Urban Geography

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rurb20

Interrogating ‘urban social innovation’: relationality and urban change in Berlin

Colin McFarlane, Paul Langley, Joe Painter, Sue Lewis & Antonis Vradis

To cite this article: Colin McFarlane, Paul Langley, Joe Painter, Sue Lewis & Antonis Vradis (2023) Interrogating ‘urban social innovation’: relationality and urban change in Berlin, Urban Geography, 44:2, 337-357, DOI: 10.1080/02723638.2021.2003586

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2021.2003586

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

Published online: 09 Dec 2021.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 1266

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Citing articles: 1 View citing articles

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rurb20

URBAN GEOGRAPHY
2023, VOL. 44, NO. 2, 337–357
https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2021.2003586

Interrogating 'urban social innovation': relationality and urban change in Berlin

Colin McFarlane[a], Paul Langley[a], Joe Painter[a], Sue Lewis[b] and Antonis Vradis[c]

[a]Department of Geography, Durham University, Durham, UK; [b]Senior Research Fellow, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh; [c]School of Geography and Sustainable Development, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, UK

ABSTRACT

The relationship between the city and "innovation" is long and varied, but in recent years there has been a new focus on the potential of innovation to catalyze economic, social, and environmental change. This has led to a debate around whether and how innovation might be progressive, and the extent to which it is captured by – indeed driven by – neoliberal thinking and processes. Our argument is that a useful route to understanding and evaluating the forms and politics of innovation in the city lies in critically examining how the "urban", the "social", and "innovation" are differently understood, put to work, and brought together by different actors. Exploring how these terms are relationally co-constituted is different to existing approaches. We do not seek to identify principles of what makes good urban social innovation, and we go beyond separating out different cases as "neoliberal" or "progressive" (though we keep a hold of that critical focus). We show that a relational focus enables an understanding of the constitutive elements through which "urban social innovation" differently proceeds. This approach can help nuance, diversify and broaden how we understand the forms and potentials of initiatives presented to us as "urban social innovation".

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 10 April 2020
Accepted 20 October 2021

KEYWORDS
Innovation; creativity; social; politics; Berlin

Introduction

The city is increasingly promoted as a generator of economic, social and environmental creativity and innovation. Across the urban world, and amongst all manner of groups, from policy-makers and think-tanks to activists and businesses, a plethora of related terms, ideas and initiatives buzz around with growing intensity: creativity, innovation, experimentation, entrepreneurialism, the city-as-laboratory, urban living labs, incubator urbanisms, and more.

The demands made on the city are increasingly high, with a number of key drivers. One response to the financial crisis has been a renewed focus on the potential of the city to stimulate economic growth, often in relation to new and green economies and urban infrastructures (Power, 2016). This emphasis responds to deepening efforts to incentivize climate-sensitive growth (Bulkeley et al., 2016). In Europe, there is an expectation that

CONTACT Colin McFarlane colin.mcfarlane@durham.ac.Uk Department of Geography, Durham University, South Road, Durham DH13LE, UK

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

cities foster not just innovation, but innovation that enhances the social and ecological life of the city. In addition, the potential of the city to foster innovation by bringing together new trends – digital technologies, high-skilled entrepreneurialism, creative urban neighborhoods, new geographies of labor, and so on – is, for some, a central driver in positioning the city as vital to innovation (Cohen, 2016; Florida & Mellander, 2016).

Against this backdrop, we are witnessing growing discursive and material investment not just in innovation, but in social innovation in the city. The European Union, for example, has positioned social innovation as central to creating and realizing new opportunities in the city and tackling long-standing social and ecological problems. The context here is slow economic recovery since the financial crisis, its social impacts in the form of poverty, inequality and disinvestment in public and community services, and growing urgency around climate change (e.g. *City of Tomorrow* report, 2011, 2013, 2014; Eurostat, 2014; Ubtract, 2015). Social innovation has a history that, as Godin (2015) and Moulaert and MacCallum (2019)have shown, is multifaceted and connected to different conceptions of both social and economic change. It is an increasingly prominent aspiration across a variety of global policy contexts (Brandsen et al., 2016).

We review some of these debates below, but our central contention is that despite the rich and growing body of work in this area across disciplines, the specific articulations of "urban", "social", and "innovation" are often lost. Few accounts have focused on the three terms involved – *urban, social*, and *innovation* – or how they are brought into relation with one another by different groups in the city. Instead, literature in this area – cutting across Geography, Urban Studies, Innovation Studies, Organizational Theory, and more – usually falls into three broad positions. One is to identify ways in which cities might foster innovation through top-down or bottom-up activities and spaces, an approach we short-hand below as "City as Lab". A second is to critique forms of innovation, especially top-down initiatives fostered by the state or large corporations, as neoliberal, and to identify instead a more progressive set of alternatives – this we label the "City of Situated Solidarities". And a third, related approach – which we call *principles of urban social innovation-* is to argue for a set of principles that might hold together and even help foster more progressive forms of urban social innovation. We discuss these in more detail below.

While these approaches implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, examine the interrelations between the urban, the social, and innovation, they do not do so in any sustained way. The consequence is to limit our ability to understand how different actors in the city read and put to work particular configurations of urban social innovation. In contrast, paying attention to these differently made configurations can help to nuance, diversify and broaden how we understand the forms and potentials of urban social innovation. Focussing in on how actors compose urban social innovation provides research – and indeed policy and practice – with resources through which to further advance how urban social innovation is being understood and pursued in cities today.

In practice, the urban, the social, and innovation are understood and made not separately, but relationally. They co-constitute one another, as we will show through our work in Berlin. This relational quality is not an additional or supplementary element to how urban social innovation is understood and made, but is instead actively constitute of it. In other words, at stake in examining how – in a given city – the urban, the social, and innovation are brought together, is the very question of *what urban social innovation is* as

a discourse and practice in the city. We pay attention not to normative definitions of what makes good or bad urban social innovation, nor do we evaluate the impact of the various cases we describe, but instead focus on the work these three different terms do, and to how they are differently understood, practised and contested. We do not adopt a specific definition of "innovation" in the city, then, or delimit in advance what we mean by "social" or "urban". Our concern is with how the relational combination "urban social innovation" performs in the city. While we will contextualize how different scholarly approaches have sought to understand urban social innovation, we do not set out to define "urban", "social" or "innovation" in advance, but instead locate them and their inter-relations in the imaginaries, work and practices of different actors in the city.

But while we do not begin with an a priori definition of what makes for good urban social innovation, the approach we take does allow an insight into the potential, practices, limits and politics of these terms and their combinations, and is therefore an important step in assessing the meanings, aspirations and concerns attached to them. In showing how the terms "innovation", "social" and "urban" are radically unstable, made and inter-related in very different ways across by different groups, we also provide pointers for how we might understand the nature and routes to urban social innovation more generally.

Our concern is with how the notion of innovation is produced in relation to particular, and differing, conceptions of the urban and social not just through the conceptual debates of academics, but by different actors within the city. As we will see, innovation, in our account, emerges from how urbanites use resources, organize, or put technology to work, while the social is seen variously as product, encounter, multiplicity, community or as a "good" requiring improvement. We work with an expansive understanding of innovation as produced through novel combinations of people, information, and things across space (Chesborough, 2003; Landy & Bianchini, 1995; Shearmur, 2017). Innovation here may be a new approach, product, idea, or way of pursuing an old practice, or entail taking an existing idea, practice and product into a new context. It might be foisted on groups and places through the state agendas or institutions, or emerge from the struggles and concerns of activists working on particular issues or places.

