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SOCIAL INNOVATION:
NEW GAME, NEW DAWN OR FALSE PROMISE?

Hivos
people unlimited

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> '"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."
>
> Charles Darwin'

A Way In

The ecological principle underpinning this oft quoted adage serves as a theme for this paper's questioning: does Social Innovation offer a game changing new dawn or a false promise for better tackling the 'big' issues of our time. There are many issues to choose from. Examples are: the anticipated, unwelcome consequences of climate change; the diverse consequences of aging populations and the ecological consequences of demographic growth; a destabilising increase in economic inequalities; inter-generational prospects of precarious livelihoods; anticipated global pandemics; and, often violent, intolerance of life choices such as religious beliefs and non-heterosexual sexual orientations. Does the thinking and substance of social innovation as currently portrayed seek to change the 'games' producing these outcomes or - one by one - alter rules under which they are being played?[1] Should organisations devoted to tackling big issues across the globe consider taking up the role of a social innovator? A framework for answers is provided by the system of international aid which is largely populated by entities with such an expressed purpose in and for society. But, as will be seen, the scope and implications of this study are not limited to the field of aided change.

An 'organic' angle into a critical discussion of Social Innovation as an inspiration, mission and primary process for an organisation is chosen for a number of reasons. First, it is usually in an organisation's interest to respond to shifts in external conditions, particularly to alterations in the norms, rules and institutions which 'structure' society towards stability and predictability over time (Scott, 2008).[2] Be they for the short or long term, organisational responses that refine, find or create a 'niche' in an ever changing operational landscape are part and parcel of ensuring a relevant self-understanding and viability.[3] Observing such behaviour over time, Thompson (2008) argues that there is no such thing as an organisation, but simply a permanent state of organising and disorganising that spawns *'innovation', that is originality and inventiveness* in changing a society's artefacts, functions, forms, norms and relationships at different, nested scales. His dynamic sentiment informs this writing.

Proponents of social innovation often voice such a socio-ecological perspective.[4] The emergence of social innovation and innovators is seen as a 'natural' response to a rapid escalation in the type, number of and links between big issues faced by all societies, where the local and global cannot be separated. A common argument is that relations between societies' dilemmas are complex, both causing and 'thickening' negative prospects for humanity. Today's institutions and the physical environment cannot sustain how people and planet are interacting. Under such conditions, social innovation arises as a problem-solving expression of human agency. The phenomenon is interpreted as one example of a self-propelled counter-reaction by 'responsible' people in their individual and collective, 'auto-structuring' efforts to solve unwelcome effects of globalisation. Proponents of social

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[1] The label 'game' is used as shorthand for multiple natural and manmade forces and power relationships driving processes which dominate how societies and the world work and to whose benefit over time.

[2] Institutions can be understood as stabilising but intrinsically unfulfilled outcomes of conflicted structuration in society, which manifest themselves as social regularities and relational patterns arising from human action that overtly and covertly guide behaviour. Operating at multiple scales, institutions embed, gel and mediate configurations of power that can be changed by people's agency. Societal structuration is systemic, which means that institutions seldom operate in isolation from one another. They can be distinguished in interpenetrating dimensions of (in)formalisation and (a)symmetry. That is they can embody an unintended organic process of patterning or be purposeful pragmatic responses of a society, often relying on legal codification. Asymmetry means that some institutions treat everyone as equal, while others do not.

[3] This process is not simply one of environmental determinism – organisations also act to change the environment to suit their interests. A ying and yang are in play.

[4] Advancing towards an Innovation Society is now a political agenda (e.g., Lane, 2013).

innovation reflect an implicitly normative position that this 'new' approach is better able to address wicked problems than others which are already available (e.g., Caulier-Grice, Davis, Patrick and Norman, 2012). A central purpose of this paper is to explore and test such a 'thick problem + solutionist' explanation for understanding and adopting social innovation as an organisational option.

A Way Around

This study investigates social innovation in by defining and applying test criteria. Social innovation can be directed at causes or symptoms. We therefore need some idea of why societies' problems are 'thickening'. This insight will help judge social innovation as a solution-response from within the social ecology. Consequently, in Part I, a first set of criteria are provided by analysis of the world at a 'tipping point' and what this means for social innovation as a potentially game changing response.

