



Carrefour des innovations sociales

Pulling scattered content together

Following the initiative of CGET (the French government's office for spatial planning and territorial and urban policy), La Fonda (a well-established think tank working with associations) and around 50 more partners, France is launching the 'Carrefour des innovations sociales' (Social Innovation Hub). AEIDL will participate.

Every day, new services and community-led initiatives in the field of social innovation are launched and take various, sometimes very original, shapes.

These initiatives are most often carried out by social enterprises, whether not-for-profits or cooperatives, which want to offer practical solutions to problems related to health, sustainable development, social inclusion, employment, etc.

Their profusion and inventiveness are progressively shaping remedies for social, economic and environmental crises. Even when they are strongly rooted in their local context and have a place-based character, they can inspire other localities, and offer new perspectives for social cohesion, economic development and local attractiveness.

The [Carrefour des innovations sociales](#) is tackling the issue of scattered information arising from numerous capitalisation platforms by offering a new way to access their content and to exchange ideas.

Based on open-source software and the principles of the commons,¹ this digital hub enables members of its community to enhance their content and share it more widely, thus improving their capitalisation and the support they can give to local social innovations.

A web platform to get on track

Every time a new project is capitalised, partners from the hub community upload relevant content onto their web sites. The hub thus points to up-to-date results. More than 10,000 initiatives have already been collected from around 20 partners using a web crawler.

Additional functions such as a brokerage tool for project promoters (calls for expertise, job offers etc.) and a data design application are currently being integrated.

¹ Elinor Ostrom (American economist and political scientist, Nobel Prize for Economics) showed that when natural resources are jointly managed by their users, in time, rules are established for how these are to be cared for and used in a way that is both economically and ecologically sustainable. Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

In the short term, the hub should collect and promote around 40,000 initiatives covering the whole country or even coming from abroad and translated into French.

A project with collective governance

The Carrefour brings together a great variety of stakeholders, public and private, local and national, and creates a genuine way to network at national level.

It is based on several key principles, set out in a charter: an open dimension to social innovation, through each partner bringing its own definition and 'guaranteeing' the innovative character of the actions taken forward; equality and goodwill among the hub community, avoiding leadership or dominant positions; producing and managing content under the 'commons' principles; using open-source tools (the entire computer development relies on open-source software).

At the crossroads of open innovation and social innovation

Open innovation can be a disrupting factor in conventional knowledge management practice. Instead of building knowledge in a closed loop, open innovation is the result of a collaborative endeavour among many different stakeholders, putting into question the issue of intellectual property and the notion of exclusivity. It is especially widespread in the digital arena.

The principles governing open innovation are rather similar to those governing social innovation: user involvement, place-based, joint design and evaluation processes, hybrid economic models, etc.

As with some successful local initiatives, a new way of conducting public action is shaping up at national level, in co-production, serving place-based initiatives. This approach is inventing a space for dialogue between public stakeholders, especially from the national level, and grassroots practitioners.

More information (FR): <http://www.cget.gouv.fr/actualites/lancement-du-carrefour-des-innovations-sociales-en-avril>

Video (FR): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKIwgJFL3zk>