The research is part of an ESRC-funded project, *The Politics of Urban Social Innovation* (Department of Geography, Durham University), concerned with comparing urban social innovation in three European cities – Berlin, Athens and Newcastle. We chose Berlin because, first, of the historical tendency to attach to the city discourses and ideas of "innovation", "creativity" and "experimentation" of different kinds. The city has long been portrayed, by all kinds of actors from different social and political positions, as open to makeshift and alternative ways of doing things, from music and art to squatting and community gardens, supported by a liberal political environment of permissiveness (Colomb, 2017; Van Schipstal & Nicholls, 2014; Vasudevan, 2015). Focussing on once city allows us not only to probe different localized configurations of urban social innovation, but to demonstrate how a city can become a rich resource from which to expand and learn different ways of thinking and doing urban social innovation.

Berlin's historically low rents and housing prices, and the "over-supply" of buildings, offices and warehouses, have played an important role in the discourses attached to it (Colomb, 2017). The production of "voids" (Huyssen, 1997) – through a combination of war, division, demographic shrinkage and lack of post-wall economic boom – has meant that it has been relatively easy to find space in which to grow or implement innovative ideas,

work or approaches. For example, activities ranging across "flea markets, car boot sales, beer gardens, outdoor bars, community gardens, sports grounds, open air theatres, camping sites, or spaces of artistic experimentation" (Colomb, 2017, p. 134) have, initially at least, been temporary (Bishop & Williams, 2012). Some have become enrolled, however, in processes of "symbolic gentrification" with a sense of permanence and unintended effects, pricing out the kinds of activities that started them (Holm & Kuhn, 2011).

There is another reason why Berlin makes a good choice for the questions we're asking, and that is that the diversity of the city, the sheer range of economic and social activities going on, provides a rich context from which to identify and compare forms of urban social innovation and, from that, inform wider debates on these processes. We spoke, then, to a range of groups across a variety of sectors, from activists and artists to startups working on food, and groups facilitating socially-oriented businesses and community groups through raising finance of different sorts. Our interviews, which took place over several short research trips in 2016 and 2017, aimed not to be representative but instead sought to capture organizations of different forms across a diversity of sectors, and at a particular moment in time (we'll return to that below). Our decision to focus on a wide range of different kinds of groups is a deliberate one. While it necessarily means that we sacrifice breadth for depth, it provides us with a broad canvas through which we can identify different relations between urban, social and innovation, which is the core contribution the paper seeks to make.

Our objective was to investigate groups that actively claimed to be improving the social conditions of the city, and who were either making claims to – or claims were being made on their behalf – of doing things in a novel way. We also spoke to groups who were known to be more actively suspicious, or even hostile, to discourses of "innovation", but who nonetheless were seen by others – and sometimes by themselves – as "creative" or "experimental" in one form or another. This provided us with a broad canvas in which to critically evaluate the discourses, practices and relationalities of urban social innovation in the city, and thereby to critically reflect on how urban social innovation is understood in the city today. In all the cases we selected, initiatives sought not just to make money but to pursue an active social goal. They had to be about more than just generating profit.

Our fieldwork reports on diverse groups operating in distinct contexts in the city, from food and start-ups to crowdfunding and refugee-support, which enables an appreciation of the range and politics through which urban, social, and innovation are brought together. We report on twelve of the groups here (some of which were happy to be named, others not). We selected groups that have been active in social solidarity for many decades – such as Neighborhood – as well as groups that have been active recently, such as Moabit Hilft which is largely a response to the 2015 arrival of 54,000 refugees, mainly from Syria, to Berlin. Indeed, the refugee "crisis" was an important focus of social activism in Berlin at the time of our fieldwork, and became a context for investigating urban social innovation and selecting the groups. Other groups, such as Urban Assembly (UA) or Campus Cosmopolis, were also working with refugees, and are less new than Moabit Hilft while not as long established as Neighborhood. If Neighborhood works in a particular territory of the city – Kreuzberg – UA operates in different sites and with different groups across the city. We also sought to widen the sectors in which groups

operated, and so included groups as different as Urban Food, which cooks with food that is past its best-before-date, through to groups like Betterplace and On Purpose that are more explicitly part of the social economy and based around alternative financing.

While Berlin is often publicly presented as bastion of social democratic politics, and not without reason, neoliberalism and austerity urbanism have been ideological hallmarks of the city in recent decades (Soederberg, 2018). Cost savings in housing and across the public sector have been accompanied by growing role for the market in urban services, including the privatization of public utilities, the selling off of many municipal housing companies, and reductions in unemployment and other benefits and rental assistance (Holm & Kuhn, 2011; Soederberg, 2018). Some of the organizations described here, such as those working with refugees, have been fulfilling roles that the state may have previously done – the emergence and form of urban social innovation in amongst civil society and private actors is linked to the nature of the state and the context of urban political economy.

We begin by explaining our approach to urban social innovation in more detail, positioning it as distinct from existing approaches. We then explore how these three term – innovation, the social, and the urban – interrelate in our research in Berlin, and consider the implications for thinking about urban social innovation. We close with a reflection on the politics of urban social innovation, and what this means for future research in this inherently inter-disciplinary area.

Cities and social innovation

Cities have long been associated with innovation and creativity. The argument goes in different directions, but is broadly one that cities both attract creative people and produce sparks through the mix of different interacting knowledges, spaces, and resources (Landy & Bianchini, 1995; Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019; Storper, 2013). We can trace this history through – to name just a few – Jane Jacobs (1961) writing on diversity, density, economic life, and human flourishing, or Edward Soja's (2000) account of the "synekism" through which density fosters innovation and agglomeration in cities, or Richard Florida's (2002, 2011) accounts of urban creativity and innovation, and into more critical accounts (e.g. see Mould, 2018; Peck, 2005). There is a plethora of debates around innovation and cities that cut across different fields and disciplines, from Geography and Urban Studies to Institutional Economics, Planning and Organizational Theory. As Frank Moulaert and Diana MacCallum (2019) argue, social innovation is an increasingly diverse concept, emerging in quite different ways across disciplines and fields and across non-academic contexts in the last decade in particular. It is variously understood as entrepreneurship, technological change, new applications of social media, public sector reorganization, new economic creativity, alternative forms of participatory democracy, new styles of management, and so on (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019).

This journeying across fields is perhaps no surprise given the frequent concern attached to innovation in national, urban and regional development of different kinds, and across policy, economy, and civil society. For Michael Storper (2013, p. 9), for example, "understanding the space and time pathway of innovation and growth is the holy grail of development economics and geographical economics". Identifying the drivers of innovation is complicated in part, Storper goes on, by the fact that innovation in cities is often so varied,

with "its own specific supply architecture – the way that ideas, entrepreneurs, partner firms, and consumer tastes and habits are brought together" (Storper (2013, p. 9). Place and locatedness, he shows, can be vital to innovation. At the same time, innovation can operate – argue Ash Amin and Patrick Cohendet (2004) – in a wider architecture of systems, materials and encounters through which knowledge and ideas emerge.