The second source, detailed in Part II, looks for criteria to assess the merits of social innovation as a discrete category. Does it make sense in relation to other types of social action? A yardstick is the extent to which social innovation is distinctive enough to act as a meaningful organisational choice. The way of finding out is to locate and compare social innovation within a much broader historical family of the 'social'. Does its substance stand out enough to be worthy of a separate labelling? For the moment, we can treat *social innovations as original or inventive individually or collectively driven initiatives that are intended to alter the rules of the game - or the game itself – that are played out in the institutions that co-determine a society's trajectory, sustainability and its winners and losers.*

International aid provides the grounds for a third set of criteria. Reasons for choosing this focus are three-fold. One is that the sixty year old system of aided change is populated by entities and processes -such as internationally financed and governed public agencies, as well as global conferences on 'big' issues such as climate change, inequality and insecurity as well as myriad private initiatives – whose calling is to prevent and 'solve' such wicked problems. If social innovation is not relevant here, where would it be? What can it offer? Second, many years of developmental investment has produced rich experience about what can be classed as social innovation across time and space as both endogenous and exogenous processes. This body of learning can help counter what is identified as a relatively limited geography of social innovation thinking, loci and norm setting. Third, as will be seen, the small 'd' of development interventions is blending more and more with the big 'D' terrain of the economics and geo-politics of globalization. But, little 'd' is doing so in ways that may offer venues for and leverage on the latter. Together, detailed in Part III, these justifications provide a third source of criteria test the merits of social innovator as an organisational choice. However, this aided developmental focus recognises that the concept of social innovation is gaining traction everywhere. For example, Canada has appointed a Minister for Social Innovation. Europe is looking to evolve itself by member countries becoming innovation societies.

Across all three sources of criteria, an important pointer to future problem resolution is seen in repeated references to the systemic complexity of societies' dilemmas that require *collective action* on an unprecedented scale involving a new breed of *'interlocutors'.*

The substance of Part IV is to test social innovation against criteria distilled from Parts I, II and III. It concludes, in Part V, with a summary reflection on social innovation as a concept and strategy and becoming a social innovator as an organisational choice. The considerations and trade-offs involved will obviously be unique to each organisation.[5]

Part I – Thick Problems and Their Evolution

Social innovation is an up and coming discourse for public policy specialists and others concerned about deteriorating prospects for people and planet. For, notwithstanding tangible gains in reducing the poverty and material deprivations experienced by many of the world's inhabitants, concerns continue to be raised about the viability of a global trajectory based on an increasing scale of a consumption-driven economic model, allied to population growth (e.g., Rischard, 2002). A common

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[5] A separate discussion note considers the social innovation option for Hivos.

story line is that the world is at a 'tipping point' or 'crossroads[6] brought about by an increasing number of inter-connected wicked and super-wicked problems (Bernstein, Cashmore and Auld, 2009).[7] This part of the paper starts by looking at four 'thickening' forces which are supposedly taking the world to a 'crossroads' at which social innovation would have to demonstrate its value.

The need to do so stems from the perspective that existing institutional arrangements – like the European Union or the United Nations system or regional trading blocks or the G7, 8, 20, 77 or whatever configuration of nation states – are patently fragmented. These set-ups cannot generate adequate remedies, so new types and locations of solutions are required which, to be effective, must differentiate between causes and symptoms. Identifying the forces driving big problems provides a reference point to test a prospect that social innovation will satisfy such a remedial requirement.

Here, a word of caution is required. Not all factors discussed are to be found everywhere, nor to the same degree– sensitivity to forces and problems vary from context to context, country to country. Inevitable generalizations must therefore be treated with critical care.

The Long Path to Problem Thickening: A Conspiracy of Disillusionment and Disenchantment

In his 2011 publication, Mike Edward's alludes to 'thick' problems – such as inequality and global warming - with causes that are not amenable to old solutions which have been tried and failed. This perspective requires unpacking causalities to understand and judge the merits of the emergence of 'social' solutions. With a tipping perspective in mind, a broad summative treatment offers causal pointers.

Four Tipping Forces

At least four forces play substantial roles in problem thickening that conspire in unprecedented ways to bring the world to a point demanding radical reforms. The big forces creating thick issues are located in major social systems of economics, politics, ecology and the complexity of their interactions.

Economics

The economic force is argued to be structural. As articulated by world systems analyst Emmanuel Wallerstein, economic conditions correspond to a crisis which points in a 'tipping' direction.

> 'The system has gone from bubble to bubble. The world is currently trying one last bubble - the bailouts of the banks and the printing of dollars. (Wallerstein 2009, pp. 12-13)
>
> The coming together of the three elements - the magnitude of the "normal" crash, the real rise in costs of production, and the extra pressure on the system of Chinese (and Asian) growth – means that Humpty Dumpty has fallen off the wall, and the pieces can no longer be put together again. The system is very, very far from equilibrium, and the fluctuations are enormous. As a consequence, the short-term predictions have become impossible to make, and this tends to freeze consumption decisions. This is what one calls structural crisis. (Wallerstein, 2009:21)'

However, from a centuries-long geo-political view, Friedman (2009) argues that the recent economic crisis is located within a longer cyclic phenomenon which is not 'tipping' but simply repeating past economic expansion and contraction in new ways. Whatever the case, a growing tendency is to doubt the resilience of the accumulative global economic system and to question the ability of politics to find an alternative, structural remedy.[8]

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[6] www.crossroadsfilm.com

[7] Wicked problems have multiple inter-dependent causes and multiple possible solutions which may or may not be amenable to practical implementation. Moreover those causing the problems are also those responsible for fixing them.

