Concept Paper

The Impact of Dissonance? A Valuation Perspective on Rural Social Innovation Processes

Jonathan Hussels [1,2,*], Ralph Richter [1] and Suntje Schmidt [1,2]

1   Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space, 15537 Erkner, Germany;
    ralph.richter@leibniz-irs.de (R.R.); suntje.schmidt@leibniz-irs.de (S.S.)
2   Department of Geography, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 10099 Berlin, Germany
*   Correspondence: jonathan.hussels@leibniz-irs.de

Abstract: Social innovation (SI) has been credited with fostering novel solutions to the socio-economic challenges many rural areas face. The quest for a substantiated understanding of its potential for regional development has spawned a rich literature on SI impact assessments. Yet, having been instrumental, these assessments harbour several ambiguities as they seek to unveil objective impacts in a results-oriented manner. First, SI processes take diverse directionalities, questioning the idea of them being 'straightforward facts' and giving leeway to a more constructivist understanding. Second, a results-oriented perspective tends to obscure social processes that initially contribute to the emergence of impacts. In response to such concerns, we suggest a valuation perspective that explores how SI impacts are constructed iteratively throughout the innovation process. To do so, we operationalise the notion of *dissonance* as a critical factor embedded in innovative activities in three instances: *impulses*, *turning points*, and *lock-ins*. This perspective allows us to study how value is experienced, assigned, and strategically attracted while shedding light on how SI processes and their impacts are co-constructed in valuation processes. The article uses empirical vignettes from selected case studies with SI initiatives in Northern Germany.

Keywords: social innovation; impact; valuation; value; dissonance; rural areas

1. Introduction

The concept of social innovation (SI) has been a prominent topic in rural studies for well over a decade, with academics and practitioners emphasizing its potential to foster novel approaches and solutions to address diverse societal challenges [1]. However, emancipating from the well-established focus on growth or competitiveness in innovation research and considering a broad array of potential innovation trajectories significantly complicates the study of its impacts. Questions alluding to a socially constructed nature of SI arise, such as, "What is considered innovative by whom?" and "Who perceives what kind of effects?" Hutter and colleagues [2] suggest that innovations are not simply objective facts but are shaped by "*practices of perception and legitimation*" (p. 20). Therefore, whether a new social practice is eventually considered innovative is a matter of perception and valuation practices [3]. In this context, innovation narratives have been described as crucial drivers of both legitimation and joint decision-making while reflecting power relations and actors' interests [4]. Valuations, therefore, must be considered closely entangled with power-induced negotiations of what is considered problematic and innovative, respectively. Instead of a positivistic notion of an objectively graspable, seemingly real and thus measurable impact, this gives leeway to a constructivist perspective emphasising the social construction of reality through one's own experiences [5] and acknowledges the embeddedness of SI impacts in subjective connotations and specific value systems. This is not to disregard the tangible, or as Lee [6] puts it, "life-sustaining", values that can result from socially innovative activities. Instead, we argue that a sole focus on the tangible effects

of SI processes overlooks the complex and potentially conflictual societal negotiations underlying what is deemed novel and thus valuable.

Despite resonating with more constructivist perspectives in social impact assessments [7], a valuation perspective enables the additional exploration and conceptualisation of the performative qualities of valuations. Cunha and Benneworth [8] recognise that innovation is not solely driven by the introduction of novel solutions but also by how actors perceive this innovation, suggesting that the impacts of innovation are indeed experiential. Rather than being confined to perpetual subjective assessments, we suggest considering valuation as occurring against the backdrop of socially shared, intersubjective conceptions of what is considered valuable (and what is not) [6,9]. This perspective underscores that valuation processes and underlying values influence the construction of the SI process in the first place [10–12]. Specifically for the case of rural SI, Vercher et al. [4] showcase the relevance of communicative elements such as narratives as reflexive and performative drivers of innovative activities that reflect questions of power relations as well. Conceiving valuation as a processual phenomenon, comprising both value attribution and value creation [13] emphasizes the merits of adopting a valuation perspective of SI impacts. This approach allows for an examination of the iterative and potentially conflictual negotiation and emergence of value throughout SI processes. Consequently, we focus on how precisely such processes are valuated and continuously (re)constructed throughout their emergence. Furthermore, the proposed angle may also stress that SI process impacts already unfold in ongoing processes (see also Ammaturo and Schmidt in this special issue [14]).

Against this backdrop, this paper questions how to systematically think of and trace value construction in SI processes. We adopt a two-pronged approach as we derive conceptual guardrails from pragmatist approaches to the sociology of valuation, introduce a conception for analysing valuation processes, and illustrate its application through empirical vignettes of SI processes. The following sections review ambiguities frequently encountered in impact assessments (Section 2) and develop our valuation perspective and an analytical conception for studying valuation processes in SI initiatives (Section 3). We then suggest the notion of dissonance as an entry point for empirically studying valuation embedded in SI processes and present our methodological procedure (Section 4). Through empirical vignettes, we illustrate and elaborate on three distinct instances of dissonance and its resolution (Section 5). The paper concludes with a discussion of the merits of our valuation approach, its limitations, and its contribution to academic discussions on SI impacts (Section 6).

2. Understanding Impact: Examining the Constraints of Social Innovation Impact Assessments

Scholars and politicians attach a high relevance to SI impact measurement because *"what you do not measure, you do not achieve"* [15] (p. 7). This has led to a growing body of literature on measuring and describing the impact of SI [16–18]. The impact of SI is commonly related to socially added value created by third-sector organisations and social enterprises. Here, social impact measurement refers to seemingly objectively measurable criteria rather than to the qualitative valuation across social processes, even though some scholars call for taking *"into account the value experienced by all stakeholders involved"* [8] (p. 59). Often, the impact of SI is considered transformative. Such change is primarily depicted as the causal result of interventions and measured by effect measurement or by assessing organisational performance against more static and externally defined criteria [12]. Because of its practical relevance, impact assessments frequently provide evidence that justifies and legitimates investments in SI, as they expound on how innovative processes address societal needs.

According to Baturina and Bežovan [15], SI impact measurement faces several challenges. The 'causality problem' denotes the complexity of social environments, which complicates tracing back an observed effect to a specific cause. The 'measurement problem' refers to the difficulty of evaluating elusive issues such as new thoughts and explains a certain reluctance of SI activists to assess their activities [19]. Often-used 'one-size-fits-all'

measuring approaches are questionable given the context sensitivity of SI [8]. Additionally, external impact assessments unfold a performative power [12], as externally pre-defined measurement criteria affect social dynamics and decision-making within development processes. Last, impact measurement is often implemented once an SI becomes visible and identifiable, neglecting small changes, adjustments, and micro-effects already unfolding across the SI process [14].

