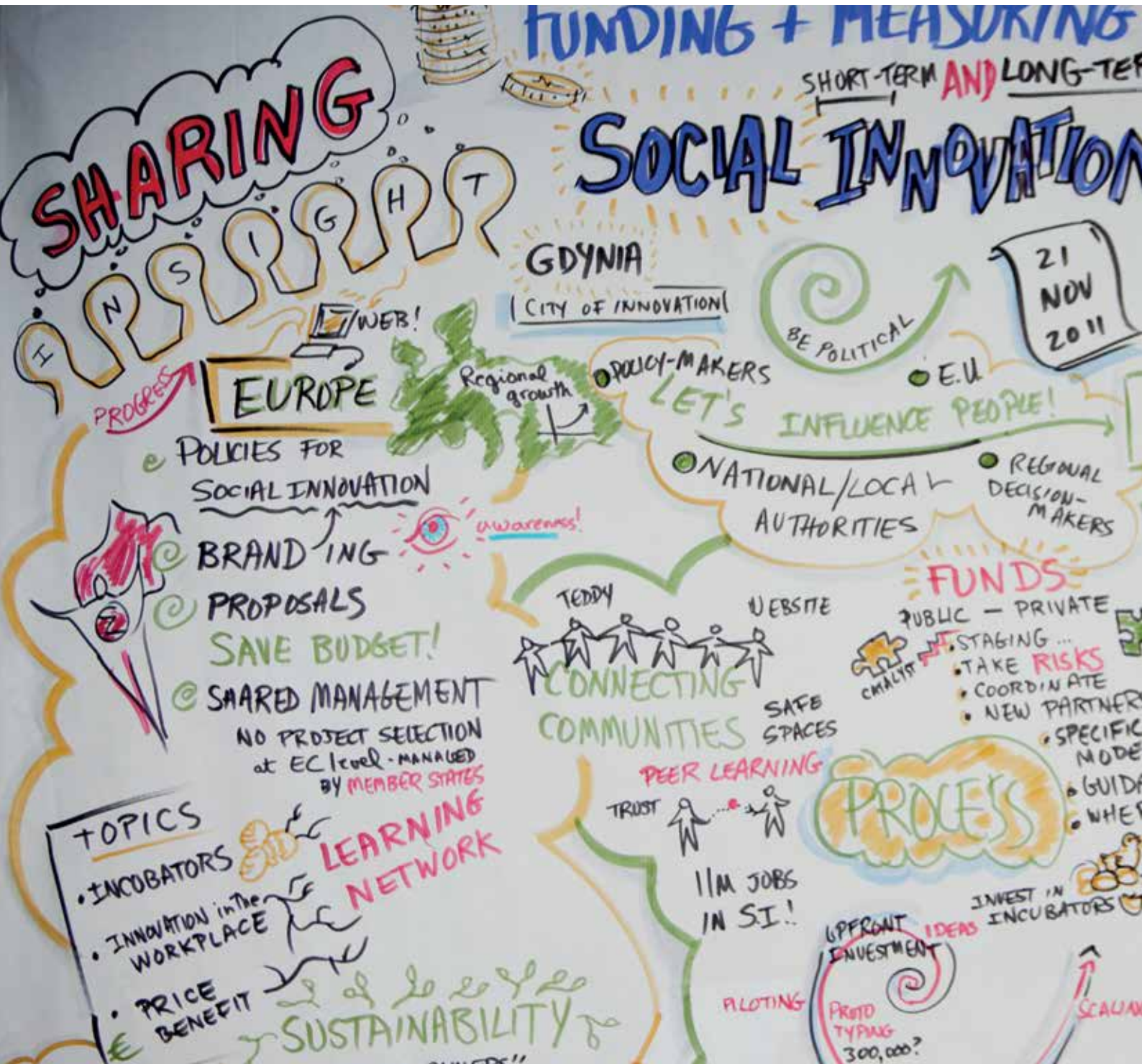


GROWING SOCIAL INNOVATION

A Guide for Policy Makers



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About TEPSIE

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TEPSIE

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Executive summary

The international community increasingly recognises the need for new approaches to address our most pressing social challenges. In order to stimulate this innovation, this report suggests a number of approaches which policy makers can take, drawing on examples taken from around the world.

Firstly, governments are the principle creators of public value and can be a source of innovation themselves (see chapter 1). In recent years we have seen the emergence of innovation teams, which help government departments use innovative methods to form and deliver policy.

Governments can also support innovation by providing and stimulating funding (2.1). In this report we give examples of how public funds can support social innovation and how governments have used innovative funding mechanisms to stimulate social investment. Governments can also support social innovation by **sharing non-financial assets**, such as allowing community groups to manage local amenities (2.3).

Governments can support social innovation by funding and facilitating **capacity building programmes such as accelerators and incubators** (2.6). Many social enterprises require assistance to develop the skills and knowledge needed to scale, win contracts to deliver services or to receive investment.

Social entrepreneurs and innovators who want to deliver public services should have access to **procurement processes which enable them to compete equally** (2.2). Some countries and regions have introduced laws that require commissioners to incorporate an assessment of social value into their decision processes. Policy makers need also to engage with researchers before they commission services to make sure that they have evidence

about which social interventions might be most successful. A variety of intermediary organisations exist to help policy makers do this (2.7). Some policy makers have set up social innovation labs to experiment with new approaches in specific areas or regions.

Governments can support social innovators by facilitating networking events to bring diverse participants together (2.4). Innovation often happens as a function of dialogue between a range of perspectives, and government is one of the institutions with the resources and power to make this happen. Some policy makers give support to organisations which bring social innovators together to share ideas across borders.

Policy makers and innovators must engage with citizens if they want to succeed, but engagement needs to be well designed (2.8).

In order for governments to support a socially innovative economy and society in the ways we outline above, **accurate and easy to use methods are needed to measure the size of the social economy** so that resources can be targeted to where they are most needed (2.9).

Appropriate legal frameworks can be decisive in enabling much of the above to take place, both to directly support social innovation and to be conducive for it to take place more broadly across society (2.5).

Digital technology can be a powerful support for existing social innovations, an enabler of new social innovations and a transformer of the governance and framework conditions underlying social innovation. **Policy makers and governments should support the frameworks and infrastructure which underpin the role digital technology can play in social innovation** (2.10).

Introduction

Why is social innovation important?

Long-standing issues such as unemployment, child poverty and growing inequalities remain challenges for governments and communities across Europe. New challenges have also emerged over the past few decades. Migration and highly diverse communities have put pressure on community cohesion and, in some cases, placed additional demands on already pressed local services; a rapidly ageing population has dramatically increased demands on health and care services as well as public and personal budgets; and new lifestyles have brought with them problems of obesity and an increase in chronic disease such as diabetes. The recent economic crisis, and the austerity that has followed, has exacerbated many of these trends, for example by worsening long-term youth unemployment.

Social innovation can however make a real difference in addressing these challenges as a source of fresh, dynamic approaches to mobilising communities and building their resilience. These solutions are coming from ordinary people in their own localities responding creatively and innovatively to the pressing challenges they and their communities are experiencing. For example, in Barcelona people have developed alternative economic practices such as consumer cooperatives, exchange and social currency networks and free universities.¹ In the UK, the rise of timebanking represents an innovative way of building social capital and mobilising the power of communities to care for the vulnerable in their midst.² While it is important to recognise that social innovation is not a silver bullet, and many issues will always have to be tackled largely by investment in public services and infrastructure, the potential of these new approaches should not be underestimated.

