

Analysis of the social innovation process: a methodological reframe grounded in immersion and participation

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Abstract

- **Objective**

This article proposes a methodological reframe for social innovation research. Our work shows that ethnography offers an appropriate immersive and participatory methodological framework to address the need for contextualised research that can identify novel practices and initiatives led by agents for revitalisation and transformation within social communities.

- **Methodology**

Based on the ethnographic account from the experience with the nonprofit La Cocotte Solidaire, we discuss the adoption of the status of participant-observer and the deployment of a data collection system that combines triangulation with scanning for hot and cold information.

- **Results**

We detail ways to capture socially innovative initiatives taking into account the cultural and organisational specificities involved: the objective of social performance, territorial grounding, or collective and democratic functioning.

- **Managerial implications**

Our work promotes collaboration between social scientists and practitioner-innovators who need to embrace their capacity to drive social innovation and the value of 'engaging' ethnographers in their approach.

- **Originality**

The article is part of the field of ethnographic marketing research and opens methodological pathways for studying emerging phenomena that drive social transformation.

- **Keywords:** social innovation, ethnographic marketing research, immersion, observational participation, qualitative research method.

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