The vague distinction between SI and social impact further aggravates SI impact measurement. While the first relates to the effects of SI practices, the latter has a broader significance and refers to social effects in target groups, regions, or the wider society caused by interventions of specific actors such as social enterprises and third-sector organisations. Given our focus on SI and its effects, we use the term 'social innovation impact'. While this gives leeway to a constructivist meaning, in many understandings, SI impact is an observable and measurable matter such as changes or improvements "*in the life of individuals, groups, and society*" [15] (p. 9). Compared to 'outcome', which refers to effects among beneficiaries, 'impact' stands for more general, potentially transformative effects leading to (e.g., social or regional) changes. From a temporal perspective, impact refers to the mid- or long-term effects of SI and resulting changes [20]. In practice, this is often translated into static, retrospective stances on impact, implying an almost exclusive and linear link between SI interventions and results, neglecting the dynamics by which value unfolds within and is ascribed to ongoing SI processes [21,22].

Research on impact measurement distinguishes between measures that operationalise the social impact of organisations or assess the effects on a group, community, or population. In the first case, social impact measurement is a form of social accounting. Social enterprises balance with a 'triple bottom line', meaning that social entrepreneurial success cannot be measured only in financial terms but by also concerning social and environmental impact. Another example of social accounting is the 'social return on investment (SROI)' analysis, which attaches importance to the involvement of stakeholders and monetary proxy indicators for the valuation of different sorts of benefits [23]. Social impact measurement in communities or societies differentiates between effects on the micro, meso, and macro levels. In a comprehensive literature review, Krlev and colleagues found that most measurements focus on structural features such as financial indices followed by approaches measuring institutional features (e.g., codes of conduct, laws) and—less prominently—concepts with a more interpretive procedure of impact measurement [24]. A further perspective is provided by Barinaga, who calls for shifting "*the focus away from the thing being evaluated and the person conducting the evaluation [. . .] onto the process and practices of evaluating.*" [12] (p. 2). For Barinaga, impact is neither entirely objective nor subjective but created through evaluation practices.

Baraniga's work, informed by the sociology of valuation, provides promising insights for our approach to the construction of SI impact in valuation processes. From our point of view, a valuation perspective offers a worthy supplement to the academic engagement with valuation and value creation in SI processes for two reasons. Firstly, while assessments are commonly used to evaluate comparable entities or something with a given norm, valuation signifies a broader concept involving the attribution of value against the background of socially shared meanings [25]. Therefore, valuation opens up a perspective on the analysis of how, why, and by whom an SI is considered innovative (and valuable), as well as providing promising insights into why SI processes accelerate, slow down, are temporarily on hold, or get stuck at a given point in time. Secondly, rather than solely ascribing value to results, a valuation perspective can potentially illuminate valuation practices in all phases of an SI process beyond the reconstruction of seemingly linear cause–effect chains. Thus, a valuation perspective meets analytical and epistemic interests, allowing for addition to the often more practically oriented impact measurement approaches.

3. Towards a Valuation Perspective: Attaching, Negotiating, and Creating Value in Social Innovation Processes

To conceptualise the negotiation and emergence of value in rural SI processes, we draw on Dewey's pragmatist axiology [26]. Dewey defines valuation as a continuous and ongoing process involving reflection, experimentation, and adaptation, sensitive to the dynamics and normative underpinnings at play. Valuations are thus interactive social processes encompassing shared or dissonant judgement, negotiations of what is worthy, collective sense-making, and ascribing or dissociating meaning to or from objects, processes, and actors [2]. However, valuation does not merely respond to a predetermined, experienced reality but also actively shapes the emergence (or construction) of this reality in the first place. Huguenin and Jeannerat [10] (p. 627) argue that value is not to be regarded as a mere epiphenomenon of innovation, stating that "*value creation emerges through the creation of new products and activities that shape and are shaped by social performances and experiences*". Thus, a valuation perspective promises to illuminate not only how SI processes are evaluated but also how SI processes are constructed and shaped through valuation practices, highlighting their performative power. While static assessments tend to reduce questions of value to questions of evaluation, a valuation perspective also allows for a more explicit exploration of value creation and of how the ability of actors to articulate their valuing perspective within and across communities may affect the further progress of an innovative process. This resonates with Vatin's [13] argument, which stresses the dynamic meaning of valorising. He argues that while evaluation attributes value to something by relatively static judgement, valuation relates to an interplay of evaluation (as the attribution of value) and valorisation (as the production of value) (ibid). Hence, valuations must be considered potentially powerful practices that are subjected to, at times, diverging interests and agendas.

Value is hence not viewed as a fixed attribute but rather as a perceived, negotiated, and constructed quality [9,11]. Drawing on the concept of 'value grammars' [27], we understand valuation not as confined to perpetual subjective assessments but as occurring within the context of socially shared, intersubjective perceptions of what is deemed valuable and what is not. The metaphor of 'grammar' suggests a structured, rule-governed method through which values are articulated and understood in social interactions (ibid). Analogous to how grammatical rules dictate the construction of sentences in a language, value grammars determine how values are expressed and recognised within societal contexts. This appears useful for two reasons in the context of rural SI processes. First, the potentially conflictive co-existence of these grammars allows for capturing diverse or even antagonistic valuations of an SI process by different groups of actors. Second, it points us to the role of conventions, which are essentially irritated by and throughout SI processes.

The understanding of value as continuously being (re)constructed throughout SI processes and valuations continuously gearing these processes illustrates how valuable impact of SI evolves alongside the innovation process [8]. Processual perspectives of innovation [28,29] subdivide the innovation process into several phases, suggesting that valuations are inherently embedded in them. Typically, innovation processes are conceptualised as starting in an incubation phase crucial to problem recognition and definition. This phase is characterised by the specification of a perceived problem and its effects, which are experienced as problematic, obstructive, tying, or troubled [30]. This requires collective practices of sense-making, interpretation, and judgement, as well as collectively agreeing on a shared perspective of a given problematic situation that needs to be tackled. Based on these collective valuation endeavours, this first innovation phase may move forward to developing, testing, and prototyping potential problem solutions and increasingly mobilising more actors and resources. We may, therefore, consider situations involving conflicting aspects, such as the ontological challenge of problem definition, as laying the groundwork for collaborative valuations that ultimately drive innovation processes [30–32]. A clear problem definition marks the entry into the following innovation phase as the unknown becomes specified [32]. The transition into a new phase also marks a shift in valuation practices because some dissonances could (at least partially) be resolved. This second phase

is then equally tied to valuation, as, for instance, actors can only be mobilised by either agreeing with or opposing an idea. Likewise, prototyping a novel idea requires a shared agreement on what exactly is being prototyped and with what kind of resources, as well as the decision to invest these resources.