Across different debates, innovation emerges both as a set of abstract processes or values, and as an always already situated idea made in relation to particular contexts. Ed Soja's (2003, p. 274) elaboration of "synekism" was one means through which he foregrounded space in understanding the city, arising from "living together in dense and heterogeneous urban regions". Here creativity and innovation – alongside territorial identity, political consciousness, and development – were vital for agglomeration as a "spatial specificity of urbanism" (Soja's (2003, p. 274). Writing in a different moment and context two decades later, Moulaert and MacCallum (2019) also insist on the place-specificity of innovation, drawing on cases as distinct as waste-to-energy centers in low-income neighborhoods in Nairobi to resistance movements campaigning for housing rights in Barcelona. Across a series of interventions on social innovation in and beyond cities, Moulaert has sought to position social innovation not as a fixed concept or even "quasi-concept", but as a "precept": a theoretical and practical work-in-progress that spills over disciplines and boundaries (see, for example, Moulaert, 2010; Moulaert et al., 2010; Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019).

A key point of departure for our contribution is the growing focus across this literature on *place*. One useful route to developing that focus is to examine more closely how the ideas of "urban", "social" and "innovation" are relationally brought together by actors within a city. This demands attention to the "placing" and "peopling" of urban social innovation by residents, activists, artists and others in the city. In making this argument, it is important to notice that across different accounts the "urban" surfaces in quite different ways. Sometimes it is the density of "collisions" between people, knowledge, ideas and resources, at other times the urban is more of an imaginary that provokes an atmosphere of possibility or creativity, or in other cases it is more of a matter-of-fact a proximity of possible funding resources. As we go through our cases in Berlin in the subsequent sections, we will see again that the "urban" is operationalized in multiple ways. In other words, the "placing" of urban social innovation reveals neither a generic geographic context nor a particular kind of place; instead, its placing unveils the ways in which the "urban" is differently imagined and put to work. The concern becomes, then, less one of figuring out what is specifically "urban" and what is "non-urban" about social innovation, but instead one of how the urban is enacted and differently enters into the composition of urban social innovation'.

We turn now to three approaches to understanding social innovation in the city that are particularly common in the literature and especially the urban debates: the concept of *city-as-lab*, a second and growing area that we refer to as the *city-as-situated solidarities*, and a third – emerging in part from the second – that identifies *principles of urban social innovation*.

The city-as-lab

Here, the emphasis is on civic entrepreneurship (Cohen, 2016); experimental collaboration and technology are positioned as drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship, and the urban emerges here as a test-bed for creative encounters. Trends of this version of urban social innovation include growth of the sharing economy, "incubator" or

"accelerator" spaces like fab labs, social finance mechanisms, open data sharing, and models like Airbnb and Uber. Boyd Cohen (2016) has argued that, in contemporary cities, innovation is increasingly democratized, and uses the idea of "collision density" to label the co-location of cultural forms and ideas – designers, artists, musicians, entrepreneurs, community activists, and so on – and how they provoke innovation. The challenge becomes one of city governments maximizing the inherent potentiality of the city by fostering such spaces (see Edler et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2016, p. 11). This is a version of social innovation that assumes a causal role for particular versions of urban spatial organization, and, by extension, implies that those properties are unlikely to be found in "non-urban" or remote areas (Shearmur, 2017).

However, if, as Florida and Mellander (2016) argue, "the locus of innovation and entrepreneurship is shifting back to the great urban centers" (Shearmur, 2017, p. 33), urban spaces themselves receive surprisingly little attention here. Or, rather, when the urban is addressed, it is as a set of spatial attributes – proximity, connectivity, density, collaboration – and lively socialities that attract venture capital, from which innovation and entrepreneurship apparently spring. In other words, the urban here is a means of realizing social innovation through the optimization of spatial proximity and encounter. Much of the diversity, forms, inequalities, politics, and socioeconomic configurations of the urban slides from view (Cf. Jacobs, 1961; Sennett, 1970; Simone, 2014; Soja, 2000). The "social" too is reduced here, in two ways. First, to the idea of active, energetic and ethical entrepreneurs bristling with ideas and experimental potential. There is a biopolitics here of the informed, tech-savvy citizen, and social difference and issues of inequality and equity rarely figure in any significant way (Langley, 2018). Second, the social becomes a series of problems to be addressed by responsible capital investment. In these profit-plus-purpose initiatives, society – and the urban – typically figure as a stage to act upon, rather than an uneven, contingent, differential, and often politicized set of spaces and processes, and the result is to flatten the social (Van Dijck, 2013).

The city-as-situated-solidarities

This approach is more cautious about the merits of different forms of innovation in the city. It is argued from this perspective that projects forwarded in the name of "social innovation" are too often top-down – driven by states or large corporations – and/or concentrated amongst middle-class areas, with limited impact on communities and in lower-income places (European Commission, 2011, 2013, 2014; Eurostat, 2014; Moulaert, 2010; Moulaert et al., 2010). Middle-class areas also often have the kinds of "civic capacity" that leads to social innovation. A wider critical literature has warned of the fetishizing and class-based nature of some innovation and allied discourses (Mould, 2018; Peck, 2005). The claim here is not that poorer neighborhoods are somehow unable to produce social innovation, but that the resources and connections existent in more economically prosperous areas can lead to greater capacity for social innovation.

Nonetheless, there is a growing body of work demonstrating how social innovation emerges from more marginal groups and places. Social innovation here lies with establishing forms of solidarity and action that simultaneously address needs and forge empowerment (Moulaert, 2010). Blanco et al. examined grassroots social innovation in a variety of urban contexts: solidarity spaces, from community banks to anti-eviction

campaigns; ecological initiatives, from community gardens to energy cooperatives; alternative economies, from social finance to consumer cooperatives; and self-organized spaces, including autonomous management of abandoned spaces. They define social innovation as "new ideas that simultaneously meet social needs and create webs of social support", and reveal how neighborhood associations in Barcelona support people evicted from their homes by contesting foreclosures, building food security, developing alliances with other movements, fostering solidarities across ethnic lines, and enhancing participation and empowerment. Notice here that the "urban" emerges here as an actor in social innovation in quite different ways from the city-as-lab approach. Not only is the range of actors and spaces diversified, the question of *need* shifts the presencing of the urban. Now, the urban is cast as producing not particular kinds of innovative spaces, such as incubators, but as producing a multiplicity that is at once spatial (from gardens to abandoned buildings) and political (anti-eviction, alternative economies or political formations). Once again, these multiplicities are positioned as *of* the urban – its concentrated inequalities and multiple differences – and not the "non-urban".

The city-as-situated-solidarities approach is often accompanied by a richer discussion of the urban and the social, and a recognition of the pluralization of different forms of innovation across place and organizations in recent years. As Moulaert and MacCallum (2019) argue, a key question across these debates is how to distinguish different forms of social innovation in a moment when the term seems to be so well-traveled and differently interpreted. The breadth of meaning attached to social innovation can, they note, be viewed as a strength – a broad banner of ethical orientations – but it can also render the term vulnerable to values or practices that may be damaging to some in the city.

While the city-as-situated-solidarities approach attends to the urban, and in particular to urban difference in places and levels of investment and inequality, our approach pushes the urban dimension further by focussing on how actors themselves – residents, activists, artists, and others – differently read, use and inter-relate the terms, and by explicitly asking what that exploration can yield for a wider understanding of urban social innovation. In doing so, it is not our intention to position the urban as the source of all innovation (Shearmur, 2017). As Richard Shearmur has argued, the fact that the geography of innovation tends to position the city as the crucible of innovation is not the result of looking systematically for innovation and finding that it mainly occurs in the city, but instead of an "urban bias" that assumes innovation will not be found in remote areas or amongst, for example, isolated firms. He shows too that innovation is also increasingly the product of activities entangling that cut across urban and remote areas. While this is outside the scope of our paper, his argument raises intriguing questions about how future work might delineate the difference between the "urban" and the "non-urban", and the role of geographical contexts and relations in innovation (and see Eder & Trippi, 2019; Lindberg, 2018).