[8] For our purposes, a system is made up of interacting elements that exert mutual influence on each other and act on other systems with different constituent elements which operate according to different principles. So a legal system is distinctive enough to be distinguished from a monetary system which it regulates. Systems typically nest within each other from smaller to larger scales. A systemic change alters how the whole of a particular system functions.

Today's distance from economic equilibrium means that small fluctuations can have disproportionately big effects triggering, for example, mass activism seen on many streets across the world, (Gladwell, 2000; Biekart and Fowler, 2013). One trigger is disillusionment with the future promise of 'free' markets and the economically expedient precariousness of employment that they rely on (Lee and Korfman, 2012). Because of their near collapse, lightly regulated laissez faire Western economies are no longer reliable role models for aspirants.[9] These conditions signal a second deep-lying problem generating a 'tipping' potential, namely disenchantment with and mistrust towards a compromised political establishment described later.

A large scale and apparently long-term feature of the recent crisis is the dragging of a bulk of populations in otherwise relatively 'contented' and secure post-industrial countries into an unwelcome scenario of broken promises about the supposed security of their well-being. A future beckons that lacks shelter and promise, particularly for the young and mid-life generation, but also for those already retired. In these countries, virtually no socio-economic group is or will be unaffected by what has occurred. Nor is the geography limited to Western Europe or the United States. Alongside financial markets and their channels, supply chains provide a pathway for contagion of economic distortions and governments' often 'austere' stabilizing responses that are felt at both ends – by producers and consumers and the 'would be' (young) employed.

Politics

The salient point is that disruptions to the lives, hopes and prospects of those who felt somewhat immune from the downsides of globalisation are at a scale where democratic politics is found wanting by those who can vote. Mistrust in politicians is endemic. The resulting activisms of the Occupy movement and *Indignados* may be spearheaded by younger people, but support and engagement is not limited to them. In demanding better governance, a growing frustrated and educated middle class is flexing its political muscles. Nor has the locus of these activisms remained where they started. Turkey and Brazil can now be added to democratic dispensations that experience major socio-political dissatisfaction and civic unrest. A long history of civil disobedience across the globe is now said to show a communication-enabled 'compounded inflation'.

> '… the possibility that civil unrest activities, across countries and over long time periods, are governed by universal mechanisms has not been explored. Here, we analyze records of civil unrest of 170 countries during the period 1919-2008. We demonstrate that the distributions of the number of unrest events per year are robustly reproduced by a nonlinear, spatially extended dynamical model*, which reflects the spread of civil disorder between geographic regions connected through social and communication networks."* (Braha, 2012:1, emphasis added.)'

A question arising is the extent to which twin motivators of today's activism – economic and political – are reinforcing a sense of inter-generational alienation and their net-enabled reactions in forms not foreseen by Karl Marx or Adam Smith (West 1996), allied to an emerging citizen transnationalism (Batliwala and Brown, 2006). While Marx saw evisceration of private property as the solution, the Adam Smithian counter to alienation was education. Smith's model prevails. Yet, the provision of education is generating a glut of graduates feeding diploma inflation and high student indebtedness. This condition feeds an inter-generational disenchantment with what the current system had 'promised' to young people in both pre- and post-industrial populations.

It can be argued that the economic crisis has exposed and broadened this type of age-related malaise across the world - North, South, East and West – but in net-enabled ways that are giving rise to information flows, connected solidarity and collective consciousness that transcends national borders in ways not seen before. One result is a game of e-based cat and mouse between regimes wishing to control information and citizens wanting greater transparency and accountability. [10] To contain the internet's transnational power, the prospect of a nationally enclosed internet with 'virtual visas' may not be an unrealistic prospect (Schmidt and Cohen, 2013).[11] But even then, the advent of

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[9] The capitalist economics China or India both operate on the basis of 'managed' markets.

[10] Finlay, 2011. China's 'giant caging' of the internet (*Economist*, April 6, 2013) to control information and curtail social media activism is one example.

[11] *Economist*, May 4th 2013, pp. 72.73.

'digital natives' as a 'new' generation has to be factored into accounts of how activism will impact on political futures where mistrust in party-based representation is endemic (Edelman, 2012).