Policy makers globally are exploring means to support and promote social innovation. Within the European Union, the Commission

has developed programmes to fund, scale and foster social innovations, including prioritising social innovation within the structural funds and developing the Social Business Initiative to support social enterprise.³ This has been echoed by similar initiatives within many individual Member States. Further afield, the White House of the United States has developed an Office of Social Innovation and Civil Participation, to ‘cultivate bottom up practices in cities and towns across the country where ordinary people already are coming together to solve tough problems’.

SI around the world

Social innovation can also be found in government initiatives across all continents. Some examples of these include The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, which was founded in 2009 with seed funding from the South Australian government and has been behind innovative programmes such as ‘Family by Family’.

In South Korea, the Seoul Innovation Bureau is a cross-departmental innovation unit with 58 staff members and an annual budget of £5 million. The overriding principle of the Bureau is that citizens are the main catalysts and sources of innovation, whether that be in identifying problems, clarifying issues or generating solutions. The Bureau team captures and orchestrates this knowledge and insight.⁵

In South Africa, The Centre for Public Service Innovation is a part of government and tasked with creating a culture and practice of innovation to help solve challenges, whether in identifying the root causes of problems or convening partnerships with the third and private sector in order to explore possible solutions and develop funding models.⁶ There are many more examples of these, but what is clear is that social innovation is a movement which is spreading fast and gaining traction with policy makers globally.

What is social innovation?

We define social innovations as new approaches to addressing social needs. They are social in their means and in their ends. They engage and mobilise the beneficiaries and help to transform social relations by improving beneficiaries' access to power and resources.

We define social innovation in the following way:

- *New*
A social innovation is new to the context in which it appears. It might not be entirely new but it must be new to those involved in its implementation.
 - *Meets a social need*
Social innovations are created with the intention of addressing a social need in a positive or beneficial way. Social innovations can also play a role in articulating or shaping social needs; they can help to legitimise new and emerging social needs or those which have so far gone unrecognised. Because social innovations are concerned with meeting specific social needs, we argue that social innovations are distinct from innovations which have a social impact.⁷
 - *Put into practice*
Like innovations more generally, social innovations are ideas that have been put into practice. In this way, social innovations are distinct from social inventions (new ideas that have not been implemented).
 - *Engage and mobilise beneficiaries*
Beneficiaries are involved or engaged in the development of the social innovation or in its governance. This is either achieved directly, or through appropriate intermediaries or other actors who themselves have direct contact to the beneficiaries. It might also take place via actors who directly support the beneficiaries or have legitimate knowledge of their needs. This engagement often helps to ensure that the social innovation serves legitimate goals and involves the members of the target group themselves in addressing and owning their own problems. This can, in turn, lead to better and more innovative solutions, as well as increasing their awareness, competences, and even their dignity and self-esteem.
 - *Transform social relations*
Social innovations aim to transform social relations by improving the access to power and resources of specific target groups. As such, social innovations can empower specific target groups and challenge the unequal or unjust distribution of power and resources across society. In this way, social innovations contribute to discourses about the public good and the just society.
- Aside from the five criteria above there are also a number of factors, which often characterize social innovations, but do not necessarily have to be present:
- *Bottom up vs. top down*
Unlike other forms of innovation, especially innovation in large scale companies, social innovation often tends to be 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' and ad hoc rather than planned. It often emerges from informal processes and the entrepreneurial actions of citizens and groups of individuals.
 - *High level of uncertainty*
At the outset, social innovation is typically marked by a high level of uncertainty, in part because it has never been implemented before, at least in the specific context where it takes place. As a result of this uncertainty it is impossible to say at the outset whether the social innovation is 'good' or more 'effective' or 'better' than alternatives. This can only be seen in hindsight.
 - *Embedded in routines, norms and structures*
At the beginning, a social innovation will be different from widespread or mainstream practices. But, depending on the social, political and cultural context in which it appears, it may become embedded in routines, norms and structures and thereby become a widespread everyday practice. Once the innovation has become institutionalised, new needs and demands might arise, leading to fresh calls for social innovation.
 - *Unintended consequences*
Despite good intentions, social innovations might prove to: be socially divisive; have unintended consequences that have negative social effects (by excluding people who are affected by the innovation in the design and implementation stages); and become vulnerable to co-option and/or mission drift.⁸

TYPES OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

Social innovation is a broad term which refers to a wide range of activity. A key reflection on our research is that we often need to go beyond using ‘social innovation’ generically and be clear about what kind or type of social innovation we’re talking about. To this end, we’ve developed a typology of social innovations which sets out five forms or types of social innovation. Some social innovations might cut across more than one type.

Type of social innovation	Description	Example
New services and products	New interventions or new programmes to meet social needs	Car-sharing; zero energy housing developments (e.g. BedZED)
New practices	New services which require new professional roles or relationships	Dispute resolution between citizens and the state in the Netherlands (the professional civil servant role has changed dramatically and citizens’ social needs are much better met)
New processes	Co-production of new services	Participatory budgeting (started in Brazil and since widely scaled; is not dependent on ICT, though ICT often used); Fair Trade
New rules and regulations	Creation of new laws or new entitlements	Personal budgets (e.g. in Denmark and the Netherlands where older people can decide themselves how to spend much of their support money)
New organisational forms	Hybrid organisational forms such as social enterprises	Belu Water, a small UK based social enterprise, which sells bottled water and donates all its profits to WaterAid and has pledged to raise £1m by 2020

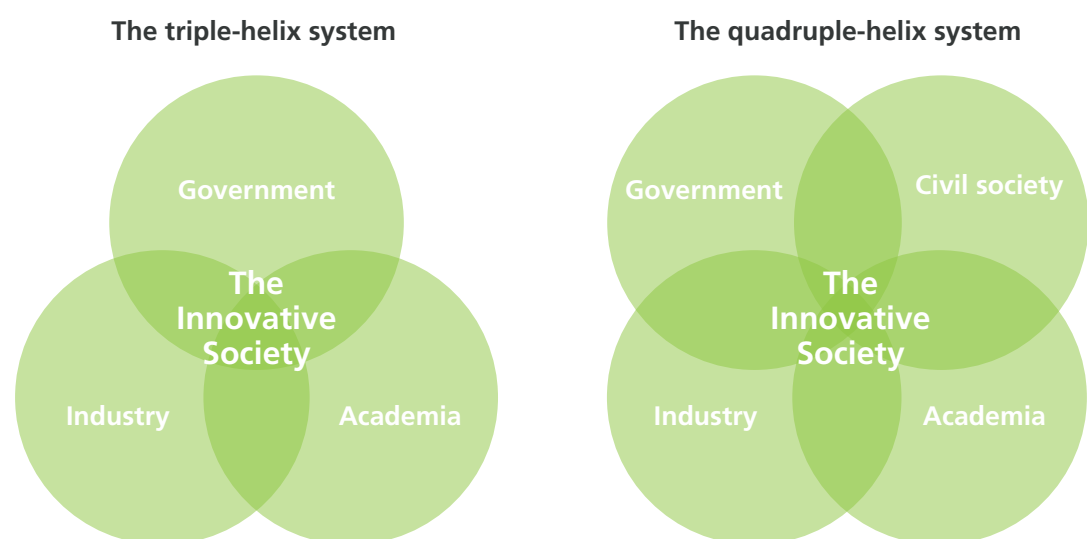
The role of government in social innovation

Governments at all levels play a significant role in influencing the potential for success for social innovations. Our research has investigated a number of policy areas such as financing social innovation, measuring social impacts, spreading and scaling social innovations and understanding the role of digital technology in social innovation. We found that governments play a highly complex and instrumental role – not least in terms of setting up the right framework conditions for social innovators across sectors and geographical areas. Its role goes far beyond the common perception of being a passive institution whose primary role in social innovation is to remove legislative barriers and provide financing.⁹

In recent years, the concept of the triple-helix system¹⁰ has gained momentum as a framework of understanding among policy-makers and has thus

driven many decisions to promote innovation across the EU. It views academia, industry and government – and not least a stable interplay between them – as the foundation for an innovative society. However, although the triple-helix system has proved efficient in terms of promoting advanced and ground-breaking technological innovations, it has proved less efficient in terms of promoting satisfying solutions to our societies' complex social challenges. Although governments and the private sector – with the support of academia – play an important role in creating and carrying out social solutions, civil society (or the civil sector) is equally important. We argue that policy-makers should expand the framework of understanding to a 'quadruple-helix model'¹¹ including the civil sector as the fourth cornerstone of the innovative society.

