

# INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL INNOVATION

**Critical Thinking  
Bulgaria 2019**

## Why critical thinking and Social innovation?

- Lack of user-friendly methods for social change
- Critical thinking can be a shared value for society, via social innovation methods
- Social innovation is based on critical thinking
- Critical thinking consists of many internal, self-reflective processes and SI brings it back to community

# WHAT CAN YOU GAIN FROM SOCIAL INNOVATION?

## THE BENEFITS

The main benefit:  
the added value for society.

Besides that:

### **Financially**

- Reduced costs
- Increased revenue
- Higher sales
- Increased margins
- Greater profit

### **Reputation**

- Improved brand awareness
- Better image
- Larger audience
- Positive brand experience
- More recommendations
- Larger differential advantage

### **Customers**

- Better relationship with customers
- More involvement of employees
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Better service experience

### **Partners**

- Sustainable relationship with all players involved
- Increased satisfaction of shareholders

### **Chances for innovation**

- New products / services
- New forms, models or systems of collaboration
- New business models
- Better processes

# WHAT IS SOCIAL INNOVATION?

## IN SEARCH OF AN APPROPRIATE DEFINITION

### PRAGMATIC APPROACH

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Social innovation as 'innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly developed and diffused through organisations whose primary purposes are social.'<sup>1</sup>

### ECONOMIC APPROACH

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Social innovation defined as 'conceptual, process or product change, organisational change and changes in financing, and new relationships with stakeholders and territories.'<sup>4</sup>

### SYSTEMIC APPROACH

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A 'complex process through which new products, processes or programmes are introduced, leading to a deep change in daily routines, resources' streams, power relations or values within the system affected by the innovation.'<sup>2</sup>

### CRITICAL APPROACH

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A process of 'empowerment and political mobilisation' targeting a bottom-up transformation of the functioning of a social system, in terms of stakeholders and in terms of distribution of material and immaterial resources.'<sup>5</sup>

### MANAGERIAL STANCE

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Social innovation as a 'new solution to a social problem which is more effective, efficient, sustainable or fairer compared to existing solutions, and which generates value primarily for society instead of single individuals or organisations.'<sup>3</sup>

### SHORT APPROACH

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We like keeping things simple, so for us, social innovation is '**innovation that is social both in its ends and its means.**'<sup>6</sup>

# WHAT SOCIAL INNOVATION IS NOT

## THE CONFUSION BEHIND SOCIAL INNOVATION

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Social innovation is not a new concept and should not be considered similar to other definitions, such as social entrepreneurship, creativity or invention, improvement or change. 'As with innovation in technology or business, social innovation is distinct from 'improvement' or 'change' and from 'creativity' and 'invention'. These last two are both crucial to innovation but overlook the important stages of implementation and diffusion which make new ideas useful.'<sup>1</sup>

### SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

'Whilst social innovation certainly occurs through social enterprise and social entrepreneurship it also happens in many other contexts. Conversely, although social entrepreneurship often involves innovation, only a small minority of social entrepreneurs create new models that can then be scaled up, and that process of scaling up often involves governments and larger businesses.'<sup>2</sup>

### IMPROVEMENT / CHANGE

- Innovation requires change.
- Change is doing something different, while innovation is about getting better concurrently.
- Social innovation requires the implementation of a strategy, while change or improvement might not.

### CREATIVITY / INVENTION

- Creativity is the ability to originate new ideas, while innovation is the transition of the mental state to the actual implementation of those ideas.
- Invention is a process referring to parthenogenesis
- Inventions are mostly seen out of business or society, in universities and research institutes.

# SOCIAL INNOVATION IS NOT ‘NORMAL’ INNOVATION

## THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO

### **‘SOCIAL INNOVATION PROJECTS ARE:**

- ‘Multidisciplinary and aimed at integrated solutions
- Focused on empowerment and working together
- Driven by demand
- Custom-made
- Approached in an open manner to allow the sharing of knowledge and intellectual property

### **‘NORMAL’ INNOVATION PROJECTS ARE:**

- Focused on stand-alone solutions
- Determined from the top-down
- Driven by supply
- Mass-produced
- More closed and confidential in approach’<sup>1</sup>

# SOCIAL INNOVATION EXAMPLES (1/2)

## SOCIAL INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

“The emerging field of social innovation is rich and varied – from new models of learning and eldercare to new ways to reduce waste, empower communities and transition to a low carbon economy – and there are many organisations and individuals engaged in the development and use of social innovation across Europe.”<sup>1</sup> Below, see some examples of social innovations that have made the world a better place thanks to their long-lasting social impact.<sup>2</sup>



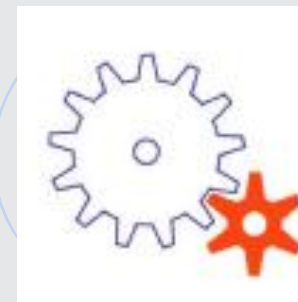
### Open University

And other models of distance learning that transformed the way people engage and interact with education.