> 'This headline slump in trust is due, above all, to the public losing faith in political leaders. In 2011, across all countries, Edelman found that 52% of those polled trusted government; this year, it was only 43%. Government is now trusted less even than the media, which actually enjoyed a modest recovery, to 52% from 49% last year. Trust in business fell slightly, from 56% to 53%, as did trust in NGOs, which still remain the most trusted type of institution, at 58%, down from 61% in 2011. For each institution, the broader public was even less trusting than the informed, with government trusted by 38%, business 47%, NGOs 50% and the media 46%.[12,]

That the loss of people's trust in public institutions and business is pre-occupying international institutions is readily apparent in, for example, a Re-Building Trust Forum created in 2013 by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

> 'Trust makes economic transactions smoother and more efficient and is the basis for social interactions. Yet most people do not trust government or business and many are suspicious of the media. The reasons vary in each case, but today's attitudes have their origins in the recession. Corporate greed and bad management are seen as the initial cause of the financial and economic crisis, but governments are blamed too, both for failing to prevent the crisis from happening in the first place, and for appearing to propose only solutions that made life worse for victims such as the unemployed, those on low incomes or users of public services. [13,]

The failure of public institutions to provide or protect welfare gains and public goods is global in scale. Resolution is critically hampered by the multiple sites from which such governance should operate (McGinnis, 1999; Ostrom, 2009). Misalignments, conflicts and self-interests play out between different types, locations and scales of governing, which weaken possibilities to hold political or executive authority to account. This further exacerbates people's perception and experience that existing institutional arrangements are simply not up to the task of 'unthickening' let alone resolving social problems.[14] Something else is required that can take a longer term, systemic view, allied to the ability to turn interdependence into effective collective action.

Ecology

A third 'tipping' force is ongoing depletion of and failure to manage the global commons and public goods. This shortcoming brings destabilizing climate effects which add to human vulnerabilities and inter-generational uncertainties. This condition signals a fundamentally flawed, systemic 'disconnect' between people and planet.

> 'In the environmental sustainability problem the human system has become improperly coupled to the greater system it lives within: the environment. The universal consensus among environmentalists is that how to achieve proper coupling is *the* problem to solve. (Harich, 2010:35)'

For example, issues of access to and control over the planet's natural capital on the one hand and cross-border pollution are aggravating international relations and establishing asymmetric dependencies, particularly on energy suppliers. Failure of the carbon-trading system is one example of theoretical and institutional failings in dealing collectively with globally disbursed but dependently connected behaviours. Similarly, the socio-economic consequences of resource capture by national or private interests are creating tensions that have to be mediated. An additional dilemma about public goods stems from contention about the claim of intellectual property rights on natural resources such as medicinal plants, but now also commercial ownership parts of the human genetic code. The general point is that abilities to negotiate agreements and manage the global commons

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[12] http://www.economist.com/blogs/newsbook/2012/01/faith-world-leaders
[13] http://www.oecd.org/forum/issues/rebuilding-trust.htm
[14] "The term "social dilemma" refers to a setting in which individuals choose actions in an interdependent situation. If each individual in such situations selects strategies based on a calculus that maximizes short-term benefits to self, individuals will take actions that generate lower joint outcomes than could have been achieved." (Ostrom, 2005:4)

are imbued with numerous resistances which feed social and economic anxieties and undermine the efficacy of (inter-) national governance. Not surprisingly, therefore, are arguments that use the 'commons' as a way of linking conditions of the physical planet to the notion of global governance.

'It is only by moving from the idea of individual protection to the idea of protection of all that we can start to envisage the possibility of a global social contract. In other words, it is our global freedom, that is, our freedom to enjoy, thus to protect, what is common to all of us as a world community that will entice us to, and determine our will to extract ourselves from what is essentially becoming a global war on our planet, on our "commons," and on ourselves.[15]'

Complexity

Finally, the tipping point argument draws on the principles of complexification to comprehend what happens to society as more and more forces interact over time (Casti, 1994). Deepening interdependence and associated interconnection of risks produces non-linearity and emergence – the creation of unanticipated phenomenon that cannot be simply be reduced to their constituent parts (Johnson, 2001). Advances in technology, changes in demographics, escalating energy demands, with economic cycles of expansion and contraction, are feeding unprecedented concentrations of wealth and perpetuating volatility. These conditions are occurring alongside contested reconfigurations in geo-political in power, a growth in tourism that spreads diseases, in sectarian, cultural or religious conflicts, in natural disasters and so on, which all become increasingly connected in unforeseen ways to create unpredictable outcomes. The future is certainly becoming more uncertain, requiring organisations and institutions that can best work with this uncomfortable reality. Complexity is a way of understanding what has occurred, but without the pretence of predicting what might happen. At best one can only try and forecast and build contingencies into everyday life. Could social innovation offer a way of doing so?