An innovation process perspective provides a clear starting point for viewing SI through a pragmatist-informed valuation lens. Innovation processes fundamentally involve breaking away from conventional or established practices. As illustrated, they are pivotally driven by dissonance [30]. Simultaneously, as approaches in the sociology of valuation emphasise, joint valuations and, hence, agreements on how to proceed with an initiative unfold a performative power, further shaping the SI process [12,13]. For this understanding, we suggest using three distinct analytical categories when scrutinising the processual emergence of impact in valuation processes. The category of *dissonance* captures the often-conflictual encounter of diverging orders of worth throughout innovation processes, while *valuation* examines the kind of negotiation and agreement that potentially allows one to overcome the former. Finally, *assemblage* accounts for the performativity of valuations (see Table 1 for an overview of the analytical categories).

Table 1. Deduced analytical categories with guiding questions to study SI valuation.

Analytical Categories	Deduced Guiding Questions	Key References
Dissonance	• What kind of dissonance can be observed? How is the situation assessed differently by different actors?	[30,31,33,34]
Valuation	• To what extent and how do valuations resolve or mitigate the dissonance at play?	[9,12,13,34,35]
Assemblage	• Which socio-material elements are introduced or discontinued in this context? How is the SI's agency affected?	[11,28,36,37]

First, as discussed, innovation phases can be understood as times when dissonances [30] are experienced and negotiated in diverse ways. Dissonance refers to contradictory meanings, viewpoints, preferences, or performances [30,31] that may lead to opportunities for valuation practices embedded in sometimes unpredictable conversations and exchanges. As such, dissonances can help one to inquire what is at stake or what is known or unknown and to specify potential routes for searching for a solution [32]. In David Stark's understanding, "*[d]issonance occurs when diverse, even antagonistic, performance principles overlap*" [30] (p. 35). Stark [30] points out that innovation processes contain contradictions, frictions, and even disruptions. Innovation processes, thus, are seldom harmonious or smooth. Instead, they may be temporarily put on hold (e.g., because they lack consent on how to proceed), or activities may meander and seem to lack direction to search for the next steps. The initial phase of an innovation process is commonly characterised by an ontological dissonance concerned with a joint problem specification. Then, one encounters epistemic dissonances in interpreting and making sense of challenging situations throughout the SI process. Here, the focus lies on the assembly and disassembly of epistemic objects (such as early prototypical solutions) (ibid). Instead of being interpreted exclusively as ruptures, Stark [30] suggests regarding dissonances as potentially constructive exchanges that enable innovation processes based on colliding valuation frames.

Second, the idea of dissonances bearing opportunities for new valuations resonates with Festinger's [33] theory of cognitive dissonance, portraying it as generating discomfort typically not tolerated. Valuations are thus an essential component of any SI process, as it is through them that novel solutions, approaches, or developments are valuated, legitimised, and constructed. They touch upon the paradox at the heart of innovation definitions, namely the tension between an innovation's appreciated newness and its diffusion, mimicking, and potential institutionalisation [35]. In this sense, an SI process

can be thought of as the *"creation and legitimation of new social objects"* [38] (p. 72) or, fundamentally, as a valuation process. However, SI processes are rarely characterised by smooth or harmonious progression. Instead, valuations are inherent to each phase of an innovation process, and collective valuations move the process forward. Our second analytical dimension focuses on the valuation practices involved, examining how and to what extent they address or alleviate dissonance at particular stages. It is thus concerned with how precisely values are perceived and attributed in a given phase of an SI process.

Our third analytical category, the assemblage dimension, reflects the stressed performativity of valuation. Transcending questions of value attribution alone, an assemblage perspective allows us to examine how a valuation plays out in materialistic, symbolic, cultural, and social terms (or in terms of valorisation) equally. In rural areas, SI often manifests as recombination processes, characterised more by relative innovation than outright novelty. This notion of recombination, akin to the concept of bricolage [39], has been approached from an assemblage point of view by Christmann et al. [28], inspired by De Landa's work [36]. This angle allows us to coherently look at the dis/assembly of heterogeneous components in a provisional, open-ended manner. Translated to the case of SI, Christmann and colleagues [28] (p. 506) focus on the assembling and thus change in "*constellations, procedural and organisational aspects as well as physical structures*" throughout its emergence. At the heart of assemblage thinking lies the examination of interactive agency, which is considered distributed across these socio-material elements (people, things, narratives, etc.) [37]. Agency relates to the ability to bring about specific effects in SI processes. It can be understood as evolving interactively through the interplay of material and expressive elements of a whole. Consequently, an assemblage perspective illuminates at least two distinct effects of valuation that can be associated with impact. The first concerns the emergence of the SI process itself and the notion that any SI assemblage can essentially be considered an impact of valuation. Hence, it allows us to regard impact not as external but entangled with the SI process itself. Secondly, this very SI assemblage carries varying degrees of agency, allowing one to tackle the problem(s) at stake. As such, it can be assumed that an assemblage perspective is suitable for capturing qualitative changes and elusive impacts rather than for measuring 'hard' and quantifiable ones. Its focus on how the SI process facilitates a shift from a static impact evaluation to a relatively dynamic impact valuation perspective. Valuation not being confined to the appraisal of an SI alone but rather the emergence of SI processes equally being embedded in valuations [12,13],¿ implies an iterative and processual interplay of dissonances, valuation, and dis/assembly shaping the at times meandering trajectories commonly observable in SI processes. This observation underscores our argument that valuation and innovation processes are closely interwoven.

4. Researching Valuation

4.1. Triad of Dissonance as an Analytical Entry Point

Following the above argumentation, the consequential question is how to empirically investigate SI valuation. The analytical choice of a processual perspective sensitises us to the oftentimes collective, complex, and non-linear nature of SI processes. Still, a processual perspective can be adopted in at least two distinct ways. While typically structured in phases, innovation processes are also marked by specific, impactful events or situations that can significantly alter the direction of the process, sometimes irreversibly [29]. Such instances have been framed as 'impulses' [40], 'milestones' [41], or 'turning points' [34]. They may arise internally within an SI initiative, spurred by co-production or reflective learning (ibid), or can be triggered by external factors, such as funding opportunities for social entrepreneurs [40]. These moments illustrate how innovation processes might meander and shift course over time.