### kiva

The world's first peer-to-peer micro-lending site allowing people to 'lend money via the Internet to low-income entrepreneurs and students in over 80 countries.'<sup>4</sup> Its mission is to alleviate poverty.



### Repair Café

'Repair Cafés are free meeting places and they're all about repairing things (together). There are over 1.500 Repair Cafés worldwide.'<sup>3</sup>



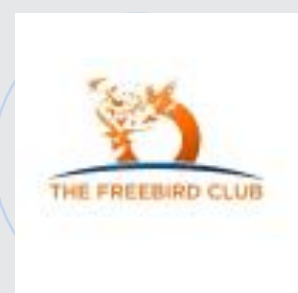
### Fair Trade

A social movement pioneered in the UK & USA with a mission to aid producers in developing countries achieve better trading conditions.



### Grameen

Grameen Bank is a microfinance organisation that alongside BRAC is empowering poor people to end poverty and hunger.



### The Freebird Club

A peer-to-peer social travel and home stay platform designed specifically for people over 50. It addresses loneliness and financial stability.



## SOCIAL INNOVATION EXAMPLES (2/2)

“The emerging field of social innovation is rich and varied – from new models of learning and eldercare to new ways to reduce waste, empower communities and transition to a low carbon economy – and there are many organisations and individuals engaged in the development and use of social innovation across Europe.”<sup>1</sup> Below, see some examples of social innovations that have made the world a better place thanks to their long-lasting social impact.<sup>2</sup>



### Linux Software

'And other open source methods such as Wikipedia and Ohmynews that are transforming many fields.'<sup>1</sup>



### Wikipedia

An Internet-based, free encyclopedia, written collaboratively by the people who use it. The largest and most notable general reference work on the Internet.



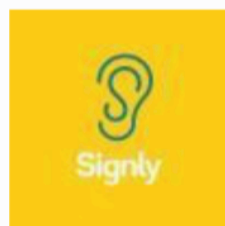
### The Social Teahouse

The Social Teahouse employses youth raised in orphanages in a creative event venue offering food, tea and co-working



### Herbal garden

Herbal garden employes youth with intellectual challenges and offers outdoor activities for kids.



### Signly

An app that uses augmented reality to display pre-recorded sign language videos, which enables access to written content for deaf users.



### The Family Shop

Social start up that offers therapy in reward of knitted blankets handmade by parents of special needs kids



## A WORD ON SOCIAL INNOVATION HISTORY (1/2)

'Social activists were the youngest generation of the New Left/Labour who having tried changing government from within and somehow failed, joined forces with civil society activists, technopositivists and researchers to continue their enterprise to renew Western democracy from outside governments.'<sup>1</sup>



### THE BIRTH

1990s

Started between the 1990s and early 2000s as a movement of social activists and researchers in the UK, with America following.

### GAINING MOMENTUM

1996

In the new millennium President Obama established The White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation as he took office in 2009.

# A WORD ON

## SOCIAL INNOVATION HISTORY (2/2)

### EUROPEAN RECOGNITION

2010

In 2010 the European Union launched its Europe 2020 strategy, with Social Innovation being defined in the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative (2010).

### CHANGING FRONTIERS

2010s

'The inclusion of social innovation as an official EU policy triggered a cascade of regulatory and nonregulatory actions with notable impact on the promotion of the third sector and social economy.'<sup>1</sup>

### ESSENTIALITY OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

2018

Europe noted an impressive track record of successes. Yet, it faces existential challenges (shrinking population, an ageing society = further pressure on services and security systems. At the same time, globalisation, urbanisation, digitisation and migration raise the speed of change and unpredictability).