Navigating a Future

From a social innovation point of view, there are dimensions to a tipping point narrative that merit particular attention. One is the relatively long historical nature of the forces described above that become more interwoven over time (see Friedman, 2009). Consequently, it should not be anticipated that remedial responses or 'tipping' will be 'events'. More likely are signs and signals of remedial alternatives arising and being tried out – some successfully find a niche and systemic traction, others do not. As a history of the 'social' described in Part II teaches us, social innovation may be one of these evolutions in advancing towards critical decisions about navigating into the future.

'We may think of this period of systemic crisis as the arena of a struggle for the successor system. The outcome may be inherently unpredictable but the nature of the struggle is very clear. We are before alternative choices. They cannot be spelled out in institutional detail, but they can be suggested in broad outline. We can "choose" collectively a new stable system that essentially resembles the present system in some basic characteristics - a system that is hierarchical, exploitative, and polarizing. … Alternatively we can "choose" collectively a radically different form of system, one that has never previously existed - a system that is relatively democratic and relatively egalitarian. (Wallerstein, 2009:230)'

In this vein, Laszlo (2012) postulates a choice between (adjustments to) Business As Usual (BAU) and Timely Transformation scenarios (TT) and lists features of each. His identification of movement towards the latter emphasises the psychosocial dimensions of crisis and the emergence of individual and collective consciousness and the issue of values. Elaborating on this factor, Beckwith (2102:153) speaks to The Birth of a Global Citizenry and its agency.

'The transformation of an egocentric model of 'me and mine' into a world-centric mindset of 'we and ours' is the vessel that accommodates a revolution in values creating space for the emergence of a global citizenry. … because, *how we govern our individual life determines the character of international relations on our planet.* (Emphasis in original)'

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[15] Blin, A. and Marin, G, <Forum for a new World Governance.htm> downloaded 14 February, 2103.

However, there is a widely observed interpenetration of business and political systems and their interests. This corruption-feeding dynamic is seen in the privatization of democratic politics as a commodity to be 'messaged' and sold. Constituted by governments, it is unlikely that political-economic institutions, such as the World Trade Organisation, will be the source of different values and other imagined futures. One will probably need to look elsewhere for this type of impulse.

What does this mean for testing social innovation?

Attempts to address the depth of thick problems requires interventions that: (1) home in on root rather than intermediary causes of the forces in play; (2) anticipate resistance to change by intertwined political and economic power holders and their interests; (3) work with critical socio-political intangibles, such as trust; (4) gain enduring effects at a meaningful scale for the issue of concern; (5) are comprehensive enough to engage with multiple actors in terms they understand, which means; (6) adopting a complex systems perspective to transcend the traditional institutional 'sectorism' which works against integration of mutually reinforcing processes of change. A test of social innovation should include these parameters.

There is also a need to assess the extent to which social innovation, as currently portrayed, has a realistic potential to initiate Timely Transformation in the dominant growth + consumption + politically discredited game. Or, is its practice more likely to be limited to incremental 'one rule at time' BAU-type reforms that fail to change the game itself. Such a distinction is a topic of Part II.

Part II – The Re-Advent of the 'Social'

Analysis of how and why the world's problems and dilemmas are thickening contained in Part I takes a long view of the processes involved. It can be argued that increasing attention to the 'social' as a site for problem recognition and remedy stems from multifaceted ways in which the 'thickening' of social dilemmas and dysfunctions has occurred in time and space. In other words, in history, the spontaneous emergence of socially-driven initiatives is a 'prescient' indicator that all is not well with the way a society and the world are working. Their additional value has been to provide a source of 'learning-from the edge' about innovative ways to advance significant change (Ellerman, 2006).

The objective of Part II is, therefore, to work out how to test today's thinking about social innovation in terms of being a meaningful, substantive category for action and investment. The method locates today's notion of social innovation within a bigger historical family. This positioning is used to critically look at the promotion of social innovation in terms of its relevance and efficacy for tackling social dilemmas at scale other than by amelioration, such as by providing social safety nets. Applying a non-placatory criterion is important if the task is to address thick causes and not just thin symptoms (Edwards, 2011).

The Family of the 'Social'

Social innovation is one member of an extended family of concepts and practices that rely more and more on members of society in any walk of life or type of employment to act pro-socially both as individuals and collectively.[16] They can do so as employees, as employers, as the unemployed, as rich or poor. From whatever position and stage in life, they must live in a society of their making and deal with its consequences. Innovators take to the fore in addressing the issues they and others face at home and abroad, today and tomorrow. Often tied to individuals as socio-political entrepreneurs, it is necessary to recognise that today's repertoire of the 'social' in altering how society functions at a meaningful scale has inspirations which go back centuries. In the eighteen hundreds, such an impetus in Europe is linked to the social dislocations and risks associated with modernization and urbanization. Innovation was reflected in the values and institution of an *economie sociale*. This system was made real by mutual insurance associations, savings and credit cooperatives and other combinations of economic and solidarity principles and survivalist, the various 'traditional', culturally

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[16] What pro-social means is itself problematic as it depends on socio-historical conditions and contexts. A pro-social minimum would be increased tolerance for those that are different and a concern beyond pure self interest towards a wider whole (Fowler and Biekart, 2008)

embedded risk-spreading collective arrangements to be found across the world (Defourney, Develtere and Forteneau, 2000).

