

Spiritual dynamics in social innovation

Empirical research into a 'via transformativa' for organizations

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1. Summary

If we study processes of social innovation in organizations from the perspective of Dorothee Soelle's liberation theology, various issues for mystagogic counseling emerge. Mystagogic counseling inspired by Soelle's liberation theology may help organizations to deepen the understanding of the processes of social innovation they are involved in. Soelle's liberation theology may also provide valuable input on how students can develop a critical, socially engaged view on issues in the field of 'business and society'.

2. Social innovation and spirituality

Social innovation distinguishes itself from product innovation and technological innovation for its focus on social and human relations and interaction in organizations. It goes without saying that to many, if not all, innovations there is a social dimension not to be neglected. The Center for Social Innovation of the Ede Christian University for Applied Sciences defines social innovation as 'creating new and richer relations and environments in the workplace' (Crielaard, 2008, p.3). That defines social innovation as a new way of looking at, thinking about and working on organizations that have explicit attention for meaning, worldviews, humanization, justice and sustainability.

Spirituality is often hailed as a critical success factor in social innovation. The number of recent publications and conferences on spirituality and management/organization is an indicator of the interest in spirituality. The spiritual visions and practices discussed in books and at conferences are appealing, personally oriented, utopian and diverse to say the least. A selection from the workshops of the conference 'Spirit at the workplace' ¹ illustrates this:

- Work and intuition
- Reading the energy of an organization
- Reflecting on and discussing a text by St. Benedict
- The core of spiritual leadership and the role of neurofeedback
- Working with signals from the unconscious
- More profits and happiness at work – beyond job satisfaction
- The Christian impulse: creating – passion – community - inspiration.

The titles of these workshops reflect an awareness that is being rediscovered and redeveloped in the past thirty years: a sensitivity for the transcendent. Contemporary thinkers like Gianni Vattimo, Luc Ferry and Harry Kunneman plea for an renewed and innovative re-appreciation of the transcendent: a feeling for meaning and values and for dreams of humanity compensating for a closed, rational worldview.

The business community also longs for this kind of sensitivity. Is social innovation the incarnation of this desire? In recent years organizational or business spirituality has been mentioned as a driving force behind a more responsible and humane business.

Barrett (Barrett, 1998) for example refers to this as 'liberating the corporate soul: a shift from "self-esteem consciousness" to "organizational consciousness"'. De Blot tries to identify a 'corporate personality' (Broekstra, p.86, 2006).

Broekstra (Broekstra, 2006) explicitly connects the organization's identity and the environment of an organization. Only a deep awareness of it's own 'Essence' (Broekstra,

¹ This conference was held on June 28th 2007 and was organized by Coachingnet, Gelling Congressing and Pentascope

p.30, 2006) can help an organization to be effective in an environment that is fundamentally unstable and uncertain.

3. The liberation theology of Dorothee Soelle

The liberation theology of German theologian Dorothee Soelle (1929 – 2003) has a number of features that make it interesting for research into social innovation and spirituality.

Soelle's liberation theology (SLT) aims at making the world (and organizations) more democratic, just and sustainable. Worldly issues and worldly relations are vital in liberation theology. By 'sanctifying the world' (Soelle, 1998, p.226) the traditional boundaries between the sacred and the profane disappear and within the profane the sacred is discovered: 'but particularly in engagement with and commitment to 'here' and 'now', where God comes to us in unforeseeable ways, we meet the God of mysticism, whose ways we do not know' (Soelle, 1998, p.233). Soelle suggests that we do not only encounter the divine in the sacred but particularly in daily reality. This is what she calls the democratization of mysticism: 'I mean to say that the mystical sensitivity, that resides in all of us, is being allowed to return, is being dug out of the rubble and wreck of triviality' (Soelle, 1998, p.16). Bouckaert has described this as a 'fundamental transformation of our commitment to people and things' (Bouckaert, 2004, p.194).

3.1 The spirituality of liberation theology

The spirituality of SLT is best understood as three interconnected processes or movements:

1. emergence of a critical, moral understanding of the world and of oneself
2. initial resistance and action on a public issue
3. developing a collective praxis of resistance, action and liberation.

What constitutes the spiritual nature of these three movements is Soelle's recognition that in each of them divine-human encounter and transformation can be experienced. In our growing understanding of the world, however saddening the new perspective may be, in taking a stance on issues that matter to us and in joining forces in fighting injustice we can experience transcending ourselves.