Figure 1: Frameworks for understanding the foundations for an innovative society



With that as our framework of understanding, the role of government becomes two-fold. Firstly, governments are an innovative force in themselves – one of the four cornerstones of the innovative society. With its political leaders, overview of unmet social needs and resources, and a large public-sector apparatus under their direct control, governments at all levels have the potential to develop some of the most innovative, efficient and sustainable social solutions of the future. Secondly, governments can act as promoters of social innovation – as a force that through its financial and law-making power can make it possible, easy and attractive for actors across all sectors to come together to shape new and better social solutions for the future.

In the following sections, we will dig deeper into the nature of the two roles of government in social innovation.

1. A source of social innovation

For more than a generation in Europe, the public sector has been the main recognised legitimate source and provider of public value through enacting legislation and by providing public services and amenities to be consumed collectively rather than exclusively. Over the last twenty years, this perception, as well the reality on the ground, has changed significantly. Although today the public sector in Europe remains the principle creator of public value, and an important driver of this is innovation, including social innovation, it is now recognised that two types of change are needed for this process to continue to be successful. First, the public sector should change its roles, relationships and modus operandi, and second it needs to cooperate directly with other actors outside government.

Three main building blocks for public sector innovation¹² are:

- **open assets:** making available and sharing data, people, facilities, tools, networks and other resources
- **open services:** enabling other actors to co-create and innovate public services

- **open engagement:** ensuring that other actors can participate in decision- and policy-making, the processes and workings of the public sector, in participatory budgeting, in community building, in resolving conflicts, and in managing open assets.¹³

It is recognised there are numerous examples where full openness and transparency is inappropriate, such as in opening up government data which reveals information about individuals.

Building on the above, many governments have taken specific actions to strengthen their own role in social innovation. Across the world, public sector organisations have been appointing ‘innovation teams’ which exist to mainstream innovative methods across government. One example of these is the Danish organisation ‘MindLab’. Based in the Danish Central Government, MindLab is tasked with bringing a human-centred design approach to public sector challenges. MindLab draws on the perspectives of citizens, businesses and government staff to redesign services around their experiences.¹⁴ Similar initiatives are taking place elsewhere, for example, in the Finnish strategic design approach to public services like health, education and social services, in Singapore’s Design Thinking Unit in the Prime Minister’s Public Services Division, as well as in the UK’s Behavioural Insights Team.¹⁵

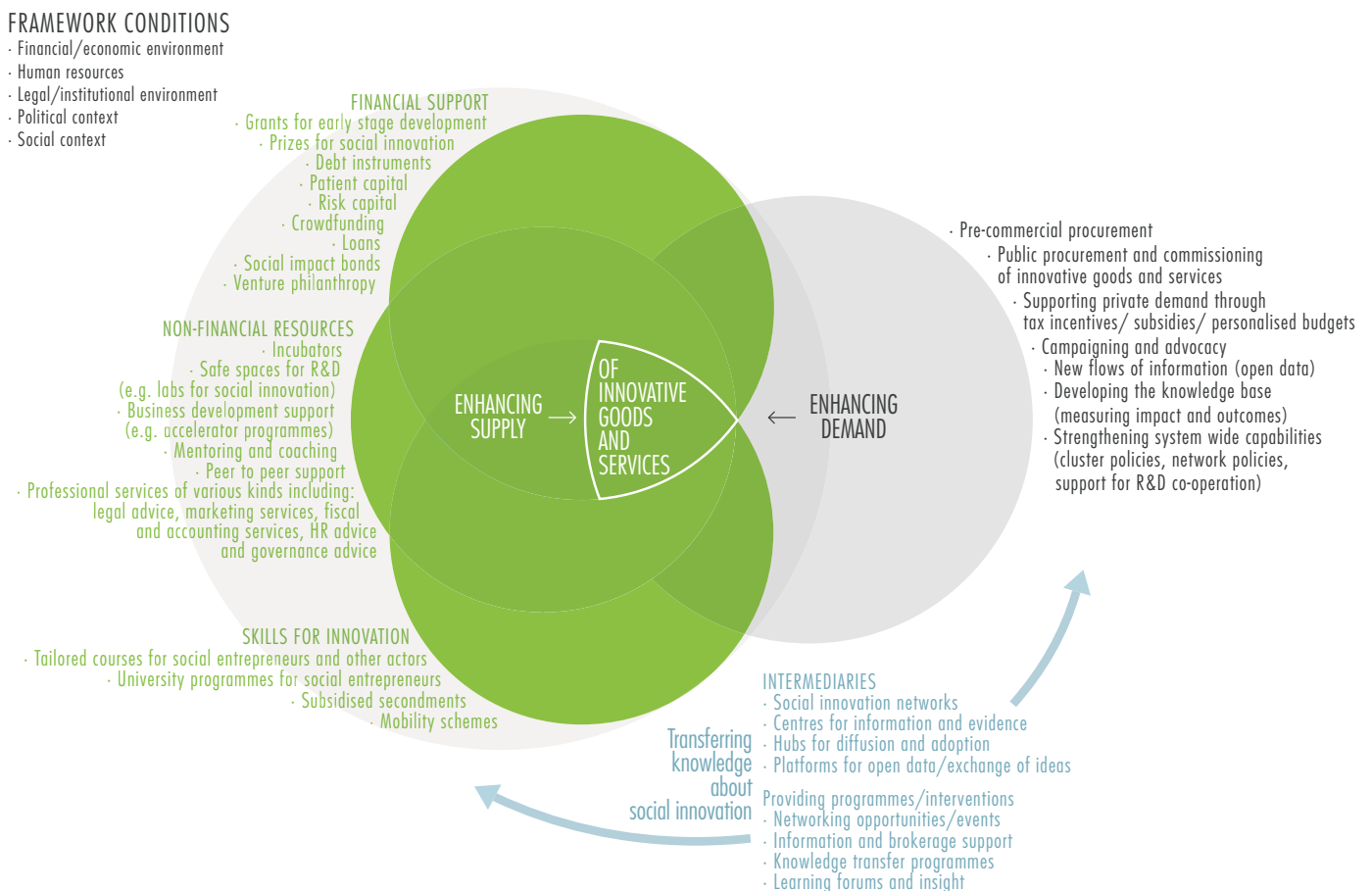
One of the biggest challenges to innovation in the public sector is often perceived to be the fact that civil servants are dealing with taxpayer money and as such act with a necessary caution. This can lead to risk aversion and strict adherence to set procedures and laws, which can create obstacles to the introduction of new processes, products, services and methods. The importance of empowering civil servants, managers and policy makers, as well as changing organisational structures and processes, cannot be underestimated. Apart from providing appropriate tools and training for civil servants, leadership from both the top and the middle of public sector organisations is critical to ensure that innovation is at the heart of the creation of public value. Traditional leadership styles, more appropriate to top-down hierarchical structures, need to give way to new types of role, in flatter, less siloed organisations, in which leaders are seen as enablers, supporters and animators of public value creation by teams of civil servants collaborating with other actors.