Similarly, Noack and Federwisch (2018) show how rural social innovation in Germany can be shaped through connections with cross-border urban actors and processes, while Gernot Grabher (2018) has shown how "centre" and "periphery" function not as static dualisms but as relationally constituted in the making of innovation. Drawing on an architectural innovation in Austria, Grabher (2018, p. 1792) shows how "authentic outsiders" exist both within and beyond neat categories of center and periphery. Our aim is not to endorse or debunk the idea that the city is the locus of innovation, but to argue that there are close reciprocities between the urban, the social, and innovation, or

rather, ideas which are themselves differently understood and put to work. Our argument is that there is value in critically examining the s*pecific ways in which the urban and innovation emerge together* (see also, on urban ecologies, Bulkeley et al., 2016; Marvin et al., 2015).

Doing so reveals the urban to be – to borrow from Simone and Pieterse (2017, p. 64) – a "messy", "unwieldly", multiple set of encounters, histories, and parallel activities, often pushing and pulling people into all manner of often "half-baked" directions and compensations. As with the social and innovation, the urban is not a pre-given object "out there" in the world, but a multiple instantiation, including as a particular kind of discourse, imaginary, context, process, or gathering, put to work in different ways in its relation to innovation and the social. As we will see, different people have variously open or fixed senses of what the urban can offer social innovation. For some, the urban is a resource to throw into the mix of innovation, while for others, building and sustaining urban life *is* the innovation. For others still urban transformation enables innovation, while for some the way the city is changing actively narrows the scope for social innovation. In these different perceptions of the urban, of how it is changing, and of what it does and does not do – which emerge from subject-positions, aspirations, sectors, and distinct urban histories – we see quite different relations to the social and to innovation.

Principles of urban social innovation

A third and final approach grows out of the second, and is one that seeks to develop a normative set of principles on what urban social innovation is. Here, Frank Moulaert's work has been important in developing a set of principles for progressive forms of urban social innovation. For Moulaert and MacCallum (2019), for example, social innovation should have transformative potential to create more inclusive places based around values of respect, empathy, openness, and tolerance, promoting mutual understanding and cooperation. Moulaert et al. (2013) identify three key principles here: meeting a genuine need, generating new forms of ecological, social or institutional relations, and collectively empowering people, especially amongst marginalized people. Here, the urban emerges as an engine for bringing different people into proximity, and the challenge of innovation is to find ways of bringing them into normative relations of respect and care.

In forwarding a broadly held progressive idea of urban social innovation is, Moulaert and MacCallum (2019) hold on to a set of values through which we might evaluate social innovation in both process and outcome – including solidarity, empathy, openness, and the social and/or ecological improvement of the lives of marginalized people. However, this approach closes from view claims to urban social innovation that have different orientations of the social. As we shall see, some organizations explicitly argue that they are pursuing urban social innovation but connect less to ideas of openness, empathy or empowerment, and more to the defense of existing places or conditions, or to sustaining conditions, or to generating profit for businesses that provide to lower-income groups.

There is typically an element of addressing needs and meeting social and/or ecological improvement at work here, but the connection between the innovation and the social sits at the fringes of the already very broad definition of progressive urban social innovation that Moulaert and MacCallum offer. To be clear, we are not arguing against the pursuit of normative principles of urban social innovation. Instead, our position is that we can

generate insight into the nature and stakes of the forms, possibilities and politics of urban social innovation by "drilling down" into how differently positioned actors make claims to, pursue, or resist the relational co-constitution of urban, social, and innovation.

Innovation: from critical distancing to inhabiting intervention

Across our respondents in Berlin, we identified two broad relations to innovation. The first emerges from community activists who adopted a critical approach to innovation. For these groups, innovation was a technical, linear, and individualistic term that privileges newness over sustaining activities. Here, innovation was aligned with a neoliberal celebration of the talented and ethical entrepreneur. These activists expressed a preference for the terms "experimentation", "improvisation" and "learning", and linked them to social collectivity – we name this "critical innovation". The second group – "inhabiting innovation" – are start-ups and community providers using alternative funding and financing, such as crowdfunding, who were much more at ease with the term. Both critical innovation and inhabiting innovation, despite their differences in form and politics, aim at some form of social improvement amongst marginal groups, but with different relations to the economic and to profit, and together reveal something of the diversity of ways of thinking and doing innovation in Berlin.

Critical innovation

In this group, people who used "innovation" tended to do so for instrumental and context-specific reasons. For example, Urban Assembly (UA) – a collective of activists, artists, and refugees working to promote multicultural dialogue and low-cost community interventions – use the term innovation, but primarily in relation to funding applications. Yet if innovation is about novelty, UA did not reject the idea that this was fundamental to their work. Instead, they insisted on a different language. Paul Weber, a leading voice in UA, described the group as a "field of experimentation" – "it's about learning from errors" – in contrast to his sense of innovation as a linear idea of things getting steadily better. Klaus, another UA activist, added that their work is unpredictable and can lead to new ideas and collaborations. Florian complained that innovation is too narrow, pointing to models that are long established and vital to UA's work, such as the cooperative model. For UA, innovation emerges from (1) the contingencies of unfolding urban relations, (2) ways of doing cooperation creatively, or (3) spotting new opportunities (for example, using established corporate advertising space for artistic work and community activities). For Weber, especially important here is the idea of being "cultural entrepreneurs".

It is striking that while notions of the new and novel, even of entrepreneurship, are key to UA's work, innovation was a term that elicited such hostility. Innovation belonged here to the elite, and to the linear – it did not fit with the collective experimentations, with all the errors that accompanies them, in UA. If UA articulated a discourses of the new and novel, others focused their critique of innovation on this very idea of newness. Niklas Kuhlendahl, of Campus Cosmopolis, an organization working with refugees and linked to UA, argued that innovation was an empty term, and that the tendency to reify innovation and assume it is a "good" thing can downplay the hard, slow and necessary work of simply *sustaining* things in the city. You might be creative or experimental, but

that might simply be a *means* to keeping things ticking over, while "innovation" implies here the creation of an *output* that is new and different from what comes before. Here, innovation is closely connected to a wider neoliberal idea of attaching value to producing things, to being productive, to having something to show for one's efforts.

For Manfred Schneider – co-founder of the community garden, Urban Ecologies, a group that connects ecology, education, and food production to neighborhood life – innovation is a term that they too might use in applications for funding, but not in their daily vocabularies: it "sounds too technical" and implies a "genius idea". In German, he added, "innovation" connotes the idea of an individual intuition, whereas the garden is a more uncertain, collective affair. And he, too, resisted the implicit connection of "innovation" with "new" and "good", and emphasized the important work of sustaining. Innovation might be planting something new, but "maintaining a garden every year is the hardest part". Agriculture, which underpins their work, is after all hardly new; nor is the idea of an educational garden, or a nonprofit group establishing a small café to fund activities, which is another part of their work. Some of the early initiative for Urban Ecologies came from a trip that Schneider's co-founder, David, made to Cuba, where community gardens were being used in a moment of crisis to feed people. Perhaps, Schneider reflected, what's innovative here is the combination of different activities in one city space – but this too is about collective process and means, not individual strokes of brilliance that produce "outputs".