The spirituality of SLT is inseparable from the dissolving of the classical, theistic conception of God. To assert in the age of reason that the theistic *deus ex machina*, can be experienced directly can no longer be held, especially after Auschwitz. Soelle's response to this crisis is a radical Christology. Christ has shown us that however God manifests himself, he does so in this world in this life. In his attitude Jesus was recognized as an incarnation of what God stands for and as a manifestation the continuing process of divine self-realization in history (Oliver, 2003, p.124). His struggle against suffering and for justice is a manifestation of the liberation and unification 'formerly known as God' (Soelle, 1983, p.159), as Soelle provocingly states. Joining this struggle equals becoming a part of and an agent of this process of change. What we experience during our participation in this process is divine-human encounter and transformation. In the liberation experiences of hoping, loving, failure, resurrection, empowerment, forgiving, healing and struggle we transcend ourselves and become an active subject of a communion that is local and extra-temporal and that is both stronger and more vulnerable than we are as individuals.

Soelle characterizes SLT by posing it opposite to counter concepts. Critical, moral understanding of the world is best understood if we realize there is also an attitude and a theology of adaptation. Action and resistance become extraordinary if we realize that, according to Soelle, most people are subject to apathy and detachment. A collective liberation praxis only succeeds if it does not corrupt into a calculated strategy of power and effectiveness.

In the next sections I will discuss the three interconnected processes that make up SLT.

3.2 Developing a critical, moral understanding of the world and oneself

SLT is closely connected to the moral bankruptcy of Christianity and western culture in general (and specifically the German Evangelische Kirche) after World War II. In the 1930's all major German traditions and institutions proved to be incapable of recognizing the true nature of the Nazi-ideology or of stopping its march towards power and annihilation. Then after the Shoah

who dared speaking of a omnipotent, all-good God? Who could believe in a suspicious, collaborative church that wanted to return to business as usual as soon as possible after 1945? Was a privatized, unearthly, abstract faith in a metaphysical, demanding God all Christianity had to offer after Auschwitz? In the years after 1945 many critical events, for example the German re-armament, the Russian invasion of Czecho-Slovakia, the Vietnam War and poverty in the Third World, gave voice to the notion that a thorough rethinking of western society, including many Christian notions, was necessary.

Over the years from the early 1960's to the first decade of the 21st century Soelle develops a critique of western society that is built upon a basic scheme of centre – periphery. The 'centre' stands for the western, capitalist society; the world of 'haves', whereas the world of the 'have-nots', the third world and the outcasts of western society are represented by the 'periphery'. The periphery only exists to serve the needs of the centre. According to Soelle it is being exploited and oppressed. In fact, Soelle states, the West is waging an economical war against the periphery in which thousands die of starvation every day².

The centre manifests itself as a double faced beast. On the one hand it fulfils all of our material needs almost beyond imagination. On the other hand it deprives us of our most basic human needs. Inhabitants of the centre are reduced to consumer-producer role players with a relentless 'do ut des'-attitude. Soelle describes the centre in utterly negative terms: extremely violent, alienated, addicted and dependent. The spiritual atmosphere in the centre is one of repressed violence, relational and mental emptiness and at the same time a hard to ignore awareness of an onward doom and a yearning for change.

Against all odds resistance and liberation movements begin to manifest themselves in the periphery. The oppressed and the poor begin to stand up for themselves, raise their voices and bring forward their oppression and misery and initiate change. The agents of change can be poor farmers organizing themselves in a cooperative, union workers fighting for political freedom or ethnical groups trying to preserve their culture. They uncover injustice, they inculcate the centre and try to restore justice in their lives or society. And in doing so they report experiencing that in their struggle they overthrow their powerlessness and transcend themselves as if their struggle has made them part of a communion or dynamism that cannot be destroyed, however fragile, small, endangered or unsuccessful it may seem to be. Christian liberation theologians and base ecclesial communities articulate this experience by saying that Christ is part of and expression of their struggle and liberation.

The call from the periphery has hit and shocked many people in the centre. Listening to these voices opens their eyes to the structures of injustice their lives are built upon: political and economical power blocks, race and gender divides, ecological destruction, access to or blockage from technology and knowledge. They begin to realize that these deeply rooted structures that give wealth to the centre, also destroy the chances of prosperity and justice in the periphery. The call from the periphery tells them that besides personal, private wrongdoing there is another type of evil: structural causes of injustice that go above an individual's direct influence but from which one is nevertheless part of and profits from.

Listening to these voices makes some people in the centre realize, that from the perspective of the people in the periphery, the centre has lost its position as a point of moral and spiritual reference. The centre is no longer the place where the spirit of God is to be found. It has withdrawn itself from the centre and has begun to manifest itself in the periphery.