2. A facilitator of social innovation

A useful framework to begin with is the social innovation ecosystem we developed in the context of our work on growing social innovation,¹⁶ which sets out the necessary components for building an ecosystem that is supportive of social innovators and socially innovative organisations. These can be segmented into those components which enhance the supply of social innovations, those which foster the demand, and then intermediaries which transfer knowledge about social innovation. A diagram illustrating this (see Figure 2) features specific examples of these components, e.g. business development support for social enterprises on the supply side, and socially responsible public procurement on the demand side. This way of thinking helps frame the ways in which policy makers can promote and facilitate social innovation, in particular, through:

- Funding
- Procurement
- Alternative use of assets
- New legal frameworks
- Increased support for networking
- Capacity building
- Commissioning and utilising research
- Promoting citizen engagement
- Measurement
- Digital technology

Figure 2: An ecosystem for innovative social purpose organisations





2.1. FUNDING

Policy makers can enhance the supply of social innovations by providing funding for socially innovative organisations.

This can be through traditional mechanisms like grant funding using taxpayer monies, or through contracts which pay social innovators for the specific services that they are providing.

In the European Union, policy makers can also use the structural funds to support social innovations which are often found within the context of charities or social enterprises. The European Social Fund in particular has been used to great effect historically to support innovative approaches. For the period 2014–2020 social innovation has been explicitly integrated into the structural funds regulations and reporting mechanisms.¹⁷

Increasingly, policy makers are seeking to support the nascent field of social investment. This is the use of repayable finance to achieve a social as well as a financial return. Governments can help to raise awareness amongst investors, set aside funds for this purpose and also incentivise this type of investment through the introduction of favourable tax rates.¹⁸

Additionally, governments can encourage social investment through innovative contracting mechanisms such as social impact bonds. This is a financial mechanism whereby investors pay for a set of interventions to improve a social outcome that is of social and/or financial interest to a government commissioner. If the social outcome improves, the government commissioner repays the investors for their initial investment plus a return for the financial risks that they took. If the social outcomes are not achieved, the investors stand to lose their investment.¹⁹

Social impact bonds are often paired with contracts which ‘pay by results’, that is, commissioners pay for certain outcomes as opposed to outputs. This means that contracting organisations need to collect data in order to evidence that the intervention they have delivered has led to certain named results.

In practice



Slovakia: Since 2001 taxpayers have been able to specify that 2% of their tax bill go to a charity or registered non-governmental organisation of their choice. As a result, support for the NGO sector increased from 3 million euro a year in 2002 to almost 45 million euros through more than half a million declarations ten years later.



Portugal: In 2014 the Government announced their intention to establish a €150m Social Innovation Fund for social investment financed through EU Structural Funds.



UK: Big Society Capital is a fund set up by the UK government using monies from dormant bank accounts and contributions from high street banks. It only invests in social investment finance intermediaries, seeking both a social and a financial return from every investment they make. These social investment finance intermediaries are then able to invest monies in social enterprises and social innovations that want to use repayable finance to help increase their impact on society.



2.2. PROCUREMENT

Commissioning and procurement processes represent an opportunity for governments to support the development of social innovation and stimulate the creation of new markets.²⁰


Historically, commissioning and procurement structures have been poorly set up to support social innovation. For example, contracts are often designed in such a way to dissuade applications from social enterprises or those who are not large and established businesses. They may also be too short-term, place excessive risk on providers, set unrealistically low prices, or require a substantive burden in terms of monitoring and evaluation. This has led to criticism that with regard to social innovation, process is being allowed to trump outcomes.²¹ Most socially innovative organisations are small and do not have the resources to compete with large, privately run businesses for public sector contracts. This is made even more challenging by the fact that many governments have implemented policies and laws which aim to foster competition and these make it very difficult for authorities to award contracts on any basis other than price.


Social enterprises and other socially innovative organisations seeking to work with the public sector also often come up against the inherently risk-averse nature of much government procurement.


Policy makers have a role to play in helping to overcome the barriers which prevent social enterprises from competing on a level playing field. These include:

- The minority status of many social entrepreneurs, which can mean they are not familiar with jargon which unlocks key funding.
- A 'catch-22' situation where a lack of a history in delivering government contracts prevents social enterprises from winning bids.
- A lack of a recognised process to measure social impact.
- The requirement of many procurement processes for detailed multi-year plans which can in themselves stifle the innovation process.
- Procurement processes which commission outputs rather than social outcomes.²²

In Practice

 **Canada:** The city of Toronto has established a 'Social Procurement Framework', a process which seeks to generate an evidence-based social procurement policy by the end of 2015.

 **UK:** The legally binding Social Value Act was recently implemented and seeks to ensure that commissioners consider social value at the beginning of the procurement process; this is examined in more detail under 'legal frameworks'.

 **UK:** The Department for Work and Pensions has a £16 million Youth Engagement Fund. Funding is through Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) on a payment by results basis. The fund is to help disadvantaged young people participate and succeed in education or training and prevent them from becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). The goal is to improve employability, reduce long-term dependency on benefits, and reduce their chances of offending.




2.3. ALTERNATIVE USE OF ASSETS

Governments can support social innovation by sharing non-financial assets, such as allowing community groups to manage local amenities.

Within the UK, local authorities are empowered to transfer the ownership of land and buildings to communities for less than their market value. This is known as ‘community asset transfer’ and allows communities and social enterprises to really take ownership of local institutions. This process also happens in other countries even without a specific legal process in place, such as in the case of Troy Gardens in America. Additionally, governments can share their resources using more traditional methods, such as allotments for local communities.

In Practice

 **Germany:** In February 2013, a former fire station building in Heidelberg was repurposed as a creative industries centre. It is managed by a local charity which rents rooms to entrepreneurs and social innovators at a reduced rent.

 **USA:** In 1995, the state of Wisconsin attempted to sell a 15 acre empty site. Residents had however been gardening on four of the acres for 15 years, and using the rest to walk. At the prospect of losing this resource, residents joined with several non-profit groups to form the Troy Gardens Coalition. They developed an innovative proposal for integrated land use, which combined housing with open space and agriculture. In 1998 the city accepted the plan.

 **UK:** Many local authorities are turning over assets such as sports facilities, pubs, post offices, libraries and disused/ underused buildings to community ownership and/ or management. For example, Atlantis Community Leisure Centre is run as a social enterprise and is a registered charity.

2.4. INCREASED SUPPORT FOR NETWORKING

One easy way in which governments can help to support social innovators is by providing forums for them to network and share knowledge.

Support can be either through providing funding for existing initiatives, commissioning these services or establishing government bodies to perform this function. For example, the European Commission commissioned the existing network Social Innovation Exchange to host a ‘Social Innovation Europe’ website to allow social innovators to connect. In America, the White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation hosts regular events to allow social innovators to come together.

Performing this function is relatively easy for policy makers yet achieves big dividends for social innovators. Innovation often happens as a function of bringing diverse participants together and government is one of the few institutions with the resources and networks to make this happen.