If Weber at UA looked beyond innovation to an idea of experimentation, Schneider rejected that term too. Experimentation, he added, is a kind of laboratory concept – "it's not an experiment, it's more like a game where you try to improvise as you go along". *Improvisation* is the keyword here, alongside the term "curating": "We called it *curating* . . . you get a feeling about whether things fit in". Neither innovation nor experimentation here do enough, for Schneider, to imply the sense of bricolage that accompanies creative work: trying this then that, taking one step forward then another back, having to find work-arounds, and so on, and always as a collective group in discussion and reflection.

Neighborhood is a long-established collective that grew out of the squatting movement. Based, like UA, in Kreuzberg, it supports low-income residents, from child-care to skills development, to a cinema. Noting that using "innovation" might help win funding, Mila Wagner, a leading activist at the group, was pointed: the term "puts my blood pressure up!", demanding newness rather than the vital work of sustaining "the basics". "Whenever we apply for money," she said, "we play the game – we call the things we already do 'innovation' . . . [but] we have now stopped applying to these places . . . and raise our money in the solidarity economy". Neither do they appeal to "the crowd" via crowdfunding platforms that valorize innovation (Langley & Leyshon, 2017). Instead, Neighborhood uses the solidarity economy through volunteers and low prices, allowing the group to be self-sufficient, outside of a few larger-ticket items such as the kindergarten, which is subsidized by a city government scheme.

Wagner preferred to talk about "emancipation" and "learning", where activists and residents learn about all manner of urban processes – regulations and legalities, building renovation and mundane tasks like fixing water pipes or faulty cookers, painting, health and safety, and more – as a means to developing individual and collective confidence and skills. In the 1970s, she reflected, when much of Neighborhood's work was getting started, "innovation" might have meant fighting for your rights in the city by being creative in order to get attention, but now it's caught up with short-termist fads on social

media, technology, and crowdfunded projects: “Crowdfunding is a problem in this sense. If it’s for a film project then crowdfunding is great, but when you work in the neighbourhood you need continuity and funding particular projects are extras, not everyday requirements. It needs to be supported by the community”.

In summary, while all of these groups have conducted innovative work, often as means – ie how they do things – rather than ends or outputs, they all agree – first – that whether we call it experimentation or improvisation or learning, the process of doing things differently is always uncertain, messy, error-prone, often incremental, collective, reflective, and about “feeling” a way through relations as events and networks unfold. As we argue below, much of this critical innovation work connects to its *urban* context: the urban gives shape to – has agency in – how innovation proceeds. Second, they all have a keen awareness of the limits of innovation, and in particular of its relation to *sustaining* both their work and the people they work on behalf of. This serves as a reminder to proponents of urban social innovation not only that it might inadvertently privilege output over process, but that it often cannot exist on its own, and instead in relation to the often mundane work of maintaining conditions.

The hostility to the term innovation is also bound up, as Schneider summarized, with a view that “innovation” in Berlin is increasingly linked to market-oriented corporate forms, which threaten the kinds of work going on in the community garden. Innovation, he suggested, is connected to a neoliberal discourse of entrepreneurial urban transformation that is pushing new developments and creating rising land pressures and costs in Berlin that could, in the end, reduce the space for more socially-oriented agendas. What Schneider opens out here is a broader debate on the growing emphasis on the city as a space that *ought* to be constantly transforming in order to succeed, often accompanied by a thin notion of the social as a sphere that will adapt, drive, and benefit from it. We return to this point later in the paper.

Inhabiting innovation

Working mainly to provide resources for socially-oriented entrepreneurs, this group includes incubator spaces, ideas test-beds, alternative financing, and scrutiny of business plans and potential markets. Here, innovation is a widely used term by those seeking to mobilize crowdfunding as a catalyst for social action. What they share with the groups described above is an alertness to the *labor* and *uncertainty* of innovation: innovation is a product of money, people, space, determination, belief, luck, solidarity, friendship, neighborhood support and involvement, and on. Here, innovation is about testing how a social problem might be “impacted” and perhaps even “solved” in new ways, including receiving backing from the crowd as a sign of need and “proof of concept”. For Gerhard Shulz at the Urban Laboratory, for example, the keywords are “feasibility” and “teamwork”, where new ideas are ushered along to socially-oriented markets:

> People come to us with rough ideas, and we check with a methodology of design thinking. We begin with: is it plausible? From a social and environmental position, is there an end goal? Is it feasible as a team – we don’t believe in heroes, has to be teamwork. Is it crisp, is it new, a new technology or a new address for a problem? If it is an old approach, a known way of doing things, we’re not so interested.

An innovation, he added, is a new angle on things, but might be anything – a "wild idea . . . a technology, a process, a new device". Nonetheless, there tends to be a stronger focus here on the output, on the *product* rather than the means or process as the innovation. Urban Laboratory has supported projects to cool fridges environmentally, support refugees into schools in Berlin, and a number of food-based projects. Around a third of ideas fail. What they provide is "a platform to test and improve". If ideas gather interest through a crowdfunding campaign (i.e. proof of concept), they are presented to "experts" – freelancers, social practitioners, representatives of banks like Deutsche Bank – who may lend additional financial and knowledge-based support. Other groups – such as Platform and Social Economy – work with central and local government agencies, foundations, and groups like Sparkasse on specific ongoing streams of work. While there are changes here to traditional models of lending and grantmaking, Martin Richter from Transition argued that it is being resisted in the social economy more broadly where, for organizations delivering welfare, transition to a "social impact" model of financing has gained little traction.

Hannah Schmidt, who helped start Urban Food, a restaurant that cooks with discarded food that has reached its "best before" date, explained how Urban Laboratory supported them from pitch to incubating the idea and raising funds through crowdfunding. For Schmidt, getting an innovation going involved six elements: a new idea (in this case, waste as ingredients to drive a restaurant and community workshops/educational activities), improvisation (e.g. pop-up diner to help raise profile and funds), belief, patience in the face of regular set-backs, luck, and a civic culture of creativity and social action that embraces new ideas. Here, "improvisation" is the process of persevering and developing workarounds, which was far more important than the idea:

> In the last 2 years I've discovered its incredible how people can improvise . . . We are chaotic but in the end we make it. Perhaps not efficient, and perhaps also stressed, more than if you had more structure and money and human resources . . .. We had pop up dinners because we had no restaurant, and at one event one woman said her husband was renting a location. So we had this good luck, but also good luck we created through an improvised idea – the pop-up dinners.

Schmidt, then, connected both the process and the output, where the process is "improvisation" and reminiscent of the critical innovation accounts, and the output is the innovation. For all the differences between the form, purpose and politics of "inhabiting innovation" and "critical innovation", there are common foci: on social and/or ecological improvement for marginalized groups; on the sheer work of innovation over time; on the uncertainty, errors and need to adapt and learn as you go; and on the need for collective teamwork and networks of support. Both sets of groups also seek to create contexts in which to enable innovation to occur – "curate", in Schneider's terms, "incubate" in Shulz's.

Our findings here build on Moulaert and MacCallum's (2019) argument that social innovation is a spatially differentiated work in progress, including within the one city. Yet our focus shows too how the idea of innovation is varied and unstable, and is taken to be particular and differentiated, often eliciting deeply contested and political ideas about

what it means do be doing the work of social change differently. To better understand why one group is more at ease with "innovation" than the other, we need to turn to how these groups relate to the "social" in urban social innovation.