According to Soelle there are strong tendencies in Christianity that try to suppress the 'basic capitalistic experience' (Soelle, 1983, p.164) of powerlessness, unease and uncontrollability. For centuries Christianity has suggested that the *vita contemplativa* is better and higher than the *vita activa*. Since contemplation has been exchanged for rationalism, theology has become particularly fond of what is realistic and feasible. In an increasingly economic world this has driven back religion to the private realm where it has become politically harmless.

From a movement of innovation and social renewal Christianity has evolved into a conservative force that adapts people for being an 'animal laborans' or a 'homo faber' (Arendt, 1958); slaves well adapted to what Soelle calls the Egyptian life style.

Soelle introduces the counter concept 'theology of adaptation'. In this theology Christian key concepts such as sin, salvation and conversion have been privatized and are hardly relevant

² According to the World Food Programme of the United Nations every six seconds a child dies because of reasons related to hunger or malnutrition. That means 14.000 children per day. Read on June 11th 2008: http://www.wfp.org/Country_Brief/Hunger_Map/pdf/WFP_HMAP07_ENG_R.pdf

and applicable in the public realm, for instance in politics and business. By stressing vertical, individual justification granted by God ('absolution from above'), the theology of adaptation has neglected communal, horizontal purification. It has created a self-centred faith, civil detachment, political incompetency and a convenient preference for an abstract, distant and otherworldly deliverance.

The theology of adaptation of course is not an accurate historical representation. It is an ideal type that highlights what Soelle sees as the crisis in western theology and Christianity.

3.3 The spirituality of a critical, moral understanding of the world and oneself

A critical understanding of the world, our society and our lives gains a spiritual quality, that distinguishes it from mere intellectual understanding and knowing, if it makes us transcend ourselves. For Soelle this transcendence does not simply mean some form of enlightenment or superior wisdom. Rather it is characterized by sadness, shame or embarrassment. The transcendental aspect of the emergence of a moral understanding of the world is comprised of four elements.

Spiritual poverty: As inhabitants of the centre we start to realize that our lives in the centre are on a spiritually dead end. Though economically thriving we discover ourselves to be outside of life's vitality and basis. We find ourselves caught in a giant, economic machinery that creates death and destruction. Cut off from the spirit of God we experience our souls are arid.

Spirituality in the periphery: As inhabitants of the centre we discover that life, spirit, vitality, soul, transformation and meaning are much more to be found in the periphery than in the centre. Whether it is a cry from the poor or the marginalized in the west stepping forward, 'they affirm life in the midst of death' (Murray, p.53). In them we hear a silent cry from God or see a sudden blossoming of life.

Opening up to the real world: At the same time, facing suffering and injustice is like losing one's childhood and innocence. Discovering our responsibility in and for the world feels like being expelled from paradise and being plunged into the real world; a place of blood, sweat and tears (Soelle, 1995, p.102). This archetypal image of the human banishment from the good life extends our involvement in the world from an innocent, self-centred, childlike existence to a realistic, open relation to the world that tells us that much in life is characterized by struggle and injustice.

Existential nature of struggle: The struggle for a good life is existential and concrete. It is existential in the sense that it has been going on ever since the early days of men and seems to be intrinsically connected with human existence. Injustice is not understood as a regrettable incident that can easily be fixed. On the other hand hoping, longing and actively working on and fighting for a better world has proven to be equally connected to the human possibilities. At the same time the battle for justice is a very personal one that affects daily existence in very practical ways. Joining the resistance efforts is becoming a representative of this existential battle.

3.4 Initial resistance and action on public issues

Developing a critical, moral understanding of the world is, according to Soelle, realizing that one is in a state of powerless (near-) death and that the only way to overcome this life threatening force is to confront it. Power and vitality can only be regained by resurrection and resurgence from incapacity and numbness.

Resistance against structural injustice and oppression can take on many forms, ranging from a small 'no' with possible big consequences to wilfully pursuing new ideas and sharing arguments and analysis with the 'cheated and betrayed' (Soelle, 1998, p.285).

Soelle points out that many people who resist actually hesitate to do so as they feel underpowered or have no idea how to resist. On the other hand, now that they realize that the meaning and value of their lives are at stake, they are aware that refraining from resistance equals self-betrayal and a choice against life and self-realization. In that sense resistance is a life saving act.

Resistance starts with a creative, one-sided initiative. It is the courage to initiate the change ourselves. It is creative in the sense that we do not continue to reproduce regular patterns but do something unexpected and new we hope will last.