We find the concept of 'moments of valuation' helpful in approaching such instances coherently. Hutter and Stark [42] define moments of valuation as situations characterised by dissonances and uncertainties, where multiple orders of worth may clash. Using the

term 'situation' highlights their potentially conflictive character and points us to their clear temporal boundaries. Moments of valuation can span various temporal lengths—from days to years—but maintain distinct beginnings and endings. These moments mark the transitional, often unstable periods between two innovation phases with dominant valuation systems (ibid). For the case of SI, such instances have been described as 'critical turning points' [34] (p. 4) or "*moments in time, phases or episodes in which the challenges that SI initiatives experience become particularly evident*". According to Hutter and Stark [42], dissonant situations can be resolved in different ways: One way is acknowledging (so far unnoticed) values of the current practice, resulting in its further development and the re-making of the resonant order. Another way results in materialising a new arrangement and thus significantly altering the nature or course of a process. As a third potential 'solution', they describe situations where unresolved dissonances carry on. The first implies a recognition and further development of the order already at play, the second the recognition of a new order, and the third that neither a recognition of the established practice nor the recognition of a new practice materialises. This does not imply inaction whatsoever. Instead, we understand that dissonance generates discomfort that is alleviated in some way and is not typically tolerated [33]. For instance, actors can respond to dissonance by avoiding the situations in which it arises rather than actively resolving the dissonance, thus failing to take advantage of the potential opportunity it presents. Therefore, we operationalise these distinct modes of resolving or evading dissonant situations for the case of SI processes in the following triad:

- *Impulses*: Dissonances are mitigated or resolved by the recognition of the value of the current practice, strengthening and further developing it;
- *Turning points:* Dissonances are mitigated or resolved by the recognition of the need to change practice, implying a peripety and hence a shift in the SI trajectory;
- *Lock-ins:* Rather than being resolved, dissonances are evaded. Neither the current nor prospective practices are sufficiently appreciated, leading to the SI trajectory being temporarily impeded or stuck.

This distinction allows us to systematically observe dissonances as critical valuation instances. Nevertheless, particularly long-stretched dissonances might only be identifiable regarding their resolution in retrospect. At times, only then can it be conclusively said whether a moment must be regarded as a lock-in.

4.2. Methodological Considerations and Consequences

Against the backdrop of the above discussions, we argue that a valuation perspective may contribute to reconstructing the emergence of SI impact in ongoing processes. To support this claim, we built on existing empirical material stemming from one finalised and one ongoing research project that aim at reconstructing SI processes in rural regions. We will use these empirical materials as vignettes to test the applicability of the developed analytical categories, namely dissonance, valuation, and assembly, across the triad of dissonance (impulses, turning points, lock-ins). Applying different empirical vignettes seems beneficial because they illustrate the potential scope of application opportunities for a valuation perspective of SI impact. The term empirical vignette thereby refers to the more illustrative character of the examples, as vignettes make the abstract analytical grid more understandable and provide evidence for its applicability. This understanding refers to ethnography and pedagogy, where vignettes are perceived as narrative descriptions [43] and "*condensed exemplary descriptions of selected empirical situations*" [44] (p. 35) in order "*to grasp analytical conclusions*" [45] (p. 116). This comprehension is not to be confused with vignette analysis, where vignettes are ideal–typical situation descriptions that serve as stimuli for response measurement in quantitative and qualitative methods [46]. We understand the application of empirical vignettes explicitly as an impulse to further substantiate and develop a valuation perspective on SI impact, from both a theoretical and an empirical stance.

Against this backdrop, we applied the following procedure to our existing empirical material:

1. Contextualising the empirical vignettes: The data have been collected from two research projects, the ongoing SOIR-project ('Strong through Open Innovation Regions', funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research) and a master thesis research conducted in 2022 entitled 'Are Grassroot Community Spaces Transforming Rural Communities? A Transformative Social Innovation Perspective from Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Germany'. Both projects focus on socially innovative initiatives in the north of Germany. The projects share methodological foundations and data collection procedures, such as conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews with key actors in SI initiatives to reconstruct the respective SI processes. Furthermore, the projects have a common research focus on SI initiatives in structurally weak rural regions. The regions face similar challenges, such as a peripheral location, a low population density, and the scarcity of qualified workforces. The rural location sets the spatial context of this research and adds to the comparability of the empirical cases.

2. The interview corpus in the already finalised master thesis project consists of 11 verbatim transcribed interviews and the corpus of the ongoing SOIR-project of 15 interviews. These interviews are supplemented by two focus group interviews conducted in the frame of the SOIR-project with founders of rural associations that introduced innovative solutions for societal challenges. In both projects, the case selection was based on the criteria for social innovation, namely 'community-driven initiative', 'addressing a societal challenge', and 'introduction of novel solutions'. The sampling strategy was initially to select and interview key actors in the SI processes. Additional interviews were conducted with further stakeholders of the respective SI initiatives, such as potential beneficiaries, partners, and representatives of local authorities. The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and further processed with the analysis software MAXQDA (version 2020.4.2). We applied qualitative content analyses [47] to analyse the interview transcripts, followed by an in-depth interpretive analysis of interview sections [48] that provides insights into dissonant situations and valuation practices.

3. In total, nine SI initiatives have been reconstructed that can be assigned to three different rural sectors: community-based agriculture (AGRI), community-based cultural initiatives (CUL), and community-based service provision (INFRA) (see Table 2). By revisiting the empirical material with the conceptually derived triad of dissonances (impulses, turning points, and lock-ins), we identified 30 moments of valuation.

It should be emphasised that the empirical data were not used to inductively deduce the analytical conception. Instead, the conception was theoretically developed, while the empirical vignettes illustrate and calibrate its applicability. This said, the analytical grid should be treated as a potential approach for analysing valuation processes. It is explicitly open to adjustments and additions in future research, depending on the applicability of the respective empirical data. For example, future research may find that the triad of dissonance requires further refinement or that additional types of dissonance should complement the triad.

Table 2. Overview of empirically identified dissonances across nine cases.