## TYPES OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

### CONTRASTING CHARACTERISTICS

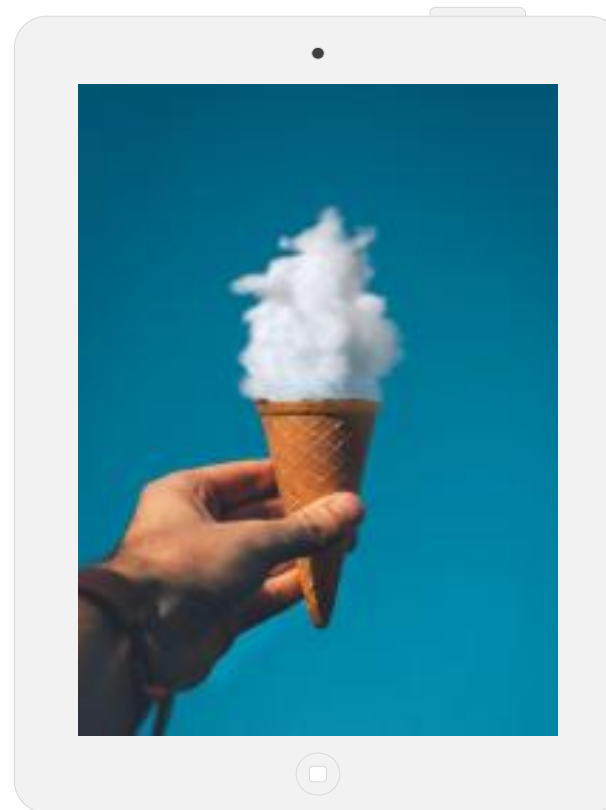
The word 'innovation' comes with many names. In the modern era innovation is one of the most overused terms and can describe a process, phenomenon, strategy, product, idea or service that is new or breakthrough. The term social innovation is used to describe something that is new and has a cause. Social innovations attempt to fulfil a humanitarian purpose with new approaches and tools.

### Incremental

Incremental social innovations are the ones that 'build on what went before.'<sup>1</sup>

### Radical

Radical social innovations provide 'entirely new models for thinking and doing.'<sup>1</sup>



### Disruptive

Innovations are perceived as disruptive when they can 'disrupt patterns of production, consumption and distribution.'<sup>1</sup>

### Generative

Innovations are understood as generative when they can 'generate further ideas and innovations.'<sup>1</sup>

# FEATURES OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

## IN SEARCH OF COMMON POINTS

### CROSS SECTORAL

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'Social innovations can cut across and occur in all sectors. Social innovations frequently move between sectors as they develop – for example, many models of distance learning were pioneered by non-profit organisations and then adopted by business or social enterprise.'<sup>1</sup>

### GRASSROOTS & BOTTOM UP

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'Social innovations are often bottom-up, grassroots, distributed and local. Here, the old model of centralised command and control that developed in the period of mass production has been replaced by distributed systems.'<sup>1</sup>

### OPEN & COLLABORATIVE

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Social innovations often need several stakeholders to be implemented, which may come from fields of expertise. This collaboration 'entails large numbers of people working independently on collective projects without normal market structures and mechanisms.'<sup>1</sup>

### BETTER USE OF ASSETS & RESOURCES

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'Social innovation often recognises, exploits and coordinates assets and resources which would otherwise be wasted, under-used or not used at all.'<sup>1</sup>

### MUTUALISM

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'Mutualism is the notion that individual and collective well-being is obtainable only by mutual dependence.'<sup>1</sup> Yet, there is a new form of mutualism emerging, which enables networking and promotes mutual exchange in a great array of forms.

### ASSETS & CAPABILITIES DEVELOPMENT

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'Many social innovations explicitly aim to develop the capabilities of beneficiaries enabling them to meet their needs over the longer term. This capability approach highlights human agency and advocates participation.'<sup>1</sup>

# SOCIAL INNOVATION APPROACHES

## KEY CHARACTERISTICS



**'Open rather than closed** when it comes to knowledge-sharing and the ownership of knowledge.'<sup>1</sup>



**'Multi-disciplinary and more integrated to problem solving** than the single department or single profession solutions of the past.'<sup>1</sup>



**'Participative and empowering of citizens and users** rather than 'top down' and expert-led.'<sup>1</sup>



**'Tailored** rather than mass-produced, as most solutions have to be adapted to local circumstances and personalised to individuals.'<sup>1</sup>



**'Demand-led** rather than supply-driven.'<sup>1</sup>



**Driven by integrity and purpose** rather than by the power or personal interest of the social innovator.

Social innovation includes six stages that move from idea generation to the creation of impact. Social innovations are not always sequential because 'some innovations jump straight into 'practice' or even 'scaling'.<sup>1</sup> Social innovations 'can also be thought of as overlapping spaces, with distinct cultures and skills. They provide a useful framework for thinking about the different kinds of support that innovators and innovations need in order to grow.'<sup>1</sup>