Putting the social to work

We now go on to explore three relations to the social that emerged from our interviewees, and which follow on from the conceptions of innovation above: the *entrepreneurial social, the damaged social*, and the *social as cultural encounter*. We begin with the entrepreneurial social, and Platform – a major player in the rewards sector of Germany's crowdfunding economy. Platform is a social enterprise, marking it out from major platforms operating in, for example, the Uk crowdfunding economy (Langley, 2016). The organization intermediates the funding of social enterprise projects, whether these projects further education for refugees or create sustainable local shops that dispense with packaging. Platform's Hans Vogel described the social as a particular ethical orientation and motivation of entrepreneurship. The emphasis here is on fostering a *culture* of social innovation; i.e. a sense of creative energy and momentum that realizes the potential of the crowds "out there".

The social here is an active *loose* public without territory and well-defined social bonds, where people make ephemeral commitments to causes without meeting the people involved. There's also a sense that the time for this kind of social has arrived. Digital startup platform Digital City talks about how "positive social change doesn't happen by sitting back and waiting for something to happen. These uncertain times call for people to lean in" (on "leaning in" in the digital economy, see Sandberg, 2013). The social is the *driver* of innovation here, and a biopolitics of the tech savvy networked individual and collective is important.

At the same time, the social is *emergent*. For example, at an event in Berlin that Urban Laboratory organized with FinTech companies and social banking institutions, the FinTech companies were concerned with how to analyze data to establish the emergent social concerns and motives of users. Here, doing socially entrepreneurial work entailed an element of the data-based *discovery* of the social. At the same time, Ben Mason from Social Economy pointed out that new instructions by regulators require them only to list on their website the projects of organizations that are registered charities under the law; i.e. organizations with a track record of working on the social. This undercuts their ability to facilitate bottom-up and project-driven entrepreneurial social change, and limits the emergent social to those with pre-ordained experience and skill sets.

The "entrepreneurial social" links closely to "inhabiting innovation", and here the social is of a quite different sort from those in the "critical innovation" group. For example, Mila Wagner at Neighborhood described a *damaged* and *struggling social*. If the entrepreneurial social is "out there" across and beyond Berlin, the damaged social is well known and identifiable to Neighborhood because it is located in the immediate urban area. This is a social in which people struggle with poor quality housing, where for parents look to make ends meet from state benefits, often dependent on Neighborhood for training, the kindergarten, and in some cases their social lives. The role of activists like Wagner here is to get to know and support local people and their everyday needs and aspirations, not to proof project-based ideas. "Critical innovation" connects to the idea of

the "damaged social", then, because the struggles local people face demand a focus on developing provisions that support their everyday lives, and here innovation as an idea can appear short-termist (hence Wagner's focus instead on "learning").

Third, there is the social as *cultural encounter*. Paul Weber at UA spoke about the encounter of "old" and "new" Berliners – refugees – in their work, and how those encounters can create creative relations and activities in the city. Weber described the social as primarily "cultural", given that UA's work seeks – through art, drama, dance, music, gardening, and so on – to change perceptions, foster mutual learning and reflections, and generate new understandings of identities and the city. Campus Cosmopolis made similar claims. The social here is not something "out there" but a world that has to be made, which is multiple rather than singular in form, more translocal and subject to change than the damaged social Wagner described (e.g. as new Berliners encounter and learn from one another). That this sense of the social-in-flux via cultural encounter connects to a "critical innovation" account is not surprising, given that what matters for those involved is less the fact of innovation, nor even the results, but more the hard and often messy improvisations and curations of working through differences in practice.

These different forms of the social – entrepreneurial, damaged, and cultural encounter – draw our attention to how conceptions of both "innovation" and the "social" inter-relate in ways that reveal distinct urban social innovations. These different renderings of the social connect, for example, to different spatialities (eg local territory or wider spread), temporalities (short or long term), and ideas of agency (the active digital entrepreneur, or residents in need with less resource and network), provision (new ways of doing things, or finding familiar basic needs), and knowledge (of existing or potential social economies, or local people in a neighborhood, or new understandings of self and other). This builds on existing literature on social innovation by illustrating how these kinds of distinctions reveal radically different forms of and orientations to urban social innovation, and underlines the value of attending to different readings of "social" and "innovation" and how they are inter-related by urban actors.

Foregrounding the urban: building and density

The role of the urban is both vital and varied in co-constituting forms of urban social innovation. Like innovation and the social, the urban is not a stable category here. For each of our respondents, it stands for particular sites (neighborhoods, streets, even the city as a whole), and there are different temporalities – past, present and future – attached to it. For some groups, the very nature of the work they do is attributed directly to the place in which they are working, while for others the site is little more than a convenience – whether in the form of cheap rent in a well-connected place, or simply a Berlin address. We highlight two broad ways in which respondents connected the urban to the social and innovation: the urban as a *building* process, and the urban as a *density of creative people* in a relatively cheap city.

Urban as building process

For UA, in their work with artists and refugees, the work of social innovation is inextricably connected to urbanism as a material process of construction. The city is a lively part of their work: low rent enables people to come together in a place, but the places they

inhabit often need a great deal of work, from fixing windows to building furniture. The urban is, in practical terms, something that is *built*, and then maintained and repaired. The specifically urban dimension here lies with how building emerges through the different kinds of built form and social groups that dense heterogeneity affords. That building process is at once social and material, and often about learning: people working together with things to create or transform spaces (Grabher, 2018). UA use an old train station warehouse, an abandoned hotel (mainly for their work with refugees), and using an old GDR government building in the city center for artists, refugees and volunteers. In each, space becomes a staging post for multicultural encounters, bringing difference together to forge new solidarities, support, and artistic expression. For Mila Wagner at Neighborhood, urban space as a building process is equally vital, including as a space of encounter and solidarity: building workshops, space for training and seminars, a cinema, hostel, bakery, café, canteen, bike repair shop, and hostel of 35 beds:

> We had only one idea at first: activists simply wanted to stop an investor taking this building . . . In the middle of the squatting movement it was not difficult to find supporters. But then a group of single mothers came to us with improper housing, and we had revolutionary trade unionists, and the activists from the *kiez* [neighbourhood] – this was our amalgam. We learned that there were more that 100 children with no kindergarten . . .. When we started we realised everything around us was multicultural and we brought the children together for school, and we had a football team here . . . So the work here emerged through the neighbourhood.

These forms of urban building and dwelling, or *cité* and *ville*, both emerge from the urban and weave it anew as part of an ethic of intervention in the city (Sennett, 2018; Soja, 2000). The discourses of experimentation, improvisation, and learning outlined earlier in relation to creative innovation are here *materialized* in always already social ways. In contrast, for the start-ups and social enterprises – more closely aligned with an entrepreneurial sense of the social – the focus was less on learning with materials-in-place, and more about building *digital* platforms to bring loose collectives across urban space together, and enable financing. Here, digital spaces and topographical places feed off one another, for instance, in the financing of short-lived social innovations, such as the plethora of temporary public spaces that pop up in Berlin during the summer months.

Urban as creative densities

Almost all interviewees acknowledged the importance of a history of creativity and experimentation in Berlin, and/or suggested that Berliners are likely to volunteer for things they care about. Some put this down to the legacy of the Cold War – in the east, getting by and making things work in often austere conditions, or in the West, being relatively isolated and having to forge connections with one another, often without the resources of other major European capitals. Many noted that Berlin's comparatively cheap rents, empty buildings and relaxed regulations created spaces for experimentation (Colomb, 2017). As Manfred Schneider at Urban Ecologies put it, "it's not just about having more space and it being cheaper", but the historical "leftovers" of urban space that were accompanied – at least in the early post-wall years – with relatively relaxed regulations and tax systems, low living costs, and a good number of people with time to give and energy to spend.