Initiative Code	Innovation Object	Impulses	Turning Points	Lock-Ins
CUL-1	Developing and testing an operator model for the preservation of a listed building.	2	2	2
CUL-2	Creation of a village cultural centre and refugee-related work.	1	3	1
CUL-3	Implementing communication tools for inter-municipal networking across district and state borders.	1	-	-
CUL-4	Developing and testing an operator model for the preservation of a listed castle.	1	1	1
CUL-5	Creation of a village cultural association and integration of newcomers.	-	1	-
AGRI-1	Creation of a community gardening project focusing on clay works and cultural events.	2	2	1
AGRI-2	Community-supported agriculture (CSA) project.	-	1	-
INFRA-1	Offering counselling and publicity for parents of stillborn children.	3	2	2
INFRA-2	Creation of a kindergarten focusing on education for sustainable development (ESD).	1	-	-

5. Impulses, Turning Points, and Lock-Ins: Tracing Valuations in Rural Social Innovation Processes

In this section, we aim to test how the analytical categories of dissonance, valuation, and assemblage can be applied to each of the three deduced kinds of moments of valuation. We aim to utilise these results to further demonstrate how the valuation processes contribute to reconstructing the impact of SI processes.

5.1. Impulses

Dissonance. The dissonances we empirically observe to elicit impulses unfold in the tension of a new social practice evolving yet needing further appreciation. An initiative might already have kicked off a potentially socially innovative project. However, this can only develop from potentially desirable to being an innovative practice by diffusing via repeated recognitions of its value. Situations where incongruent understandings of the worth of a new practice become apparent, thus creating dissonance and finally (at least partially) resolving through collective valuations. The dissonant part of these situations is characterised by uncertainties regarding whether or not the new practice will eventually be embraced. INFRA-1, for instance, seeks to create awareness for the parents of stillborn children and initially found itself with the idea in front of closed doors. CUL-1 aims to breathe new life into a listed cultural building that, at first, lacks recognition as a heritage of national significance. While INFRA-1 and CUL-1's operationality were confined before the valuations suggested here, CUL-3 and its idea of inter-municipal networking of civil society across district and state boundaries navigated instead on the level of being an unimplemented idea before the consequent valuation.

Valuation. In cases where we observe impulses, we do not necessarily witness a complete resolution of the experienced dissonance. Instead, these valuations often contribute incrementally to legitimising new practices. Such legitimisations are not self-evident, as the notion of lock-ins describes later. In rural SI contexts, we find impulses that alleviate dissonances in various forms: external fundraising (AGRI-1, CUL-1, CUL-3, CUL-4, INFRA-1, INFRA-2), formal recognitions or certifications (INFRA-2, CUL-1, AGRI-1), or impactful networking events that affirm the value of an initiative's innovative approaches within a desired community (INFRA-1, AGRI-1). Likewise, instances resulting from internal learning processes or developments of the initiative are observed, such as the launch of new facilities or practices that the initiatives have developed over time. (CUL-2, AGRI-1, INFRA-1).

Our vignettes exemplify that dissonances do not merely revert to the existing 'old' resonant order, as Hutter and Stark suggest [40]. Rather, the valuations observed recognise

and validate the trajectory of a process without implying significant, qualitative changes. Take the example of CUL-3: this initiative was aimed to enhance inter-municipal networking by developing a community-based, local newspaper that would transcend district and state boundaries, typically seen as barriers between neighbouring villages. A newly established association initially spearheaded this idea, and their early efforts and the concept itself gained external validation, notably through the receipt of federal funding. This form of valuation thus enabled the implementation of an existing idea. This recognition was further solidified by a visit from the respective federal minister to the village, which is not least associated with the relative newness of the project for the region, as one of the initiators describes:

> "[...] being in the countryside also has advantages; there's just nothing much here. And there are funding programs that look at the regional distribution and then say, 'Do we already have something in the region? No, they are the first. Great.' You can also make a name for yourself because you're out on a limb. We once had a project in the village [...], and the Federal Minister for Family Affairs visited us in person. [...] Then you can stand out a bit again." (CUL-3-1)

The notion of 'standing out' points to ideas of relative newness and simultaneously underscores the relevance of this valuation, offering the association increased visibility. The actors developing SI processes are intrinsically interested in attracting this kind of valuation to normalise and institutionalise the proposed new practice. To do so, we find initiatives to trigger such valuations strategically. For instance, they leverage broader societal discourses to validate and amplify their activities' impacts. Consider INFRA-2 as an example, a kindergarten that focuses on education for sustainable development (ESD). The State Ministry of Social Affairs has recognised it as a model day-care due to its particular sustainability focus, hence valuating the adopted discourse and generating an impact that exceeds the SI initiative. In other cases, initiatives construct specific discourses or find themselves at the forefront of putting innovative practices into memorable language. When there is no existing, widely recognised discourse to adopt, creative narrative construction becomes a strategy for situationally appropriate communication. For instance, during the early 1990s post-socialist transition in East Germany and the associated tense socio-economic situation in much of its peripheral countryside, AGRI-1 strategically intertwined narratives of ecological conservation with the goal of maintaining rural living conditions. This allowed them to maintain a foothold in the eco-movement while positioning themselves as a regional employer retaining jobs in the area:

> "We engaged in a job creation scheme, and there was money for it, and we used it wisely. [...] We always said that we wouldn't be tending the forest, but if we did, we would do something for the region, for nature, for people, and that was the plan. And that's why it's stayed that way to this day." (AGRI-1-1)

Assemblage. The valuations found in impulses reinforce the trajectory an SI process is navigating. It is the progressing nature of trajectories, however, that hints at certain changes in terms of assemblage, and agency in particular, resulting from such instances. The above-described impulses indicate alterations in terms of SI assemblage. They entangle new funding, contacts, knowledge, and valuations with the pre-existing assemblage, pointing us to how the impact is procedurally and iteratively constructed. Take the example of INFRA-2 being officially recognised as a model kindergarten. This did not only allow the initiative to carry the label 'model kindergarten'; it simultaneously granted access to funds and training, fostering engagement and activities regarding education for sustainable education.

While specific narratives are being used to attract valuations, changes in expressive elements can also be observed from an assemblage point of view as a result of valuations. It is in the course of funding applications, for instance, that initiatives are found to sharpen their employed narratives and, at times, translate their endeavours to a certain ductus or language deemed more effective when it comes to persisting in the funding landscape (often referred to as 'funding prose' in the field).