In this attempt we can discover our own power, knowledge and courage. If our act of resistance is a joint effort we may well experience that a community of fellow resisters carries

the resistance. As an individual resister we may sense being part of a larger whole that has more potential than we ever imagined.

The ones that resist often are small and powerless relative to the adversaries that represent the cause they resist. From that perspective the efforts of the resisters seem useless and futile. That is why resistance has the nature of struggle and of surrender. Exactly in surrendering to something or someone that is powerless, resides the spiritual core of resistance, according to Soelle. In surrendering to the powerless we experience that the cause we care for is dependent of our efforts. At the same time we experience that our life and our spiritual development are only possible through bonding with the vulnerable and the powerless. Experiencing this mutual dependence and growth equals experiencing the mutual dependence and union between God and man. In this relationship the weak and dependent represent God to us and at the same time we represent God to the weak and dependent. "This experience makes us more free, it lifts my boundaries and makes me grow to that which is different" (Soelle, 1998, p.409).

Through practical resistance we experience empowerment and liberation from our powerlessness. This experience has a touch of grace as we feared starting resistance and feel guilty for being part of the cause we now resist. Although the first resistance does not undo our involvement in injustice, nor the injustice itself, having done 'something' can be a gratifying experience as it releases us temporarily of our powerlessness and shows us a meaningful road ahead.

If we are sensitive, as Soelle suggests, to the representational character of the interdependence between ourselves and the weak cause we have begun to commit ourselves to, resistance can be considered a form of co-creation between God and ourselves. This awareness may lift our experience from an 'ordinary' protest to a manifestation of divine self-realization. That is not to say that our actions become instant-success miracles. It means to say that we experience that our actions are part of the 'living, active, breathing divine dynamic of love we experience in relation to one another' (Heyward, p.224).

There are several ways of dealing with our understanding of structural injustices and societal sin. One way has been described in this paragraph: resistance. Soelle however points at another possibility. Awareness of the deep moral and spiritual crisis in our society does not automatically lead us to make a course correction. If the awareness is limited to a merely intellectual understanding of the crisis and of comprehension of theoretical changeability, chances are this understanding will paralyse us instead of make us change our ways. The more we become aware of our entanglement in damaging structures, our collaboration in the suffering of others and of the tempting power of the centre, the more we they may incapacitate us. If we realize the seriousness of our situation, Soelle warns, for some the world becomes a frightening place from which we better hide in our fears.

Soelle characterizes the situation of many people in the centre as 'overeducated and underpowered'. Our knowledge is often aggravated powerlessness (Soelle, 1998, p.285).

This is understandable as a big 'No!' to society is hardly possible. We cannot participate in society and avoid all of its negative aspects at the same time, just as a total retreat is not possible and certainly not desirable. If we desperately try to be someone else we cannot be, despair, cynicism and disbelief will govern us. Hope and a new beginning then will become loose concepts. Soelle refers to 2 Corinthians 7:10: 'Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.' (TNIV). All knowledge that is not used for resistance turns to knowledge that is determined by death. Our (self imposed) powerlessness makes us helpless and sad: worldly sorrow. 'Ratio and analysis in themselves are too weak to release us from the prison we have fallen asleep in' (Soelle, 1998, p.275).

3.5 Developing a collective praxis of resistance, action and liberation

Two traits of resistance may help develop initial resistance grow into a more organized, collective praxis of resistance.

As initial resistance can be experienced as empowering, meaningful, gratifying and connecting, people may want to continue their resistance. Secondly, as resistance has a struggle-like nature the initial resistance will probably not 'do the job'. Some form of follow-up action is necessary. The resisters need to develop a collective praxis of resistance that is durable and will enable them to relive, re-experience, practice and deepen or further develop the original spiritual experience.

Soelle explicitly states that groups are the sociological model of the New Testament. It is not individuals nor the masses that open new perspectives (Soelle, 1998, p.270). The gospel makes new groups emerge that voluntarily and critically try to initiate change and give hope. These groups are the nurturing chambers and laboratories of liberative experiences and experiments. Their primary objective is to give a voice to the denouncements of the periphery and to look for and experiment with structures that promote social justice. In doing so the people involved may jointly experience and celebrate liberation and empowerment along with the hardships of struggle.

The basic question they keep asking is: what is just? Answers to this question will lead to non-conformist action and to make themselves heard in a non-violent, open and forthright way and in trying to keep going an open dialogue with people who have different opinions. According to Soelle reflection on the resistance is essential. Although praxis and action are primary over theory, theology and reflection, it is vital not to hold some form of action as the one true form (Soelle, 1983, p.179). The group is the place for a sensible debate on the course of action to be followed and for a deepening of the understanding of the group's actions. Soelle refers to the connection between contemplation/theory and action/praxis as the 'vita mixta' (Soelle, 1998, p.280): a fruitful interdependence between 'vita activa' and 'vita contemplativa'.