For Paul Weber (UA), Berlin is a "concentration of interesting people", a "critical mass of progressive individuals". For Hannah Schmidt at Urban Food, "Berlin people want to be engaged as volunteers,". For Gerhard Shulz at Urban Laboratory, the city has inherited an "atmosphere": "We were an Island for 40 years and the big money wasn't here … it was a free thinking city and had enough space to live cheap, with open space, not a crazy market like Paris or London or Rome. Not everything was done by money". For Hans Vogel at Platform, "the history of socialism and capitalism creates different cultures and [the city is] quite cheap so you can prime new ideas here … the start-up scene in New York is more professional and revenue-based and pressured than here". He added, importantly, that the city itself varies considerably: "It's harder to do [social innovation] in more expensive parts of the city than in cheaper and creative parts of the city like Kreuzberg, Neukölln, or Wedding".

The idea of the city as holding all kinds of densities that might foster innovation echoes the "City as Lab" approach outlined earlier, in which particular urban attributes are connected to the potential for innovation. The difference, however, is that this version of the urban is positioned as more explicitly open than the City as Lab approach, connected to – indeed, produced by – different political and social beliefs and ways of being that take us beyond the more entrepreneurial tech-savvy social connected to that tradition, and enabled by Berlin's particular urban geographies and histories. It is a view of the urban, then, that cuts across both the critical and inhabiting innovation orientations.

This view of the urban – of what its densities might creatively do – connects closely to "inhabiting innovation" and to the "entrepreneurial social". And yet, that history also connects to accounts of "critical innovation" and of the social as cultural encounter, because those stories foreground the inherited solidarities of the city that feed into the idea of the urban as built. The urban as building connects to the social as a cultural encounter, but looks less to the history of the city and more to how new cultural encounters with refugees demand learning Berlin – what it is and who composes it – all over again. Across these accounts of the urban – whether as building process or as creative density – is a shared sense that the urban is more than just context, but enters into the making of social innovation. The form may be an atmosphere, attributed to a longer culture of free-thinking expression and do-it-yourself action, that makes innovation a kind of trait in the city.

In these accounts, Berlin was, and remains, a city of relative experimentation – "a kind of trialing for thinking differently", as Weber put it – but in the same breadth, most respondents argued that possibilities are narrowing due to rising land prices and economic competition for space. Property prices rose by 20% in 2017, the fastest rise of any city in the world (Collinson, 2018). "Berlin", Weber continued, "is not yet London and New York", there remains "potential", but "the city does not see what it loses." Niklas Kuhlendahl at Campus Cosmopolis agreed. "Real estate prices are creating real obstacles". Schneider, at Urban Ecologies, put it more bluntly: "The market is like a wave taking everything. Maybe the moment [for a different socioeconomic path] has been missed". For Anna Lehmann at Digital City, Berlin still "attracts collaboratively minded people" but is "on a trajectory that is worrying … [there is the] possibility to lose what makes Berlin unique". "Maybe in 10 years" reflected Gerhard Shulz, "it's over – gentrification rolling through the city".

For scholars of social innovation, there is an important message here about paying closer attention to how conceptions of the urban inform social innovation as an idea and practice, and its futures. No one spatiality emerges as dominant for social innovation – yes, density matters, but while for some groups proximity is key (eg Neighborhood), for others the challenge is connecting people from different walks of life across and beyond the city (eg, in their different ways, UA and Urban Laboratory). How we conceive of the urban can, then, open up some possibilities for social innovation while closing off others, just as how we perceive innovation or the social has consequences for how we might understand the role of the urban.

Conclusion

Despite the proliferation of research on social innovation in the city, and the growing focus on place-specificity, few studies attend to the particular inflections actors bring to "urban", "social", and "innovation", and how they relate to one another. We have tried to show that there is value in investigating these articulations. Our aim has not been to evaluate the impact of the different initiatives described here, but to work with a breadth of cases that collectively reveal a range of ways in which urban social innovation is understood and pursued in the city today.

Innovation in the city does not simply fall into binary terms as either an exclusive and damaging neoliberal innovation, or as a progressive innovation in marginal spaces oriented to social needs and urban politicization (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019). Innovation is not a stable, fixed or uncontested concept and practice that neatly falls into either damaging or progressive work in the city. Instead, it is differently configured in its relations to (also highly divergent) ideas of the "urban" and "social".

We have shown, for example, that those who were cautious and critical of the idea of "innovation" as a technical, linear, individualized term that privileges newness, were also more likely to connect to an idea of the social as damaged or as cultural encounter, and the urban as a material building process that connects people and place. In contrast, those who were more comfortable with the term innovation were more likely to relate to a sense of the social as an entrepreneurial domain, and to see the urban as building digital spaces and creative densities. For Neighborhood, the social has been damaged by inequality, and innovation only matters if it is able to help people cope, sustain and get on in a particular urban locale, while for Urban Laboratory the social is a vibrant space that can generate innovation only if it is "proofed" by the social economy in a wider spatiality of the urban not connected to any one territory. Urban Laboratory celebrates innovation and praises the social, Neighborhood is suspect of the term innovation and is anxious about the social, and instead innovates by finding new ways of providing services or raising resources.

Our approach provides a useful set of resources through which to broaden our understanding of the plurality of forms and politics attached to urban social innovation in a city. It is, then, both a conceptual and a methodological orientation to the topic, which in turn feeds into an analytical approach. The form that urban social innovation takes is not driven by the innovation itself, but by the relational co-constitutions of how innovation, the social, and the urban are conceived, inter-

related, and practiced. As a methodological approach, our work offers a route to understanding the form and diversities of urban social innovation in the city; other areas of work, as we've discussed, focusses on the impact of some of the forms we've described, and together these approaches can provide a framework for taking stock of the state of urban social innovation today. There are three additional contributions from our arguments to the wider literature which might inform future research.

One is that these different expressions of urban, social and innovation reveal the different potential routes, even within one set of groups in one city, for doing socially innovative work. Rather than position one route as necessarily better than another, or define urban social innovation in advance, our approach points instead to a growing archive from which to learn about urban possibilities and to investigate the position of "innovation" in the wider urban context. The idea attached to these terms are historically produced, often conflictual and sometimes surprisingly overlapping. They speak to the political conjuncture and histories of the city, and offer insight into the nature of urban change.

A second contribution is, following on, that focusing on how different groups connect urban, social and innovation allows us to generate a larger insight about the stakes and role of urban social innovation in a particular city. The kinds of urban social innovation that emerge in a city are tied in part to the nature of urban political economy and politics, and so in Berlin, as Susan Soederberg (2018) has argued, the neoliberalisation of the state has meant that civil society groups have sometimes filled gaps that state providers would have previously fulfilled, including in relation to housing or refugee support. We have learned about the potential futures people perceive in Berlin. Almost all groups we spoke to perceived Berlin to be at a crossroads, where the potential for different urban social innovations is shrinking due to an increasingly expensive urban fabric. Adopting a "city-as-lab" approach might tempt us to argue that new forms of collaboration and technology will drive innovation and entrepreneurship, that Berlin might innovate its way out of this challenge, whether through the sharing economy, open data sharing or alternative financing. We would not reject this possibility – cities, after all, have a habit of surprising, and the future is never closed. And, finally, a third contribution is that examining how these groups, and others, read and put urban social innovation to work illustrates the fundamental importance for scholars of urban social innovation to do that same. The ways in which we, as researchers, conceive the urban has powerful impacts on how we conceive the social and innovation, and vice versa. But this is not often made explicit in writing on social innovation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council [ES/N005988/1].