5.2. Turning Points

Dissonance. Another outcome dissonances can provoke is the realisation that there is a need to modify an existing practice, thereby initiating or redirecting an SI process. We often find that prolonged dissonances lay the groundwork for the need to change prevailing practices, as evidenced in various empirical cases (CUL-1, CUL-2, CUL-4, CUL-5, INFRA-1, AGRI-1, AGRI-2). However, equally broad societal disruptions such as the post-socialist transition in East Germany, the peaked influx of refugees to Central and Western Europe in 2015, or the recent COVID-19 pandemic can be observed as eliciting turning points (AGRI-1, CUL-2, CUL-5). These dissonances can arise at different stages of the SI process and span between solutions at hand and the evolving demands of a group of people, making current practices obsolete. In the case of CUL-1, a rural community encountered the challenge of a historically significant building being returned to municipal ownership from the federal government, yet without the necessary maintenance resources. The dissonance manifested as the building fell into further disrepair, placing the municipality at risk of legal issues due to neglected heritage conservation regulations. This led to the formation of an association raising funds and operating the building, as described by a local official:

> "All I can say now is that the municipality will not be able to do this [renovation and operation of the building] financially. Even the funding that the municipality could acquire must always include some form of own funds. I know the municipality's financial budget. That won't work. So, they don't apply for even the smallest amount of funding. So, this kind of thing is always associated with personal initiative." (CUL-1-2)

However, dissonances resulting in turning points also emerge throughout the SI process and build the foundation for peripeties during SI processes. In the case of INFRA-1, for instance, the evolution from a self-help group to a successively professionalising association can be associated with the dissonances encountered once the set-up as a loose, private initiative failed to provide the environment needed for counselling, as one of the initiators illustrates:

> "It's actually important that we can keep our own rooms because the first time, I had the women sitting at my house. But they were still sitting on my couch for a long time, close to me, when they were actually all already at home. And you need that demarcation. You need your own rooms." (INFRA-1-3)

Valuation. As inferred in the conceptual debate above, a valuation indicating a turning point entails recognises and accepts the need to change practices. A very first step in identifying the need for change is not uncommonly to 'call a spade a spade', meaning the need to recognise and formulate the experienced dissonance, as this builds the foundation for engaging in conversation and looking for innovative solutions. For the case of CUL-4, one of the initiators of the initiative trying to preserve a rural castle describes how the community members realised the problem at stake and subsequently summarises how the initiative then started with a guiding question:

> "Then we said, 'What can we contribute as an association?' And then we found: 'Actually, just publicise this castle through events, cultural events, tours'. We invited the other castle associations in Germany, and they were there with three buses. That means, again and again, developing the scene." (CUL-4-1)

This sort of latency phase appears to commonly lie before a change in practice is initiated, regardless of whether a rather persistent or abrupt dissonance occurred. An obvious question in this context is why a SI process moves from latency to realisation in a specific moment. What appears crucial here is the communicative act of transforming the problem from being perceived as an individual to a collective problem. But what precisely triggers the recognition of a problem and, ultimately, the emergence of a new practice? In the case of CUL-1, the almost forgotten village monument, which the municipality could not maintain, was eventually about to be sold to a private investor, spurring community members' will to

find a way of operating it communally by eventually forming an association. In other cases, valuating a shift in practice is crucially about the right actors coming together and, thus, performing successful bricolage. In the AGRI-1 and CUL-1 groups, which were formed as citizen initiatives to protest something, eventually moved on to initiate their own projects:

> "So we were barely here when we realised that wind turbines would surround our house, so we worked for years with the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union [against them]; these are protected areas. And so, when we were finished [. . .] the mayor at the time told me that the building was up for sale, then I joined our wind turbine group, which is a group of friends, and said it was now or never." (CUL-1-3)

Equally, consulting services or funding opportunities can trigger new valuations and the recognition of a need for change. For instance, AGRI-1 initially focused on rewilding a former Soviet military base. However, when this project concluded, the initiative lacked the means to continue addressing regional needs for nature conservation and employment. As a result, after discussions with external consultants, the initiative shifted its focus to a specific site, launching a community gardening project instead. Shifts in practices not only require consensus but also need continued validation. While narratives in the context of impulses are chosen for validation, turning points typically involve experimentation with new narratives, adapted from different contexts and locally translated to legitimise the proposed change. For example, CUL-2 reinterprets global sustainability issues into local cost-saving practices, whereas CUL-4 aims to highlight the touristic value of the preserved castle to attract recognition from district and state officials. However, adopting a new narrative does not guarantee acceptance; it may clash with co-existing values and lead to conflicts. In the case of AGRI-1, the transition towards establishing a community garden and focusing on landscape conservation emphasised their commitment to sustainability and connections within eco-alternative networks. This shift, however, resulted in a growing estrangement from local politics:

> "[The mayor] got the municipality out of debt, I think that's good. He introduced good ideas [. . .]. With people from the initiative [. . .], the structure is somehow completely different, so it often got on his nerves how people work on things here. He expected a different style; it's a bit more relaxed here and more alternative. And then, at some point, he left and no longer took part in the association. [. . .] He also once said that as long as he is mayor, not a single tree will be planted because trees only cost work and money. That's not at all what we want here." (AGRI-1-2)

The mayor's reaction is an example of the unintended consequence a turning point can cause. While SI impact is mainly seen as a desired effect of an SI intervention, it can also lead to obverse results, like the mayor's boycott of forestation and green transition.

Assemblage. We have seen that sudden or continuous dissonances are resolved or mitigated by turning points and how valuations are strategically employed to accompany these shifts. Turning points, indicating a shift in trajectory, imply a particular dis/assembly, leaving behind an altered SI arrangement. They are thus emblematic of the iterative and processual negotiation of value and the construction of impact that this paper is centred on. Regarding the introduction of new physical, procedural, or organisational elements, a typical instance is converting an initiative into a legal entity, say, an association. This includes the introduction of certain regulations (general assemblies, financial reporting, etc.), but commonly also an opening of the initiative, and thus the SI process, to a broader audience. The former qualifies initiatives to access public and private funding and is a common reason for actors to institutionalise in this sense. The opening of the initiative to external players appears to be not least a necessary strategy to access resources needed for the intended SI activities:

> "To pool the volunteering on your doorstep, so in our case, we now have this village association, and we also want to make sure that we do something for

our village in the end, of course, so that in the best case, everyone benefits. Because simply, if you're more, you simply achieve more than if you're a lone fighter." (CUL-5-1)

Dis/assembly happens throughout an SI process in instances of change. As mentioned, external disruptions can be observed in this context. Take the example of the arrival of increased numbers of refugees in rural communities in Northern Germany in 2015 and the reaction of CUL-2 to this illustratively. The initiative integrated a support circle and child care for refugees, opening a room for temporary activities near a central refugee accommodation centre. Simultaneously, the change we observe in turning points brings about the disintegration of elements from the SI assemblage. Turns in an SI's trajectory go hand in hand with the discontinuation of specific narratives and, thus, expressive elements employed before. However, this also applies to physical or organisational elements. INFRA-1, when changing from being a self-help group to forming an association, made itself publicly visible and started acquiring external funding. At the same time, they moved their counselling activities away from a private home to a rented location in the nearest town. The formalisation thus resulted in the discontinuation of a relatively private self-help set-up (INFRA-1-3).