Networking at a SIX and Hivos event in Johannesburg, South Africa. Credit: Social Innovation Exchange



2.5. NEW LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Governments can use their regulatory and legal powers to promote social innovation and models of services which generate social value.

The discussion of procurement illustrated the ways in which laws introduced to promote competition can work against social innovators and social enterprises, which aim to generate social value and not simply provide services at the lowest possible price. However, there are promising signs that legislation could be effective in addressing this. For example, the EU has published a new public procurement directive which asks public authorities to consider social value in their procurement decisions.²³

One response within the UK has been the introduction of the ‘Social Value Act’,²⁴ which asks commissioners to consider how the service to be procured could improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. This has led to an increased awareness of the role that social enterprises can play in securing such an improvement and a space to consider social value in the commission process which has hitherto been missing. Wakefield Council referred to the Social Value Act when it wanted a new milk supplier in local schools. They chose ‘Fresh Pastures’, who deliver milk and also provide local schoolchildren with lessons on healthy living and food miles.

The UK is regarded as a market leader in the development of new laws to support social innovation. In 2011, they introduced a ‘Community Right to Challenge’. This allows community organisations to submit an expression of interest in running services of the local authority on behalf of that authority. Another law recently introduced within the UK has been a new regulation on ‘Social Investment Tax Relief’, which helps to encourage this kind of investment and is the first regulation of its kind in the world.²⁵

Across the world, many countries have introduced new legal forms specifically for social enterprise, such as Vietnam,²⁶ Canada and the USA.²⁷ These allow companies to trade in support of a social mission, and to reinvest almost or all of that profit into that social mission.

Apart from directly supporting social innovation, legal frameworks can be decisive in assisting or hindering social innovation to take place more generally across society. For example, the JustPark.com website²⁸ in the UK connects car drivers looking for a parking space via a mobile app with home owners with space on their driveway in order to ease parking congestion and traffic flow by using the unused assets of vacant space. It also provides a small income for the owners and a commission for the company. However, many local authorities considered such home owners as running a business and many were fined up to €25,000 which virtually killed off the innovation. In April 2014, however, the UK government relaxed the law thus allowing the scheme to scale.²⁹

This illustrates a more general issue around existing legal and regulatory frameworks which tend to be geared to older economic models and not conducive to new innovations, and that changing them can change the balance of winners and losers. For example, in the JustPark case existing car-parking companies lose out and this typically becomes a controversial issue where the pros and cons are not always clear cut. Policy dilemmas like this are likely to increase in the future, for example the complaints currently being made by incumbent taxi companies and hotel chains that Uber and Airbnb respectively take away their business and lower standards. On the other side, the new players which typically use digital technology as a basis for their innovation, claim that more people can participate and unused assets can be brought into use, which is good for society and the environment. Many are also offering to work with governments to put in place new mechanisms to support service and employment standards which clearly require new approaches.



2.6. CAPACITY BUILDING

Socially innovative organisations require support to scale and access investment and policy makers and government have a crucial role to play in building capacity within the sector.

One strong model for building capacity is through dedicated support programmes, with a specific focus on social innovation. These programmes provide training and mentoring especially for social entrepreneurs or innovators, and are sometimes termed ‘incubators’ or ‘accelerators’. Accelerators usually offer assistance to entrepreneurs who are already providing a service of some kind, aiming to help the entrepreneur scale their business and become ready for investment, while earlier stage programmes which support those who are in the process of turning an idea into a business plan are known as incubators. One example of an incubator is Social Impact Start, which operates in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and supports social start-ups in the early phases of launching their ideas. Their “scholarship” combines coaching, professional skills development, mentoring, co-working space and matching to potential funders. It is part of the wider Social Impact group which includes a lab space, consultancy services, a crowdfunding platform and other online tools for early stage idea development and knowledge exchange. The accelerator model is based on business programmes such as Y-Combinator, which began working with technology start-ups in Silicon Valley in 2005.³⁰



A workshop of the EU Transition project.
Credit: Stuart Thomason

It is important for entrepreneurs that dedicated organisations exist to connect them with funding. Due to their crucial role in supporting social ventures to get up and running, there has been considerable government interest in supporting incubators and accelerators in the hope of generating maximal social impact. For example, the British government has recently launched a Social Incubator Fund which will support social incubators in the UK.³¹ Similarly, the European Commission is currently supporting both the ‘Transition’ project, which is supporting a network of incubators across Europe to share best practice and learn from each other while providing funding to reach an even greater number of social ventures.³² The incubators come from locations as diverse as the Basque Country, West Ireland, London, Milan, Paris and Tampere.

UK: Building social innovation capacity through incubators

The UK’s £10 million Social Incubator Fund is being delivered by the Big Lottery Fund on behalf of the Cabinet Office’s Office for Civil Society (OCS). It aims to help drive a robust pipeline of start-up social ventures into the social investment market, by increasing focus on early stage support, and attracting new incubators and accelerators into the market. The grants provided to social incubators and accelerators are between £50,000 and £1.5 million, of which a portion forms an investment book which must be invested into social ventures using non-grant financial structures.³³

One of the organisations to be supported by the fund is Bethnal Green Ventures, an accelerator programme which supports tech organisations seeking to develop solutions to social and environmental problems. They have received £900,000 in funding, which has been matched by charities The Nominet Trust and Nesta. Examples of social innovations they support include OurPath, a smartphone application which coaches and motivates diabetes patients to live a healthier lifestyle, and GroupU, an online tool which maximizes individual student progress through effective classroom collaboration.

In order to support the ventures to move forward, they run fortnightly workshops on a range of topics including user testing, impact measurement, service design, PR, business development and investment strategy. In addition, each week staff meet individually with each venture to help set priorities and move forward.³⁴



2.7. COMMISSIONING AND APPLYING RESEARCH

Policy makers and government can support social innovation by funding and applying research which builds a strong evidence-base for both policy and practice.

In recent years there has been a move toward basing policy and practice decisions on the soundest possible evidence. Although policy-makers³⁵ often cite a shortage of time, information overload and a difficulty in understanding academic jargon and analysis as reasons for not engaging with research, organisations are developing which aim to present the latest research in formats which will be most useful to policy makers. These include The Campbell Collaboration (Norway) and J-Pal (USA). At the same time, individual governments are also funding and establishing centres which fulfil similar functions, such as the ‘What Works’ Centres in the UK. These organisations help to support social innovation by ensuring that the most effective interventions are recognised and scaled.

Although the above examples represent a promising trend, the Alliance For Useful Evidence have cautioned that ‘evidence-based practice is not cook book teaching or policing, nor should it be about prescribing what goes from a position of unchallenged authority... It is important to remember that there is a huge amount of experiential knowledge that is not captured by research’.⁴⁰ Furthermore, care must be taken when generalising from results of individual studies not to overlook the unique features of the situation in any given country or region.

Perhaps for this reason, another way in which policy makers have attempted to test and research social innovations has been through funding or establishing social innovation labs which work on a much smaller scale. Across the world, these have provided a neutral space for experimentation, with the aim of generating solutions to the most pressing local challenges.

Global: Evidence-based policy

J-Pal was founded as the Abdul Lateef Jameel Poverty Action Lab in 2003. They not only conduct and fund randomised control trials of interventions to reduce poverty but have also developed a policy team who spend their time building relationships, and translating research into formats that can be most easily understood.³⁶ In addition they offer ‘custom courses for individual government departments that are interested in getting their entire workforce to think about ways to incorporate evidence into policy design’.³⁷ The team also exists to make sure that policy makers themselves have a say into which questions are answered by their researchers, and in many cases researchers and policy makers have worked directly together on study design. This ensures maximum buy-in and that research results are most likely to be relevant and useful.

