



# Enhancing social innovation in marginalised rural areas – a challenge of the SIMRA project

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# Introduction to SIMRA

**The Social Innovation (SI) in Marginalised Rural Areas (SIMRA) project is supported with ca. €6m from the EU's Horizon 2020 Programme**

**Topic: ISIB-03-2015** - Unlocking the growth potential of rural areas through enhanced governance and SI; duration: April 2016-2020

**Overarching aim: understand & enhance SI** in marginalised rural areas (MRA) by advancing state-of-the-art in SI and connected governance mechanisms in agriculture, forestry & rural development (RD), with a special focus on the Mediterranean region.



The **consortium** comprises **26 partners** from **15 countries** from across the EU and the wider Mediterranean area, and associated international networks.

It consists of **10 public bodies** (8 universities & 2 research institutes), **8 not for profit organizations**, **5 SMEs, NGOs & networks**, and **3 international organisations** [http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/200385\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/200385_en.html).

Representatives from other countries, including of North Africa & East Europe, will be involved as **supporters** coming from the South and South-Eastern European Mountain Network, the Carpathian Network S4C, IUFRO, FLEG II, Earth System Governance, Ecosystem Services Community Scotland, et al.

We **examine what characterises SI** in areas as varied as north-west Europe & Scandinavia, the Mediterranean and North Africa region, Alpine, Central & Eastern Europe, Guadalupe (France), etc.

We **work with those initiating or benefiting from SI** to learn about end-users motivations and experiences of support SI or barriers encountered.

# The coordinator



James Hutton  
(1726 – 1797)  
Founder of  
modern geology

- The James Hutton Institute - international research centre based in Scotland
- A main research provider to the Scottish Government



Strategy to tackle global challenges and address UN Sustainable Development (SD) Goals 2030 Agenda

- Social and natural sciences
- Transdisciplinary research addressing challenges of food, land and people
- Putting research into practice with policy, business and communities
- Reconnecting people to the land & environment



# Works underway in SI

- Social entrepreneurship & social enterprise
- Innovation processes
- Institutional entrepreneurship
- Social technical transitions & multi-scale interactions
- Resilience & social-ecological transformation
- Social economy, and others associated with a number of centres.

Source: Frances Westley, 2016



- **Innovation (IN)** reflects the capacity to create & implement new ideas which are to deliver value (BEPA, 2011).
- It **comprises** new outcomes, i.e. ideas, products, services, models, and new processes & changes that should, ideally, meet individual & societal needs.
- **SI includes new INST** environments & arrangements, actors' relationships & interactions (e.g. new attitudes, collaborations, values, behaviours, skills, practices & learning processes) and new fields of activity (e.g. social entrepreneurship & social enterprises).
- SI begins with ideas, develops into prototypes & pilots, can become more stable, potentially up-scale and may eventually create systemic change.



Aiming at improving the **quality of life & well-being,**

- **SI creates new responses** to pressing social demands
- **It responds to social demands that are traditionally not addressed** by existing institutions.
- **SI manifests itself in new social relationships & collaborations,** while
- **Governance mechanisms** based on new social networks can advance social capital & create new **SI**



**SI** and connected **new governance mechanisms** can be macro or micro, structural or local, vertical or horizontal, introduced by entrepreneurs or solidarity, by INST changes or/and policy reforms (Nussbaumer & Moulaert, 2007).

However, whatever is their nature, context or scale, they **strengthen actors' ability to respond to societal challenges**, such as poverty, food security, climate change etc. (Lehtonen, 2004).

**SI** and **enhanced governance** are considered crucial for transition towards SD and for **enhancing smart and inclusive growth**.