In terms of agency, the described changes allow one to address a challenging situation more effectively than before. This illustrates well how the impact of SI processes is often necessarily meandering in directionality, resulting from continuous re-adjustments. Both cases of initiatives trying to preserve listed buildings are good examples of this (CUL-1, CUL-4). The previous dissonance was constituted by the inability of the local municipalities to preserve the buildings, as described previously. The newly formed associations, however, did not only bring in resources to think about future use cases but also qualified for funding opportunities (CUL-1-2).

5.3. Lock-Ins

Dissonance. A third possibility involves dissonances that are avoided rather than resolved. This occurs when neither current nor future practices are sufficiently valued, leading to an SI becoming temporarily hindered or stalled. These situations, referred to as (temporary) lock-ins, should not only be viewed from an agency-focused perspective as a failure to resolve dissonances but also be considered for the inherent nature of these seemingly intractable dissonances. Lock-ins exhibit dissonances of varying degrees. We encounter 'soft' ones, where ideas about the value or priority given to an SI process are simply incongruent. Such conditions, persisting over time, may lead to temporary challenges or even lock-ins, challenging the socially innovative character of a process. In the case of CUL-4, one of the initiators of the association seeking to preserve a historic castle while finding ways of operating it in an economically sustainable manner illustrates the diverging priorities given to castles alike by associations maintaining them and regional tourism politics:

> "Can't we do something together for the region, raise awareness, get involved in regional marketing right away? I mean, basically, nobody in Bavaria cares if I say I'm fighting for [castle XY]; they say, "Where is that?". If I say we are [listing of similar monuments in the vicinity] all together, we make a package so that people might stay two, three, four, five days or longer. We are not just an association with a specific objective. It is simply a bit of structure that we bring in and also potential economic success." (CUL-4-2)

Here, the initiatives feel unacknowledged by regional authorities regarding their potential regional benefits. This lack of recognition affects potential future activities but does not fundamentally alter the core of the initiative's activities. However, when the dissonance is more pronounced, situations differ considerably. Take the example of CUL-1, which aimed to revitalise and preserve a heritage building. In this case, disputes arose over project ownership, sparking fears among some association members of losing control

or being co-opted. The conflict did not stem from differing priorities but from conflicting views on the role and extent of civil society's institutionalisation in regional development. These opposing epistemic assemblages were unsheathed in the course of potential funding from an extra-regional player wanting regional authorities and the initiative to find ways of engaging with each other more tightly. This collision of antagonistic conceptions of value also links to instances where key players in a given rural sector impede or disable a process opposing their respective orders of worth.

Valuation. In contrast to turning points, the main actors carrying the SI process are not capable (or willing) of resolving or mitigating a dissonance by actively co-constructing its continued worthiness in this case. Empirically speaking, this is reflected in situations where initiatives unsuccessfully seek greater institutionalisation in terms of institutional funding or recognition in district or state governance (CUL-1, CUL-2, CUL-4) or find their activities at odds with regional public and private funding landscapes and foci (INFRA-1), as well as in cases where initiatives realise a persisting dissonance between the articulated need for change and the initiative's own inability to fully deliver on the related expectations (CUL-1, AGRI-1). In either case, the dissonance is not mitigated but remains unresolved.

Thus, an SI process does not gain the legitimacy needed to present itself as a valuable solution to existing demands. Even if not halted entirely, SI's trajectory can be impeded if key validation is not given to the process. While the example of CUL-4 has already been mentioned, we observe similar cases where SI initiatives seek to prove the relevance of their cause and highlight the potential in terms of public value creation if only the SI would experience some higher degree of institutionalisation (in terms of institutional funding, for example). The SI is not actively invalidated in these cases but faces ignorance or indifference. In other cases, however, we can observe external invalidation of SI as a consequence of persisting dissonance as well. In the example of CUL-1, this led to an unsuccessful attempt to obtain more stable institutional funding. However, the quarrels surrounding the contestation implied a discontinuation of parts of the public support that the initiative received before it. One municipal representative illustrates the consequences of this invalidation as follows:

> "But the district is out of it now. Since there was this quarrel about [failed joined project], the district withdrew completely [from the project]. So there were really some decisions where I say that was yet another setback. The money is not coming, and the district is pulling out of all the support." (CUL-1-3)

By definition, SI needs to be at odds with the respective socio-technical regime one seeks to challenge or alter. The paradox situation here is that the initiative behind an SI needs to still associate its narrative with existing values and beliefs. This can, lead to frictions in terms of co-optation but equally in cases where initiatives do not manage to create such associations sufficiently. In governance research, lock-ins denote the inability to adapt and respond to grand challenges in light of transformative change [49]. This can be understood as a dissonance with a dynamically evolving environment. When discussing SI processes at a micro level, we understand a lock-in as a situation where dissonances occur but are avoided rather than being resolved. This means that more often than not, congruent or even opposing orders of worth are at play and finally block the further development of the process—at least temporarily.

Assemblage. In impulses and turning points, the assemblage of an SI is strengthened or changed in response to newly emerging dissonances. But what happens to the SI from an assemblage point of view if a process is impeded or gets stuck? As argued, it does not necessarily imply a complete standstill but can also lead to a continued impediment or a temporary hold. In the mentioned case of CUL-4, the SI with the current orientation cannot fully address the dissonance at its foundation. Thus, we do not observe a disassembly but rather a halted, impeded assembly. Yet, in other cases, disassembly can occur, as the example of CUL-1 and the quarrel with district authorities illustrates (see quote CUL-1-3). In that case, the assembly of a joint project between the district, association, and other actors was not halted. In addition, the relationship between the association and the district

deteriorated to a level where even previous levels of engagement were no longer possible. Both halted assembly and active disassembly affect an SI's agency and impact. Whereas in the former case, the SI does not manage to develop its potentials, in the latter, it loses them. Fundamentally, the construction of impact is hindered in these situations.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

This paper started by observing ambiguities related to SI impact assessments, trying to unveil how (seemingly) objective impacts emerge as a causal consequence of specific interventions. While such a stance meets the practical needs of SI actors and policymakers, it does less so for researchers interested in understanding the social processes and dynamics contributing to the emergence of impacts in SI processes. Instead of seeking to unveil some 'essence' or 'true impact', we investigated how SI processes are valuated and how these valuations simultaneously shape (impact) such processes by asking how we can systematically think of the construction of value in SI processes. The notion of *dissonance* is central in this respect, as the navigation from one phase to the next in an SI process is frequently marked by a questioning of collective valuations triggered by dissonances.