In a world of rationalism and feasibility we need a source of ideals and a non-rational language that constantly remind us of the ideals, origins, desires, perspectives and experiences of liberation. According to Soelle this is the primary task of theology. Theology as part of the *vita contemplativa* nurtures the *vita activa* and vice versa.

Unattainable as a group's ideals may be, open discussion within a group is needed to avoid mediocrity, frustration, cynicism, fixation or supererogation.

Summarizing: a collective praxis of resistance, action and liberation consists of: 1) action for a peripheral cause, 2) engaging others in action, 3) sharing, celebrating and mourning experiences, 4) commemorating, discussing and learning, and 5) experimenting with and developing new action.

All elements of this praxis serve to relive, strengthen, deepen and extend the spiritual basis of collective action: the experience of both an indestructible, empowering bonding with people and through each other with God and a mutual, vulnerable, wide open interdependency.

An important aspect of salvation and liberation, as Soelle understands it, is its collective and universal character. Private salvation tends to be narrowed down to becoming dependent of an extra-human power for an individual after-life privilege. In this way salvation makes people dependent instead of free and selfish instead of oriented towards others. Private salvation tends to destroy itself as it is primarily aimed at our self-interest and not at the beginning of a renewal (purification) of our lives.

Soelle stresses the integral aspect of salvation. Salvation is aimed at all sins of the whole person, at all people and at the whole creation as 'the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time' (Romans 8: 22, TNIV) (Soelle, 1983, p.83). Salvation is only credible if it engages us in the liberation, conversion and salvation of others and the world. In various ways we need others to realize liberation so that our lives can become meaningful and hopeful despite of our involvement in injustice.

The universal character of salvation points at another feature of the spirituality of SLT. Liberation tends to spread like an oil spill on water. Being aimed at the whole person, all people and ultimately the whole creation, liberation may start in one domain or level in life but may well extend to other domains, ranging from economic liberation, political, cultural to world view liberation.

Resistance from time to time alienates and unsettles from the world and from God. One doesn't always feel close and connected to God as the path of resistance is not a triumphant march to liberty and justice. But society is also no longer a naturally safe place to live in either, as one has discovered and exposed some of its darker sides.

Resisters often aren't heard or tolerated in the centre. Although not officially prosecuted, in Soelle's experience they are often ridiculed for being naïve or radical, threatened or blocked in their careers and professional lives.

That brings us to a final and important point of the spirituality of SLT: results and effectiveness. Soelle warns us that we should not be overly optimistic of the results of active, critical resistance. One is more likely to meet mock, misunderstanding and contempt than praise and change. Resistance resembles hopping between defeats and hopes (Soelle, 1998, p.381).

An orientation towards success and results is a way of thinking in terms of power that is very tempting but treacherous. We are used to think and judge in terms of results and effectiveness. However, the nature the cause resistance has committed itself to, asks for dependence, and surrender instead of power and force. We can only serve this cause, and in the process 'help' ourselves, if we learn to put aside our tendency to rule, to determine, to plan, to control and to execute. Success or results are not the ultimate spiritual categories. Soelle points at being united and one with others, with nature, with life, with God in an active, engaged, practical way as the foundation of life and not letting results and effectiveness legitimize our spirituality.

This however does not discharge us from using our senses and from acting in a clever way when the moment is right. Soelle, for example, is convinced that we should not shy away from a clever public affairs strategy if it positively influences the resistance.

The spirituality of liberation within a group that is actively involved in working on a just cause, may be endangered if the group becomes very much focused on results and planned change. Soelle describes the difference between a calculated strategy and a spirituality not aimed at results as 'overthrowing' vs. 'regaining'. 'Regaining' operates from an often religiously inspired awareness or memory of a good start of the world: a situation one wants to return to. The change involved can be characterized as renovation.

'Overthrowing' rejects the idea of originally good start and therefore wants to win and conquer, according to Soelle. Despite it's good intentions it gradually develops into a praxis of violence for it only knows how to stand up and fight. It hasn't learnt to really relate or submit to the weak cause it is fighting for. This causes the bond and the interdependence between the resisters and the cause to be weaker. Sooner or later the violence of the resisters will turn towards the cause it once fought for.