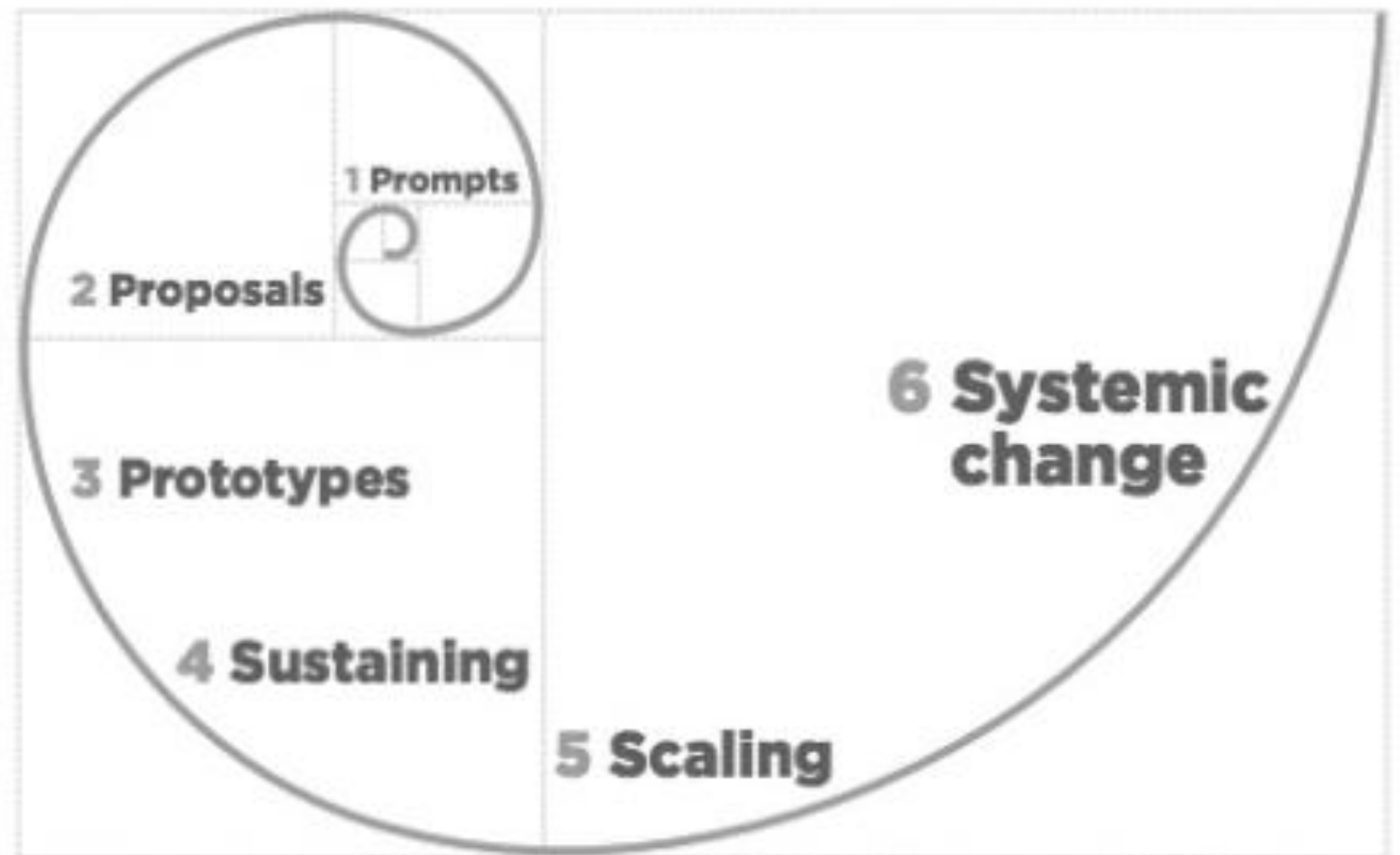


DIAGRAM: The Process of Social Innovation<sup>1</sup>

# INITIATORS OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

## INDIVIDUALS, MOVEMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS

'Today most discussion of social innovation tends to adopt one of three main lenses for understanding how change happens: individuals, movements or organisations.'<sup>1</sup>

### INDIVIDUALS & ENTREPRENEURS

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Social change can come in different shapes and from various stakeholders regardless of their profession or fame. Notable examples of social innovators are 'Muhammad Yunus, the founder of Grameen, Kenyan Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai, or Saul Alinsky the highly influential evangelist of community organising in the USA.'<sup>1</sup>

### MOVEMENTS FOR CHANGE

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Like individual change-makers, movements for change can spur a whole social innovation spiral. 'The most far-reaching movements of change, such as feminism or environmentalism, involved millions of people and had dozens of intellectual and organisational leaders, many of whom had the humility to realise that they were often as much following, and channelling, changes in public consciousness as they were directing them.'<sup>1</sup>

### INNOVATIVE ORGANISATIONS

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Innovation does not always emerge from new organisations, but can come from existing ones that strive to bring change. 'Any successful organisation needs to be simultaneously focused on existing activities, emerging ones and more radical possibilities that could be the mainstream activities of the future.'<sup>1</sup> Bringing social change means understanding the problem and working from the inside out in order to bring a resolution.