Valuation, thus, touches upon the core of the term 'innovation', as it opens up a meaningful perspective on how exactly something unfolds from being new to being recognised as beneficial to finally being diffused and institutionalised. Understanding the trajectories of SI processes illuminates changes in their socio-material *assemblage*, thereby highlighting how SI impacts are constructed throughout SI processes. Therefore, the iterative and communicative interplay between valuation and dis/assembly opens a perspective for understanding how and why SI trajectories often deviate from linear paths.

Based on our conceptual debate, we suggest differentiating *impulses*, *turning points*, and *lock-ins* as dissonant moments that either recognise and further develop the currently pursued practice, change a social practice, or lead to the inability to capitalise on a dissonance (often implying its evasion), respectively. Drawing on the presented empirical vignettes, we identified and further qualified these situations by characterising dissonances, exploring how precisely they are resolved (or evaded) by valuations, and describing the interplay of valuation and dis/assembly in SI processes (see Table 3). Combined, the analytical dimensions of dissonance, valuation, and assemblage and the triad of impulses, turning points, and lock-ins offer guardrails for the empirical investigation of SI impacts from a valuation perspective. This perspective allows for the identification of key moments across entire SI processes shaped by experienced dissonances, collective valuations, and value contestations. In these moments, dissonances are resolved or mitigated by further assembling the SI process itself. Furthermore, a valuation perspective of SI processes allows us to regard dissonances as constructive opportunities and potential threats embedded in SI trajectories.

Table 3. Synopsis of impulses, turning points, and lock-ins in rural SI processes.

	Impulses	Turning Points	Lock-Ins
Dissonance	New practices irritate established ones and are situated in competition with them.	Lengthy or disruptive moments of contestation point to the unsuitability of current practices or cognitive elements.	Conflicts and competing interests range in intensity from the disinterest of critical actors to full-grown axiological conflicts. Rather than being capitalised on, the dissonance is evaded; the value of SI is not sufficiently recognised or even actively contested.
Valuation	Recognition of an SI's value via positive feedback and validation (e.g., funding, official recognition).	Recognition of the need to change practices, values, or beliefs, spurred by an external trigger or successful bricolage.	
Assemblage	Further strengthening of the existing SI assemblage; assembly includes new socio-material elements, increased agency, minor course corrections, and the adoption of new procedures.	Altered socio-material assemblage; some elements are integrated, while others disintegrate; new assemblage allows one to respond to changing demands.	Elements in the assemblage disintegrate; the assemblage loses agency; the SI process scrambles or stagnates.

Overall, our valuation approach gives leeway to a constructivist understanding of SI impacts that may supplement existing approaches to investigate and understand SI impacts. Thus, it offers analytical access to elusive, hardly graspable impacts such as altering beliefs and thoughts, as the theme of collectively resolving dissonances is closely related to learning and joint sense-making, eventually impacting individual habits, routines, and practices, too. Moreover, it considers that the effects of SI are not objective results per se but attributed to meaning created in social negotiation processes. The approach enables the investigation of *how* SI processes are altered by valuation practices rather than only providing answers to what has been achieved.

Furthermore, a valuation perspective can potentially stimulate rural regional innovation debates. Not solely thinking of value as a mere epiphenomenon of SI but also viewing valuations as a foundation for SI dis/assembly allows us to see them as crucial resources in rural SI processes. While the concept of bricolage has become widespread to understand the pragmatic use of resources, particularly by rural actors, to assemble an SI process in light of considerable resource constraints [35], a valuation viewpoint prompts us to consider the bricolage of valuation. Specifically, how do SI initiatives strategically attract value, and what are the time-spatial dynamics at play? Understanding these questions better can provide additional insights into how dissonances can be used as opportunities for innovation and how pragmatic or epistemic conflicts can hinder SI activities. This allows us to account for an understanding of perceived innovation value and its potential political character. Hence, the proposed perspective sensitises policymakers to both the intangible social benefits of rural SI and the potential conflicts and diverging valuations that need to be navigated.

Our approach also comes with limitations, both in methodical and conceptual terms. Our vignette approach allowed us to test our initial conceptualisation on an existing empirical basis. It enabled us to qualify the theoretically deduced triad of dissonance as a conceptual contribution. However, the reliance on cross-sectional data rather than comprehensive case studies comes at the expense of a certain degree of de-contextualisation. Instead of a coherent, in-depth research design, we presented empirical vignettes from various cases. Instead of going into depth, we use the range of empirical material available to us to illuminate the potential of a valuation perspective, emphasising the need for empirical research designs that allow for a longitudinal study of valuation throughout selected SI processes. A processual perspective that relates instances of dissonance and their implications, in line with perspectives such as 'innovation biographies' [41], can provide a lens sensitive to the temporal-spatial dynamics of value construction in SI processes. Specifically, it might offer additional insights into the communicative valuation practices

(the use of narratives, arguments, and semiotics) and how these evolve throughout the SI process, thereby also responding to calls for a trans-situational study of valuations [50].

Valuation as a communicative practice remains difficult to grasp because it is deeply rooted in actors' belief systems, cultural norms, differing roles in various social contexts, and strategic actions. We therefore propose employing research approaches that make use of multiple methods of social science. Narrative interviews [51], for instance, can provide unvarnished access to past valuations. Moreover, multi-perspective approaches can illuminate the perspectives of actors involved in a dissonant event and their different takes on it. Further document and media analyses covering the SI process, participatory observations, and repeated semi-structured interviews contribute to the multi-faceted valuation practices in dissonant moments and processes.

So far, our suggested perspective does not explicitly address power relations and practices of legitimation of particular activities embedded in SI processes. Precisely because we used empirical vignettes to demonstrate the potential of a valuation perspective of social innovation processes, we would have overstretched the analysis of our existing empirical material. However, from what we presented in this paper, we understand our contribution as a starting point that needs to be further substantiated by including questions regarding power (im)balances and potentially diverging interests in valuation processes. This might also consider how valuation processes in themselves may become performative and thereby directly or indirectly influence the decisions, perspectives, or opinions of participants involved in or actively withdrawing from or excluded from collaborative valuation processes. This also requires a better understanding of beliefs, motivations, choices, and individual searches for benefits that participants in SI processes may bring to the fore or, contrarily, might lead individuals to actively contest such processes or withdraw from them. Further exploration of this line of thinking might also better address the nexus of valuation and justice [52].

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