J-PAL Europe was established in May 2007 to expand J-PAL’s advocacy work in Europe, and include European researchers in the J-PAL network.³⁸ It is based at the Paris School of Economics and has launched the SPARK network, or ‘Social Policy Analysis for Robust Knowledge’ in partnership with LSE Enterprise and Nesta. As part of SPARK, information and training sessions will be held for policy makers, support will be given in undertaking social policy research, and a network of stakeholders will be created. The SPARK network is part of a larger initiative from the EU Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion to promote the benefits of social policy experimentation throughout the EU as a tool for social innovation.³⁹

USA: Impact evidence

The New York City Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) develops and finances innovations to tackle poverty across the city. With evidence of impact central to its approach, CEO runs programmes in collaboration with agencies across the City government, robustly testing their effectiveness to scale and spread the most promising, whilst stopping those that don't meet their desired outcomes. One successful CEO programme is Community Partners, an outreach programme to connect people from high poverty areas with employment opportunities. Mobile Community Partner teams were established in all five boroughs of New York City, coordinating referrals to the public workforce system for job placement services. In 2013, 23,000 referrals were made, resulting in 3,600 people securing job placements.⁴¹

Just as it is committed to growing what is working, CEO is equally committed to stopping or decommissioning ineffective programmes. One example is the Nurses Career Ladder programme, designed to train low-income New Yorkers to secure higher salaried positions as nurses, which was stopped when there ceased to be a demand for nursing staff. CEO has also influenced national policy. In 2008 CEO developed an alternative poverty measure that is having national impact. Their work inspired the Obama Administration and this new approach is now being used by the US Census Bureau.^{42, 43}

In Practice



UK: The British government is currently setting up the world's first network of independent 'What Works' centres in order to collate evidence on best practice in social policy. These will be in the fields of crime reduction, active and independent aging, early intervention, educational attainment and local economic growth. Where possible, the centres are being hosted by practitioner organisations in the areas concerned, e.g. the crime reduction centre is being hosted by the College of Policing.



Global: Notable examples of social innovation labs include the European Network of Living Labs, the Social Innovation Generation lab at MaRS in Canada, La 27e Region in France, Participle in London and MindLab in Denmark.



2.8. PROMOTING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Policy makers and government can support social innovation by supporting and promoting citizen engagement in social innovation, while remaining sensitive to its limitations and managing the expectations of the wider stakeholder community.

Beyond increasing the legitimacy of social innovation projects and decisions, promoting citizen engagement in social innovation is important for a number of reasons:

- First, engagement may be necessary to better understand social needs. Often citizens themselves are not driving the development of new solutions; in these cases, the civil servants, public policy makers and non-profit leaders who do not experience these problems and challenges first hand benefit from hearing citizens articulate the challenges they face, their tacit knowledge, desires and experiences.
- Second, citizens themselves can be the source of innovative ideas. Policy makers and governments can foster this through processes such as competitions and co-design activities.
- Third, engaging citizens introduces divergent thinking which helps to find novel solutions to complex problems.
- Fourth, citizen engagement is necessary because of the nature of the social challenges we face. Complex or 'wicked' problems often defy top-down policy responses and by definition lack a single 'solution'. Often, behaviour change is required, such as in the case of tackling climate change which requires a shift to 'reduce, re-use, and recycle'. Thus solutions require the active participation and cooperation of citizens.

Policy-makers can play two important roles in maximising citizen engagement: first, they should consider how they can engage citizens in their own socially innovative work and service design; second they should also promote and support the appropriate use of engagement methods by their suppliers and delivery partners.

In practice



India: I Paid a Bribe is an online platform developed by non-profit Janaagraha that uses crowd-sourced data to paint a picture of the nature, scale and location of bribery. The data supports citizens in their attempts to resist bribery, and also serves as an advocacy tool. On a policy level, it has been used to pressure government departments to change their processes and procedures and thus improve public service delivery. It has now spread to countries such as Kenya, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, as well as European countries Greece, Hungary and Kosovo.



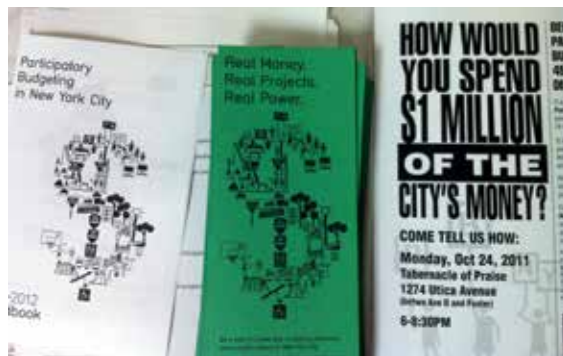
UK: Groundswell is a charity that helps homeless people take more control of their lives and have greater influence over the way services are designed and delivered. Its 'Homeless People's Commission' brought people with experience of rough sleeping together with policy makers and peer-led research identified the critical success factors that have enabled people to successfully move on from homelessness.



Australia: Family by Family is a new model of support entirely co-designed with families. It aims to enable more families to thrive and fewer to come into contact with crisis services. The programme finds, trains and resources families who have overcome tough times and connects them with families who want things to change. After the first year, 90% of families were meeting their goals, changing their beliefs and behaviour.

In general, there are three main ways in which citizens can be involved in supporting and sustaining social innovations: By providing information and resources, particularly about their needs, preferences, ideas and opinions; Problem solving, by introducing divergent thinking and buying-in to projects and proposals; Taking and influencing decisions, by citizens taking control of decision-making processes and/or the implementation of those decisions.

Citizen engagement can take a large number of forms, depending on how many people are to be involved, and the purpose of the engagement. Examples include user-led research, co-design processes, personalised budgets, crowdsourcing, participatory budgeting, idea banks, and competitions.



Participatory budgeting materials in NYC.
Credit: Daniel Latorre/Flickr

Nonetheless, citizen engagement is not a guarantee of 'success' and relies heavily on the skills and commitment of those involved. There is also a clear risk that failed engagement will lead to greater disconnect between governments/ local authorities and their citizens.

When governments want to involve citizens in their activities, there is frequently a mismatch between the way they describe a project and the reality of what it will involve for citizens. All forms of engagement should be tailored to the context and the appropriate resources in place. Using terms like 'empowerment' or 'local-control' when citizens are simply taking part in consultation exercises is likely to raise expectations that cannot be met. 'Shallower' forms of engagement that involve individuals contributing information or opinions can be a major source of value to the development of social innovations, but they need to be described in

a way that participants will recognise. Consideration must also be given to the implications of who is and is *not* engaged, and the potential for co-option of engagement processes by groups with vested interests.

Policy-makers have an important role to play in managing the expectations of the wider stakeholder community and providing a supportive environment.