References

Amin, A., & Cohendet, P. (2004). *Architectures of knowledge: Firms, capabilities and communities*. Oxford University Press.

Bishop, P., & Williams, L. (2012). *The temporary city*. Routledge.

Brandsen, T., Cattacin, S., Evers, A., & Zimmer, A. (Eds). (2016). *Social innovations in the urban context*. Springer.

Bulkeley, H., Coenen, C., Frantzeskaki, N, Hartmann, C., Kronsell, A., Mai, L., Marvin, S., McKormick, K., Steenbergen, F., & Palgan, Y.V. (2016). Urban living labs: Governing urban sustainability transitions. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, *22*, 13–17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2017.02.003

Chesborough, H. (2003). *Open innovation: The new imperative for creating and profiting from technology*. Harvard Business Press.

Cohen, B., Almirall, E., & Chesbrough, H. (2016). The city as a lab: Open innovation meets the collaborative economy. *California Management Review*, *59*(1), 5–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125616683951

Cohen, B. (2016). *The emergence of the urban entrepreneur: How the growth of cities and the sharing economy are driving a new breed of innovators*. Praeger.

Collinson, P. (2018, April 10). Berlin tops the world as city with the fastest rising property prices. *The Guardian*. Retrieved July 18, 2018, from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/10/berlin-world-fastest-rising-property-prices

Colomb, C. (2017). The trajectory of Berlin's 'interim spaces': Tensions and conflicts in the mobilisation of 'temporary uses' of urban space in local economic development. In J. Henneberry (Ed.), *Transience and permanence in urban development* (pp. 131–149). Wiley Blackwell.

Eder, J., & Trippi, M. (2019). Innovation in the Periphery: Compensation and Exploitation Strategies. *Growth and Change: A Journal of Urban and Regional Policy*, *50*(4), 1511–1531. https://doi.org/10.1111/grow.12328

Edler, J., Cunningham, P., Gok, A., & Shapira, P. (2016). *Handbook of innovation policy impact*. Elgar.

European Commission. (2011), *Cities of tomorrow – Challenges, visions, ways forward*. Retrieved July 8, 2018, from http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/citiesoftomorrow/citiesoftomorrow_final.pdf

European Commission. (2013) *Guide to social innovation*. Retrieved July 8, 2018, from http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/presenta/social_innovation/social_innovation_2013.pdf

European Commission. (2014) *The social business initiative of the European Commission*. Retrieved July 8, 2018, from https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/14583/attachments/3/translations//native

Eurostat. (2014). *Regional innovation scoreboard 2014*. European Union, Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry.

Florida, R. (2002) *The rise of the creative class: and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R., & Mellander, C. (2016). Rise of the startup city: the changing geography of the venture capital financed innovation, *California Management Review*, *59*(1), 14–38

Florida, R. (2011). *The rise of the creative class revisited*. Basic Books.

Godin, B. (2015). *Innovation contested: The idea of innovation over the centuries*. Routledge.

Grabher, G. (2018). Marginality as strategy: Leveraging peripherality for creativity. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *50*(8), 1785–1794. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X18784021

Holm, A., & Kuhn, A. (2011). Squatting and urban renewal: The interaction of squatter movements and strategies of urban restructuring in Berlin. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *35*(3), 644–658. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.001009.x

Huyssen, A. (1997). The voids of Berlin. *Critical Inquiry*, *24*(1), 57–81. https://doi.org/10.1086/448867

Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of Great American Cities*. Random House.

Landy, C., & Bianchini, F. (1995). *The creative city*. Demos.

Langley, P., & Leyshon, A. (2017). Capitalising on the crowd: The monetary and financial ecologies of crowdfunding. *Environment and Planning A*, *49*(5), 1019–1039. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X16687556

Langley, P. (2016). Crowdfunding in the United Kingdom: A cultural economy. *Economic Geography*, *92*(3), 301–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/00130095.2015.1133233

Langley, P. (2018). The folds of social finance: Making markets, remaking the social. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space 51* (1) 130–147 doi:10.1177/0308518X17752682 .

Lindberg, M. (2018). Promoting and sustaining rural social innovation. *European Public and Social Innovation Review*, *2*(2), 30–41 https://pub.sinnergiak.org/esir/article/view/61 .

Marvin, S., Luque-Ayala, A., and McFarlane, C. (2015) *Smart Urbanism Utopian vision or false dawn?* London: Routledge.

Moulaert, F., and MacCallum, D. (2019). *Advanced introduction to social innovation*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Moulaert, F., Martinelli, F., Swyngedouw, E., & González, S. (eds.). (2010). *Can neighbourhoods save the city? Community development and social innovation*. Routledge.

Moulaert, F. (2010). Social innovation and community development: Concepts, theories and challenges. In F. Moulaert, F. Martinelli, E. Swyngedouw, & S. González (Eds.), *Can neighbourhoods save the city? Community development and social innovation* (pp. 4–16). Routledge.

Mould, O. (2018). *Against creativity: Everything you have been told about creativity is wrong*. Verso.

Noack, A., & Federwisch, T. (2018). Social innovation in rural regions: Urban impulses and cross-border constellations of actors. *Sociologia Ruralis*, *59*(1), 92–112. https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12216

O'Sullivan, F. (2018, January 2). *Can Berlin buy its way out of a housing crisis?* Citylab. Retrieved July 18, 2018, from https://www.citylab.com/equity/2018/01/friedrichshain-kreuzberg-apartments-rent-prices/549314/

Peck, J. (2005). Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *29*(4), 740–770. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2005.00620.x

Power, A. (2016). *Cities for a small continent: International handbook of city recovery*. Chicago University Press.

Sandberg, S. (2013). *Lean in: Women, work, and the will to lead*. WH Allen.

Sennett, R. (1970). *The uses of disorder: Personal identity and city life*. University of Michigan.

Sennett, R. (2018). *Building and dwelling: Ethics for the city*. Penguin.

Shearmur, R. (2017). Urban bias in innovation studies. In H. Bathelt, P. Cohendet, S. Henn, and L. Simon (Eds.), *The Elgar companion to innovation and knowledge creation* (Cheltenham, UK: Elgar) (pp. 440–456). Retrieved July 7, 2018, from https://www.elgaronline.com/view/9781782548515.xml

Simone, A.M., and E. Pieterse (2017) *New Urban Worlds: Inhabiting Dissonant Times*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Simone, A. (2014). *Jakarta, drawing the city near*. University of Minnesota Press.

Soederberg, S. (2018). Governing global displacement in austerity urbanism: The case of Berlin's refugee crisis. *Development and Change*, *50*(4), 923–947. https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12455

Soja, E. (2000). *Postmetropolis: Critical studies of cities and regions*. Blackwell.

Soja, E. (2003). Writing the city spatially. *City*, *7*(3), 269–280. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360481032000157478

Storper, M. (2013). *Keys to the city: How economics, institutions, social interactions, and politics shape development*. Princeton University Press.

Ubtract. (2015). *Social innovation in cities: Ubtract II capitalisation*. Bialec.

Van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press.

Van Schipstal, I., & Nicholls, W. (2014). Rights to the neoliberal city: The case of urban land squatting in 'creative' Berlin. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, *2*(2), 173–193. https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2014.902324

Vasudevan, A. (2015) *Metropolitan Preoccupations: the Spatial Politics of Squatting in Berlin*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.