4. Comparing social innovation to liberation theology – methodology

The three movements or processes in SLT provide a scheme of how people act during processes of resistance and how they experience the resistance. In the following sections we will see if this scheme of action and experience matches processes of social innovation. This is especially interesting as social innovation, as defined in this paper, like SLT aims at making society, or organizations, more democratic, more just and more sustainable. If there is a significant match between SLT and actual processes of social innovation then SLT may provide valuable input for a mystagogic understanding of social innovation.

This approach fits well with the four step phenomenological-dialogical cycle for researching spirituality Waaijman proposes (Waaijman, 2000): 1. descriptive research, 2. hermeneutic research, 3. systematic analysis, and 4. mystagogic counselling/research. If we want to arrive at (mystagogic) counseling for socially innovative organizations or at stimulating a critical, socially-engaged attitude of students first of all we have to describe and critically understand the spirituality possibly involved.

In order to see if SLT matches with actual social innovation SLT has been qualitatively analyzed so that a theoretical model of SLT could be developed. Input for the qualitative analysis were five sections from two key publications by Soelle:

'Political theology' (Soelle, 1983):

- p.80–91
- p.159-171

'The silent cry' (Soelle, 1998):

- p.267-289
- p.317-323
- p.379-411

By means of qualitative analysis (open coding, axial coding, structuring) these texts have been transformed into a theoretical model (Boeije, 2005). Special attention was given to elements of practice and experience in SLT. The model represents the three phases of SLT, each of them composed of approximately 10 points, described in the previous paragraphs. Then five pioneers in the field of social innovation were interviewed: two entrepreneurs that have radically democratized their construction companies, a co-founder of the first 'green' bank in the Netherlands, the initiator of one of the first commercially viable fair trade initiatives and a co-founder of the first feminist magazine in the Netherlands.

An important criterion in selecting these cases is that the innovation must have been 'operational' up until now for at least ten years. This criterion can be considered as an indicator of success.

The pioneers have different (non-) religious backgrounds.

The cases were not selected according to sampling logic as they are not assumed to represent the entire pool or population of, for example, innovative organizations. Studying these successful cases closely resembles the replication logic in which a theoretical framework is tested in a multiple-case study (Yin, p.48). However the procedure of analysis used in this survey (constant comparison) is slightly different as I will explain later in this and the next paragraph.

Before the interview the pioneers have been approached with a standardized research account. They have been informed on the research project in general terms (for example: 'spirit', 'innovation'). More explicit and sensitive terms (for example 'spirituality', 'religion' and 'liberation theology') were not used in order to avoid influencing the pioneers.

For each interview an interview guide was prepared containing information from public sources (for example: biographies, books, company reports, newspapers) about the life story and the innovation of the pioneer.

The interviews can be characterized as unstructured, in-depth and focused on 1) the actions of the pioneer during the onset and the implementation of the innovation and on 2) how the pioneer has experienced these events. The information from the interview guide enabled the interviewer during the interview to focus more on specific episodes. No explicit questions were asked about religious backgrounds or habits.

The length of the interviews ranges from two to three hours. The interviews have been recorded and were then fully transcribed and qualitatively analyzed by means of constant comparison (Boeije, p.75, 2005).

5. Results of the analysis

Based on analysis of the interviews we find there is a significant match between the actions and the experiences of the five socially innovative pioneers and the theoretical model of SLT. The final model we arrive at, based on the theoretical model and enriched with adjustments induced from the interviews, does not differ significantly from the original model of SLT.

Analysis of the interviews reveals that the three movements or processes of SLT can be traced in the acts and experiences of the socially innovative pioneers.

A complete, summarized overview of the three movements and the related categories based on the interviews can be found in Table 1.

<p>1. Critical, moral understanding of the world and oneself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biographical elements and sources of inspiration • Signs of liberation 	<p><i>Throughout the entire process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical view of society, politics and economy • Self-criticism: feelings of fear or guilt for involvement in injustice • Social innovation meets disregard and rejection by others
<p>2. Initial resistance and action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incubation period • Practical-existential character of social innovation • Taking a creative, unusual initiative • Bonding with a powerless cause and confronting a stronger opponent • Experiencing empowerment • Experiencing mutual dependence between resister and cause 	
<p>3. Developing a collective praxis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on marginalized group • The SLT transformation and experience • Cultivating the SLT transformation and experience • Diffusion of the innovation • Strategy, effectiveness and legitimacy • Constructive relationship with existing systems and institutions 	

Table 1: summarized overview of the three movements and the related categories of actions and experiences of socially innovative pioneers from the perspective of Soelle's liberation theology.