Germany: participatory budgeting

Berlin-Lichtenberg is a borough of East Berlin with just over 260,000 residents. Six per cent of the local budget is used for a participatory budgeting process, which in 2014 was in its eighth year. Citizens are invited to submit proposals and vote for new services on the following themes: libraries, health, children and youth, culture, music schools, public roads, volunteering, services for the elderly, sports, environment and nature and economic development.⁴⁴

Proposals can be submitted online or at residents' meetings, which are open to all residents and held across the borough. They then have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on proposals. The borough administration reviews all proposals, amending them where appropriate to make them ready for a 'voting day'. The borough also carry out a household survey – a randomised sample of the population are asked to vote on their favourite suggestions. The final votes are passed on to the co-ordination committee at the borough who carry out feasibility studies, assess the financial costs of the proposals, decide which ones to implement and start the implementation process. The assembly is accountable for the final decisions and the implementation of projects. The monitoring committee, which consists of local residents, assembly members, councillors, civil servants and civil society representatives, is responsible for evaluating and improving the process.⁴⁵

Between 2005 and 2011, 1,888 citizen proposals were collected by the borough, of which 414 were presented to the borough assembly. Of these, 83 were rejected by the assembly but 331 have either been implemented or are in the process of being implemented. Research suggests that the process has been successful in increasing participation rates of under-represented groups, helping to build social capital in the borough, strengthening the problem solving capacity of the local community, and increasing legitimacy and transparency of the budgeting process.



2.9. MEASUREMENT

As well as supporting social innovation research, there is a clear imperative to measure social innovation in order to understand both the shape and size of the local 'market' and the impacts and outcomes of socially innovative ways of working.

Effective support for social innovation will increasingly rely on governments and policy makers having a solid understanding of the 'state of the nation' in terms of social innovation within their country or region. To do this, it is important to consider all dimensions of social innovation.

Figure 3 shows a new blueprint for measuring social innovation in any given country or region, developed through Tepsie research.⁴⁶

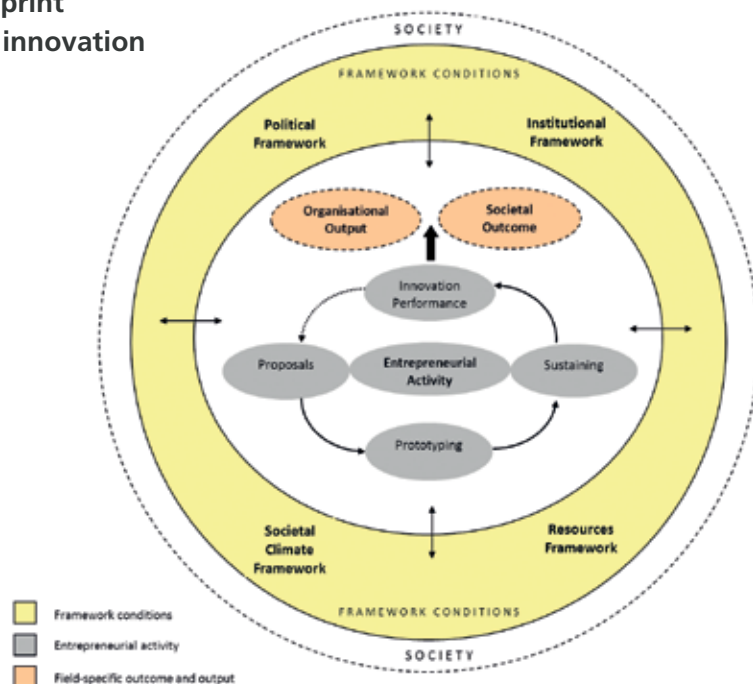
This identifies three main dimensions which should be considered:

- A measure of the *framework conditions* for social innovation. This enables insights into the structural conditions for social innovation. Thus policy makers are able to gain insights into how to create conditions that are more favourable for social innovation.
- A measure of the *organisational outputs and societal outcomes* of social innovations. This gives an insight into the impact of social innovation and gives policy makers data that they can use to make decisions on how to best target support.

- A measure of the *entrepreneurial activities* that produce social innovations. Considering the importance of entrepreneurial activities as push-factors for social innovation, policy makers need empirical survey data on organisations that are socially innovative in order to better understand how social innovation emerges and how well it develops in societies.

At the moment, there is no single widely accepted measure, reflecting the diverse nature of social innovation and that its measurement is in relatively early stages of development. Nonetheless, examples for established metrics that can be used that are directly linked to *innovation* measurement in private or public sector organisations or measurement systems include: The Innovation Union Scoreboard (European Union), Global Innovation Index (INSEAD), Innovation in Public Sector Organisations (NESTA), Measure Public Innovation in the Nordic Countries (MEPIN), the 'Innovations panel' in Germany, and the Global Competitiveness Index (WEF). Metrics that focus on social, normative or environmental dimensions, which are particularly appropriate for capturing the *social* aspect of social innovation, include: OECD Better Life Index, European System of Social Indicators (GESIS), Civil Society Index (CIVICUS), National Footprint (Global Footprint Network).

Figure 3: A new blueprint for measuring social innovation





2.10. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Digital technology can be a powerful support for existing social innovations, an enabler of new social innovations and a transformer of the governance and framework conditions underlying social innovation. Policy makers and governments should support the frameworks and infrastructure which underpin the role digital technology can play in social innovation.⁴⁷

As in many domains, the positive impacts of digital technology are only achieved if the technology is used appropriately. Its use must arise from a clear social need and the attempt to find and apply new and appropriate solutions, rather than necessarily trying to improve existing solutions. For example, the Kenyan mobile money MPESA application for mobile phones did not try to provide Kenyans with an online bank account in a traditional bank, but simply addressed their need to transfer money easily, cheaply and securely whether or not the sender and receiver have a bank account.

Digital technology in social innovation cuts across all policy fields and social needs. Given this, a set of policy enablers is required:

- to equip and empower social innovators with relevant skills and understanding;
- to ensure that the public sector is itself digitally and socially innovative and can support social innovators;
- to ensure that wider partnerships (such as characterised by the quadruple helix of private, public and civil sectors plus research institutions) are in place to promote the use of digital technology in social innovation.

Policy makers should develop support frameworks to incentivise the use of digital technology, including through specialised intermediaries. Given that even everyday technology is still a black-box for many, specialised skills and strategies are required, particularly to ensure

that the tasks which the technology does best are digitised. This requires embedding in support of those tasks which people themselves clearly do better than the technology. The wider social innovation purpose and context needs to be the central goal.

Governments can also directly facilitate the use of digital technology in social innovation through supporting more experimental processes and increased data transparency.

Social innovations also emerge, not only from the identification of a specific social need, but by experimenting and innovating using new digital tools and assets, such as open data and people's skills, enthusiasm and dedication. For example, 'hackathons' use open government data, as well as crowdsourced and other data, to develop apps and to curate ecosystems of providers and users of digital tools for social innovation purposes. Such hackathons typically result in many more 'unusable' applications than ones which can immediately be used in real-life situations, but they are hot-beds of innovation and experimentation, typically spinning off new avenues of innovation which themselves lead to usable applications.

Digital technology in social innovation is not only about applying ICT tools directly to social needs, but is also increasingly underpinning the development of other technologies which can support social innovation. Inherently, this is dependent on strong policy-making to support the development of new technologies and network neutrality.


Prime examples of new technologies include the development of 3-D printing and other additive manufacturing technologies, where digital technology is used to design and transmit new types of physical products which can be used for social innovation purposes. For example, digital tools are used to scan and analyse injuries and to develop designs for replacement prosthetic limbs, which can then be transmitted by the internet to war victims in developing countries for local 3-D printing, production and use.


‘Network neutrality’ refers to whether the various internets, and the integrated Internet of Things, will continue to be equally free for all to use, or whether it will become increasingly commoditised. If the latter happens, it will favour large commercial players with considerable financial resources who will increasingly push smaller players, including those typically involved in social innovation, to the back of the line and maybe exclude them altogether. The current global battle on this issue is critical for digital technology in social innovation and is part of the European Union’s plan to establish an Internet of Things Platform to support the single market.