In a more modern era, Ashoka's Leading Public Entrepreneurs (Bonbight, 1997) profiled individuals tackling 'global systems problems' such as child labour or provision of caring. An overview of innovation in social enterprise (Hordijk, 1999) included The Body Shop, Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, BRAC, Fair Trade, Greenpeace and the Forest Stewardship Council. Since then, social entrepreneurship and enterprise have been joined by additional angles into the 'social' as a change maker. The general point is that this historical landscape can provide a point of reference for judging the merits of a new family member.

Pluralising the 'social': Observations about contexts, drivers and mandates

Recent time shows an inflation of 'social' discourses and typologies (see Annex I) which now include: social enterprise, social entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, alongside social capital, social movements, social media, social accountability, social (impact) investment, social franchising, social observatories, social transformation and social laboratories. Their cumulative effects are soon to be measured by means of a (national) Social Progress Index (SPI).[17] This year by year expansion of concepts and social action categories are now joined by the notion of a social solidarity economy (SSE) (Kawano, 2013). Expressions of concern for society from within the world of business are: Markets for Good[18], shared value, corporate social responsibility, low profit companies and the like.

Contexts

The family of the 'social' rely on a particular paradigm, i.e., an internally coherent set of assumptions, rules, relationships and explanations about 'how things work'. Today's paradigm of action arising from the 'social' relies on a human pre-disposition towards the public good and well-being, allied to a relatively autonomous political space from which people can exert individual and collective agency. Implicit are Western precepts and assumptions about freedoms and rights to act as an agent of change that apply everywhere. However, a presumed western universalism masks assumptions about an ultimate political-economic convergence of the world order. This prescriptive view should be guarded against. Western universalism in people exerting pro-social agency from any status or walk of life is a questionable proposition: Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Vietnam, Russia and China being cases in point. When comparing three 'big visions' of the future world (dis)order Richard Betts (2010) argues that there is no unequivocal sign of a global convergence towards western configurations of state-society relations and related internal distribution of power. Modernization does not necessarily equal westernisation and economics does not necessarily triumph over (cultural) identity and dignity. It is therefore prudent not to assume that variations of the 'social' arising in the West – such as social innovation - can simply be 'exported' elsewhere. Put another way, we need to be aware that contexts determine the 'power space' for people to act autonomously. Even minimal differences in an innovation's start conditions can lead to significant differences in trajectories and outcomes.

Drivers

Diverse narratives of social family members point to a somewhat narrow historical-geography of 'needs' with a 'problem + solution' bias (e.g., Mulgan, et al, 2007:4). Broader history shows that innovations from within the 'social' are *not* exclusively driven by new ideas and products to satisfy unmet 'needs'. Exploration of human imagination and potential seen in the arts and cultural expressions are also drivers of people challenging and changing society with systemic outcomes. By 'inventing' and spreading Afrobeat and its lyrics, deceased Nigerian musician Fela Kuti is credited with a political impact which abetted the end of the country's Military rule.[19] Innovation through social entrepreneurship of belief – such as the Ron L. Hubbard's founding of the Church of Scientology – has, in many countries, constitutionally challenged what is understood as a legitimate religion, leading to interpretations with systemic consequences.[20] Here, social innovation did not stem from need, per se, for a new musical genre or for an additional belief system.

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[17] http://www.forbes.com/sites/skollworldforum/2013/04/11/michael-green-announcing-the-social-progress-index/
[18] http://www.marketsforgood.org/
[19] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fela_Kuti (Accessed, 23 May 2013)
[20] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientology_status_by_country(Accessed 23 May, 2103)

The general point is that social innovation has many drivers: not just problems but also expressions of ingenuity and inspiration of the human spirit that create civic energy. As currently articulated, social innovation discourse is too limited to a view of a problematic world order that needs fixing, which resonates with the premise of international development described in Part III below. However, this narrowed framing, fixation and character of solutionism poses a significant danger that:

> 'Everything that lacks practical consequence is excluded from the sphere of reason and sent to another, inferior sphere. (Friedman, 2010:63)'

In doing so, problem-driven social innovation introduces a potential design blind spot in terms of fully comprehending how societal changes are systemically impeded or driven and the contending supportive forces, resistances and reactions they can give rise to.