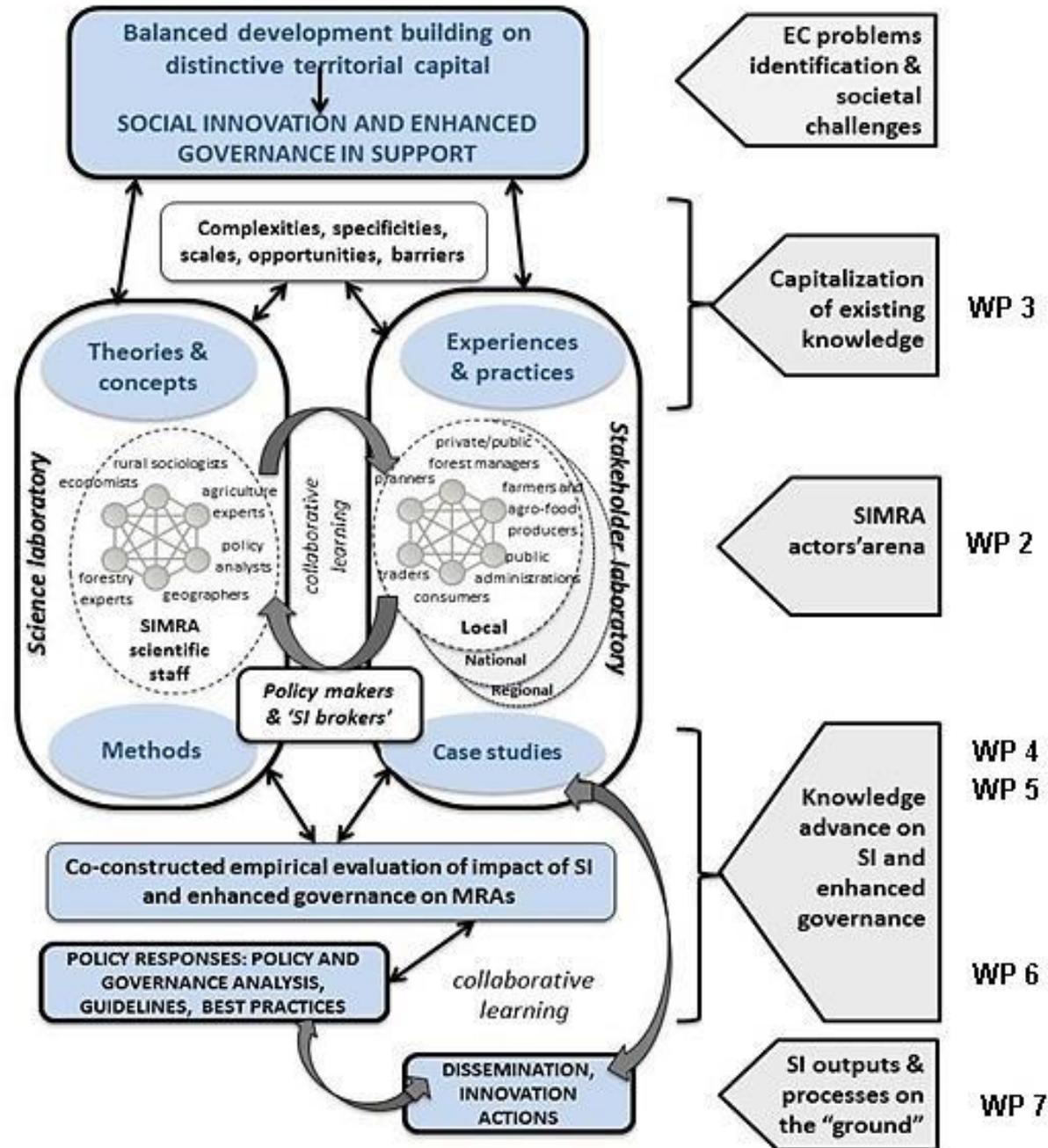
- There are numerous **definitions** of SI...
- **SIMRA:** SI is the reconfiguring of social practices in response to challenges associated with society, economy or environment based on novel ideas & values. These new practices, which necessarily include the voluntary engagement of civil society actors, comprise the creation of new INST, networks & governance arrangements & seek to enhance societal outcomes.



SIMRA blends diverse theoretical positions into an explanation of spatial variability of SI, encompassing its diversity, co-constructing a novel evaluative toolkit, and developing improved knowledge of **how to support enhanced governance and SI, addressing specificities and priorities of social needs and new social relationships and collaborations.**

## Specific Objectives

- i) **Develop systematic theoretical & operational framework** for categorising, understanding, operationalising SI in settings and across scales
- ii) **Categorise/classify** the SI observable considering the varying specificities in terms of social needs, priorities, social relationships & collaboration types
- iii) **Develop an integrated set of methods** for the evaluation of SI and its impacts in rural areas across the target region
- iv) **Carry out a co-constructed evaluation** of success factors for SI across selected case studies, covering variation and heterogeneity of regions
- v) **Synthesise and disseminate** to policy makers/end-users the **new/improved knowledge** of SI and novel governance mechanisms
- vi) **Create/launch collaborative learning, networking and innovative actions** by integrating, consulting and engaging stakeholders



## Some of our expectations from SIMRA include:

- Improved understanding of theoretical underpinning of SI.
- Co-constructing of knowledge of SI across Europe and beyond in the view of boosting SI and linked governance mechanisms.
- Advancing understanding of main challenges facing communities, businesses and institutions in developing and implementing SIs.
- Building capacities for SI by bringing scientists, businesses, governments and civil society together to create sustainable solutions to the most pressing challenges.
- Developing new research relationships and collaborations.





- Website: [www.simra-h2020.eu](http://www.simra-h2020.eu)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SIMRAeu/](http://www.facebook.com/SIMRAeu/)
- Twitter: [https://twitter.com/simra\\_eu/status/753903906443370496](https://twitter.com/simra_eu/status/753903906443370496)  
@SIMRA\_eu, associated with the hashtag #SIMRA\_eu
- Scoop it!: [www.scoop.it/u/simra-1](http://www.scoop.it/u/simra-1)
- Research Gate: [www.researchgate.net/project/SIMRA-Social-Innovation-in-Marginalised-Rural-Areas](http://www.researchgate.net/project/SIMRA-Social-Innovation-in-Marginalised-Rural-Areas)
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8546624/8546624-6159676893563015168>