Finally, in terms of overall policy frameworks, it is important to support local innovators and champions, including social entrepreneurs. Appropriate European, national and local policies, as well as legal and regulatory frameworks, need to be conducive to the new social and business models which can deliver the benefits of digital technology in social innovation, including by enabling managed experimentation.

However, they also need to mitigate the danger of undermining some of the economic, social, community and individual benefits – which are fundamental to social innovation success – because of exploitation, loss of rights, or loss or reduced quality of services. This can take place, for example, when unemployed people are able to find work when their skills are matched digitally to employers purely focused on reducing costs. Policy and regulation must not only be appropriately conducive and wary of possible negative effects, but should also be proactively interventionist when warranted, for example in situations where the demand side needs to be stimulated in relation to using open data, taking ICT training or even consuming healthy food or environmentally friendly products.

In practice


 **Denmark:** Patient Briefcase is a mobile solution to connect the patient in their own home with professional medical & care personnel through live video and audio channels over a broadband internet link. It places strong focus on user-friendliness and making it easy for patients to be ‘admitted to hospital’ in their own homes.

 **UK:** Cell Slider is an interactive website that encourages members of the public to engage in cancer research through the public analysis of images of tumours and cancers. Between its launch in October 2012 and December 2013, around 200,000 people visited the platform and nearly two million breast cancer images from two breast cancer studies were classified.

 **Poland:** Professor Why combines computer generated images with real images and introduces users to the world of science, which can be explored both at school and at home. It also offers the possibility to do virtual experiments.

 **Global:** Fab Labs “provide access to the tools, the knowledge and the financial means to educate, innovate and invent using technology and digital fabrication to allow anyone to make (almost) anything, and thereby create opportunities to improve lives and livelihoods around the world”. They primarily work with NGOs, educational institutions, and community groups.

 **Spain:** EsLife is an online tool which offers flexible work matching for household & family tasks, tackling high unemployment in local area. Over 1,000 people have already been matched with work in 7 cities, growing to over 25 cities in 2014.

 **Netherlands:** The Viedome Total Community Platform provides personalised daily and long-term physiological, medical and psychological needs of elderly and others in need of eight types of care; integrated in home and community contexts.

Conclusion

‘The future is already here. It’s just not evenly distributed yet.’⁴⁸

While social innovation is often thought to be a domain of non-state actors, policy makers are able to act both as a support and a catalyst for the field as well as being a source of innovation themselves. We hope that this short guide, developed from our Tepsie research, has helped to provide an overview of the many contributions being made by governments and policy makers today, as well as providing guidance as to where more work is needed.

Some of the most significant developments have been the emergence of social innovation labs situated within government, the rise of the evidence based policy movement, the introduction of social value into public procurement and increased government support for social investment. Additionally, the rise of digital technologies have given governments new ways to engage with citizens and connect diverse networks of actors.

That said, while many governments and policy makers are engaging with some of these trends, very few countries could be said to be participating in all of them. This is a great missed opportunity, as a strong social economy is fundamental to tackling the major challenges facing nations across the world. Governments and policy makers are uniquely positioned to help establish and support the eco-system which socially innovative individuals and organisations need to flourish. By sharing best practice policy makers from across Europe and beyond can learn more about what works best in different environments. We hope that some of the examples in this report serve as inspiration and encourage policy makers to continue sharing both their successes and lessons.

Resources

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To find out more see www.tepsie.eu.

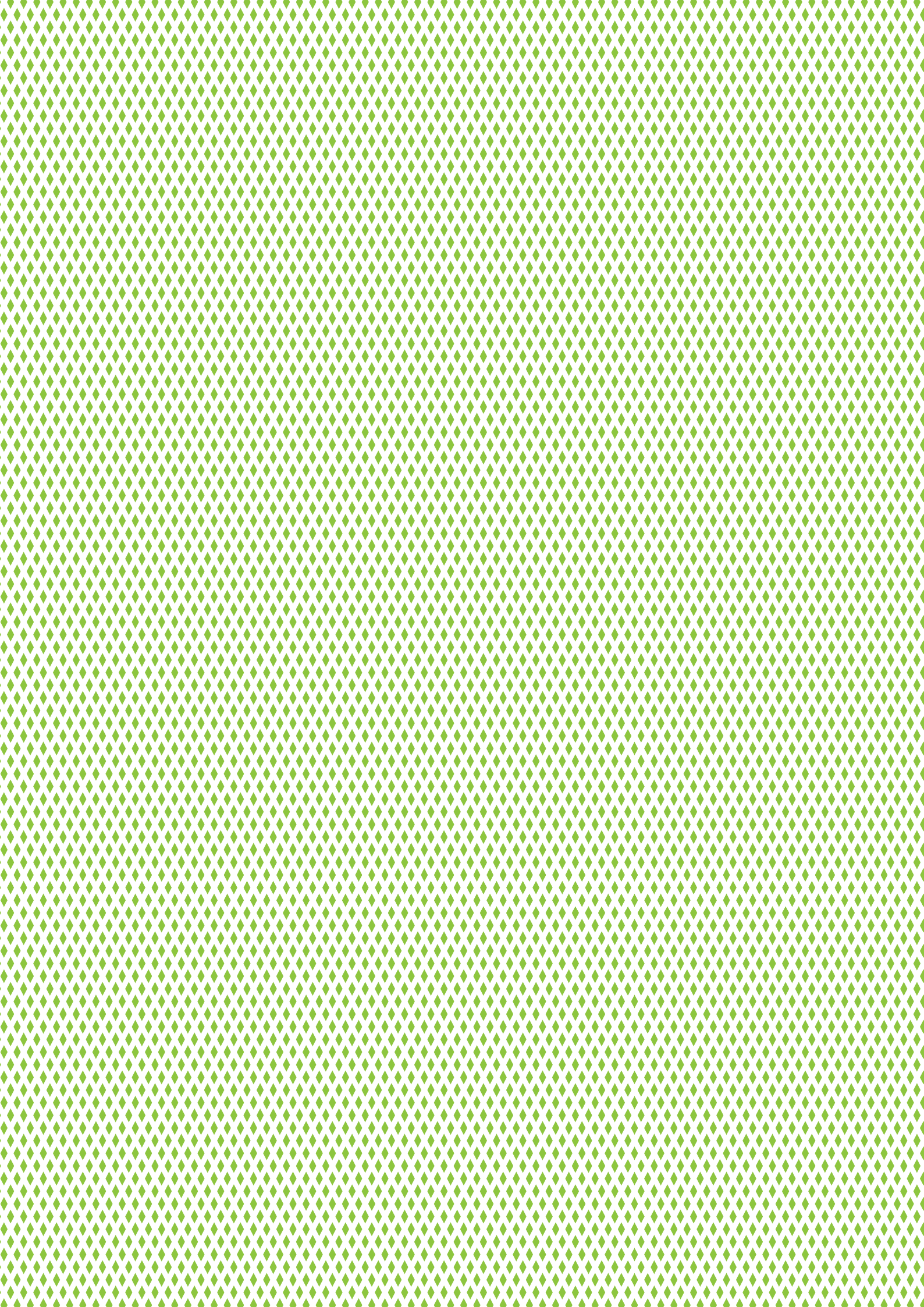
USEFUL LINKS

- Social innovation exchange – the global network of social innovators
www.socialinnovationexchange.org
- Siresearch.eu – a platform which brings together all EU funded research on social innovation
www.siresearch.eu
- Social Innovation Europe – the European network and community of social innovators <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/socialinnovationeurope/>

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