Mandates

In addition, an overly practical focus can both justify and obscure a normative imposition from those pursuing social innovation to bring about systemic effects on 'everyone'.

> 'So to make a long story short, the pairing of the words "social" and "innovation" is a response from *within* the Innovation Society, by people and organizations who subscribe to most of its ideology, but are trying to steer the Innovation Society in a direction that they regard as socially desirable. (Lane, 2013:5-6)'

This type of self-adopted mandate – associated with exerting rights as a citizen - calls for social innovators to put forward and adhere to clear governance and accountability norms. This is particularly important when social innovation intentionally goes against the grain of conventional practice and people's comfort zones. A problem solution gained by one may be another's loss.

Untangling multiple angles into the 'social' with shared characteristics is not easy. But clarity in analysis, argument and critical appraisal of social innovation make such an attempt necessary. A practical approach is to hunt down and compare definitions. Together, where appropriate, with brief explanatory texts, Annex I provides eighteen definitional examples of members of the family of the 'social'. A pitfall in the content is that writers seldom agree on definitions, making selection not quite a lottery, but certainly open to question. Moreover, definitions change over time. Nevertheless, these extracts illustrate the differences in emphasis and alternative framings for what the 'social' is all about. With these comparisons in mind, the following section explores the extent to which today's promotion of social innovation is a meaningful concept in its own right.

Social Innovation: assembling a coherent picture

There is no definitive way to establish meaningful categories and testing coherence in a universe of overlapping concepts and their multiple definitions. The approach adopted is informed by Part I, that is by a perspective of social innovation in terms of bringing about change in the games that 'thicken' social dilemmas. We start with a critical look at social innovation in today's portrayal.

Social innovation – towards a developmental working definition

The Annex contains two recent definitions of social innovation. Looking at the constituent elements in the family of the social, the TEPSIE definition of social innovation is deficient. It is essentially narrowly utilitarian in solving needs, ignoring inspirations of the human spirit and its creativities. It also lacks significant features – such as politics and power - found in the rationales of other social family members. The TEPSIE rationale is imbued by the driver of an 'innovation society' as part-remedy to ailing European economies. Its utilitarianism is consistent with a Godin's (2011) historical analysis of the evolution of 'innovation' from a pejorative labelling to a positive modern embrace, typically in the context of technology. The quest to improve productivity and create new products with advertising to increase sales and consumption is a preoccupation and driver for technological innovation, often with systemic social consequences. Examples are invention of the 'pill' which increased options for women in family planning with far-reaching demographic and cultural

consequences. Innovation in micro manipulation of materials - leading to advanced communications seen in cell phones and the internet – is actively changing the nature of relations between markets and consumers as well as between citizens and states. This author sums up the present understanding of the innovation concept in the following way.

> 'From the 1970s onward, innovation as **technological (and commercialized) innovation** became dominant in discourses, helped by statistics that crystallized this representation. Such a representation rapidly became spontaneous. Many use innovation without the determinative "technological" when talking of technological innovation, *either deliberately, or more often, unconsciously*. …. To some, this has led to a loss of the variety and richness of the term, which many are currently trying to recover (*social innovation is an example*) – for reasons having to do to with "getting a share of the attention" devoted to technological innovation as much as for purely intellectual reasons – and may de-stabilize (who knows?) the dominant representation. (Godin, 2011:41, italics not in original)'

This quote suggests that the current promotion of social innovation as a distinct category has an underlying 'political' agenda to reclaim innovation from technological capture. It signals a concern among protagonists that global businesses, such has Hitachi, are co-opting the term social innovation to mask an agenda of maintaining the old rules of the game of commodification with a reputational nod to triple bottom line sensibilities.[21] In other words, today's portrayal seen on the definition is a reaction to social innovation being used as a cover for marketing a, supposedly, more responsible, but still problem-causing, Business as Usual.

The Westley definition of social innovation is parsimonious, not emphatically solutionist or normative. It does not infer that an innovation has to be something 'new'. More significantly, what qualifies as an innovation is determined by change effects subsequently observed in society. In other words, it relies on the principle, *post-hoc ergo prompter hoc*, i.e., after this, therefore because of this. While consistent with the non-predictive principle of complexity theory, this principle poses an interesting dilemma for the notion of designing a social innovation *a priori*. As insightfully observed by Dennis Rondinelli (1983) many years ago in the context of international development, aided projects are all policy experiments. Hence, from Francis Westley's definition, it may be more fitting to treat social innovation as social experimentation – which is what laboratories do. The issue therefore becomes one of increasing probabilities of innovation at scale occurring by combining a very thorough understanding of social processes with agility to take timely action. The definition leaves open interpretation of what constitutes 'profound', but steers towards the notion of broad scale and embedding as meaningful indicators. The reference to 'routines' can be reasonably equated with an understanding of institutions as defined in this paper. The concept of 'beliefs' is broad enough to encompass ideologies as well as faiths. Citing changes in 'authority' offers a very careful and meagre allusion to issues of power and politics which, paraphrasing Oscar Wilde, appear to be factors that dare not speak their name. As we will see below in relation to scale, the definition's reference to systems is problematic in that their boundaries are seldom if ever clear cut or uncontested.