It must be stressed that this model is not intended as an instrument for predicting what socially innovative pioneers will do or what they will experience at the onset of and during the implementation of their innovation. Nor is it meant as a blueprint of how social innovation ought to be implemented or of what 'good' spirituality should be like. This model is not some sort of 'law' of spirituality and social innovation nor is it a normative frame of reference. It is no more and no less than a systematic description of what socially innovative pioneers actually do and experience during the onset and the implementation of their innovation, seen from the perspective of Soelle's liberation theology. The description of this experiential and pragmatic bandwidth can only serve one purpose: identifying mystagogic themes and providing input for spiritual counseling.

It is not possible to report on the whole model in this paper. Therefore some basic features of the final model will be presented in the following sections.

5.1 Phase 1: developing a critical, moral understanding of the world and oneself

The original model of SLT's first phase has had to be modified based on the empirical input of the interviews. Socially innovative pioneers have a critical view of one or more issues. The issues involved range from our basic assumptions on business and economy to gender issues. This criticism of course is an important motivator for developing and implementing an innovation. During the implementation of their innovation their critical view tends to expand to various domains and topics, ranging from science, gender issues to the educational system and the state of our democracy. As Soelle described the element of feeling of fear and guilt for one's own involvement in injustice can also be traced in the interviews, for example: fear of causing family conflicts on business, underestimating the international character of the problem and usable solutions, fear of becoming caught in negative, conflict-loaded organizational patterns, and growing awareness of the negative effects being a manager, being an owner, being the pioneer.

However this self-criticism is not limited to the first phase of SLT. It deepens and expands throughout the entire process of implementation.

Signs of liberation inspire and awaken the belief that things can be changed and must be changed. Pioneers report having inspired by the vitality and strength of marginalized third world groups and marginalized persons. Innovative initiatives abroad also inspire and compelled the pioneers to respond with their own initiative.

One new category was induced from the interviews: biographical elements and sources of inspiration. Being exposed to injustice themselves (for example having been round up as a youngster during World War II) somehow played a role in the pioneers' developing a critical attitude. So did discovering their own strength, for example by a sportive talent or winning a school award.

Sources of inspiration can be one's religion, a family culture of social engagement or other socially innovative pioneers. These sources of inspiration provide moral values, eschatological expectations and mystagogic understanding.

5.2 Phase 2: Initial resistance and action

For the pioneers starting the implementation of the innovation was not merely an exciting experiment. According to some of them doing nothing equaled losing their credibility. Committing themselves to a cause for them meant at one stage or another in the process putting everything (of their professional career) at risk.

A process of innovation may start with a remarkable public act that symbolizes the nature of the innovation and creates an irreversible commitment for the pioneer involved. One pioneer that democratized his company for example started his process of change with sharing a year's profit in advance and asking the employees to make their own sharing rules.

Pioneers report experiencing mutual dependence between themselves and the cause they committed to; one of the key aspects of Soelle's spirituality. For example: knowing that a marginalized group depends on the efforts of the pioneer motivated the pioneer involved enormously and made him feel very responsible. The same pioneer also realized that the marginalized group had an important task to fulfill in the innovation and that it was difficult for them to do their part. If the innovation failed, it would ruin the career of the pioneer and seriously damage the prospects of the marginalized group.

Results of the initial resistance and action in the process of innovation (resistance) result in feelings of pride and empowerment, as one pioneer states for example: 'After the first twelve

issues (of the first feminist magazine) we were very proud'. Even threats from opponents can make pioneers feel that they are onto something that has potential.

5.3 Phase 3: Developing a collective praxis

The pioneers all went on to the third phase of the SLT model and developed their initial resistance into a collective praxis in which they tried to expand their actions and cultivate their experiences. SLT firmly states that the primary objective of such a collective praxis is to give voice to marginalized group and to experiment with new structures that promote justice. We see this element emerge in the interview with the pioneers: ranging from creating an organization in which the disabled have a decent job, improving the position of women to helping poor Mexican farming communities.

Another remarkable similarity between SLT and actual social innovation is its tendency to diffuse. In the five cases of social innovation the innovation has been transferred to other companies, other sectors, other countries and other or new products. This suggests that social innovation tends to spread like an oil spill on water, just as liberation does. Liberation theology may help us understand why it does so.

5.4 Adjustments to the model

Based on analysis of the interviews a number of adjustments to the theoretical model of SLT has been made. One of these adjustments illustrates how empirical input influences the 'theoretical' model of STL. The critical view of society and oneself not only develops in the first phase, as the original model suggests. From the interviews it shows that this critical attitude develops throughout the entire process. It deepens and broadens. The pioneers tend to become critical of many issues, ranging from science, gender issues to the educational system and the state our democracy. Self-criticism also turns toward the pioneer's own role in implementing the innovation, for example: 1) acknowledging a lack of real understanding of the organizational problems and the necessary solutions, 2) growing awareness of the negative effects of being the pioneer and the former chairman in an organization that is democratizing itself, and 3) having underestimated the international character of the fair trade problem and solutions

Some others adjustments to the theoretical model of SLT are mentioned in paragraph 6.

6. Issues for mystagogic counseling

Given the match between SLT and actual processes of social innovation in organizations mystagogic themes can be identified that may enhance social innovation by means of spiritual counseling. Although further, careful analysis of both SLT and the interviews with the pioneers is required to get a systematic overview of the mystagogic themes involved, this paragraph provides three examples that illustrate what such an analysis may provide.

6.1 Reframing experiences

One element at the heart of SLT and at the heart of the experiences of the pioneers is the change in relationships as a consequence of social innovation. A new and better balance in interests, responsibilities, powers and gains for or from various stakeholders within the organization and outside of the organization is reported. Other elements of this change in relationships are a deepened awareness of mutual dependence between management, employees, shareholders and/or customers, more loyalty from shareholders and a deeply felt responsibility for a marginalized group.

It must be noted that the changes for the better also may deteriorate as, for example, employee involvement decreased after an energetic start, as one pioneer reports.

At first sight improved relationships do not sound as a typical characteristic of spirituality. But according to Soelle they are at the very heart of Christian spirituality. If we are sensitive, as Soelle suggests, to the representational character of the interdependence between ourselves and the weak cause we have begun to commit ourselves to, resistance can be considered a form of co-creation between God and ourselves. This awareness may lift our experience from an 'ordinary' interdependence to a manifestation of divine self-realization in which we

experience that our actions somehow are part of the 'living, active, breathing divine dynamic of love we experience in relation to one another' (Heyward, p.224).

Creating this awareness and this sensitivity however is a delicate thing. It certainly is not simply a matter of 'injecting' it. It presumably resembles a subtle, non-manipulative process of discovery, re-interpretation and reframing of one's experiences.

The fact that organizations have a diverse workforce with different religious backgrounds may complicate raising this awareness. If one succeeds in doing this (even if only to some extent) the innovation will get an extra quality that in a way may fulfill the innovation and the people involved.

6.2 Healthy development of organizational spirituality

Can organizations cultivate their spirituality and avoid radicalization or it's watering down? As organizations grow in size, run into difficulties and have to adapt to new circumstances, it's spirituality somehow will have to grow, develop and mature as well. Analysis of the interviews and SLT suggest that cultivating an organization's spirituality requires several elements or activities: 1) sharing, celebrating experiences, 2) discussing and learning, 3) experimenting with and developing new action, 4) democratic organisation and 5) sound financial policies. An element in avoiding radicalization is a new category that has been added to the original model based on the interview results. Five pioneers report to have developed a constructive relationship with existing systems and institutions. 'Preaching to customers and business' is not regarded as being effective and neither is a revolutionary approach ('storming the structures'). Most pioneers have learnt that working with and within existing systems and institutions can be a necessary and/or effective change strategy. Lobbying for green tax regulation, legally securing the democratic character of an organization or using the free market as a means to force businesses to adopt fair trade principles are examples of this constructive relationship with systems and institutions.

It must be noted however that the relationship is constructive in the sense that pioneers do not passively accept the status quo of the existing systems and institutions that are relevant for them. Working with and within the system for them means reconstructing and reforming them if necessary.

This observation is not to be taken as a principle that would prescribe socially innovative organizations to work with and within existing systems and institutions in order to prevent radicalization. It merely demonstrates the range of change strategies, varying of a revolutionary approach to reluctantly accepting that systems and institutions frustrate the innovation.

As mentioned in paragraph 3.5 Soelle however distinguishes between a revolutionary approach and a renovation approach. These notions can be valuable input for deepening one's understanding of change strategies and for rethinking them.

6.3 Developing a critical attitude of students

Another interesting mystagogic theme the analysis may shed some light on is how we can help students develop a critical, socially engaged view on issues in the field of 'business and society'. The analysis shows that developing a critical, moral understanding of the world and oneself seems to be an interplay between the critical awareness itself and perceiving signs of liberation, biographical elements and one's sources of inspiration.

If we want students to develop a critical, socially-engaged view on issues in the field of 'business and society' the results from this part of the analysis seem to suggest that getting the interplay going between 1) the critical awareness of issues in society and of one's own role, 2) perceiving signs of liberation, 3) biographical elements and 4) one's sources of inspiration. This interplay may be helpful in raising critical awareness of students.

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