Albeit implied and clarified in other texts, neither definition specifies context as a determining variable. Yet, development experience points towards context dependency as a critical variable for the effectiveness of even the most technical of interventions (e.g., Sacouman, 2012). And neither definition deals with the issue of the source of the solutions or initiatives. In other words, there is little to identify the character of a social innovator: motivations, agendas, values, organisational form, political-economy and so on. In this sense these definitions are not suitable for application in a developmental and organisational choice framework. For our purposes, a modified version of the working definition provided earlier remains more less appropriate: *social innovations are context dependent, original or inventive agent-inspired initiatives that are intended to alter the rules of the game - or the game itself - through the institutions that mediate and co-determine a society's aspirations, trajectory, sustainability and its winners and losers.* Rules of the game are understood as the prevailing norms, standards and practical ways in which a society resources itself and functions at multiple scales of socio-political organising. By implication, *social innovators are*

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[21] See <www.social-innovation.hitachi.com>

individuals or entities committed to and capable of bringing about interventions which lead to social innovation.

This non-solutionist formulation reflects: (1) the developmental principle of rights usually associated with citizenship;[22] (2) that initiatives are purposeful in a systemic sense; which can; (3) emanate from human action in any walk of life; while (4) recognising that change has differential effects within a society that are; (5) mediated by the power arrangements embedded in institutions. Initiatives may take any (combination of) forms – ideas, norms, artefacts, products, relationships, laws, processes, dispensations - suited to achieve the intended outcome. This definition avoids the problematic notion of 'newness' or the idea that that innovation is 'good' a priori and does not rely on assumptions of normative western universalism, such as enjoying a welfare state and its freedoms to speak, practice a faith, act in public space or gain access to information.

What is to be tested?

Somehow or other, social innovation must demonstrate that it is not a catch all category for use by any self-appointed claimant. Put another way, it must have appreciable boundaries underpinned by a defensible rationale. To stand out as a meaningful category, the content – ideology, principles, practical substance, methods, etc - of social innovation must be sufficiently distinguishable from other members of the social, particularly in terms of sensitivity to the 'thickening' forces described in Part I. To be deepened in Part IV, a step in this direction is to identify commonalities and differences with other family members.

A commonality within today's social family is an agenda to rectify what is perceived to be institutional failures. Energies emanating from the social towards solving collective problems are required precisely because of limitations within existing institutions and the (power) systems which they create and which bind them together. A reasonably consistent premise is one of a locus of agency from within the *civicus* of people with rights not beholden to any particular group or located in a specific institutional home.

Another commonality is an implicit notion that what is intended is 'obviously' good for society, or sections within it. That a social imperative can engender conflict and unfairness remains in the shadows. Less obvious, but an implied commonality, is the idea of achieving a scale of impact that is meaningful – in time and space- to problem at hand and that changes which occur are sustained.

Though not universal, another commonality is acceptance that changes which social innovators have in mind must engage multiple players, which typically involves transcending institutional barriers and breaking out of (disciplinary) silos. There is a general appreciation of complexity and a need to practically deal with its implications.

A notable difference is the reliance on individual or collective inspiration and effort. Social entrepreneurship and social investors tend to elevate an individual as central actor on the stage. Another difference is the extent to which an initiative from within the social should benefit particular groups – often associated with social movements – or society as a whole.

Finally, a comparative difficulty is one of assessing the extent to which contextual differences – for example freedom in exerting agency and in gaining access to information - are more or less relevant to what different members of the social family can reasonably expect to achieve. For example, social franchising requires enforcement of contract law, which social movements are less bound by, if at all. The general point is that, like other members of the social family, social innovation will have different context sensitivities that require recognition and militate against overly optimistic assumptions about replicability in diverse settings. As noted, development experience invites caution about the transferability of social interventions from one place to another.

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[22] While all people are agents, not all enjoy citizenship. Nor does citizenship mean access to freedoms assumed in the West. Nevertheless, this property defines the relationship between a population and a nation-state which legitimizes the latter. As nation states are likely to continue to determine borders for controlling systemic change, this individual + collective identity offers a firm enough grounds to locate drivers of social innovation.

It is now time to turn to another source of testing the merits of social innovation as an organisational choice provided by the terrain of international cooperation and development.

Part III – Aid and its 21st Century Trajectories

The opening of this study provided three reasons for adopting an international cooperation framework to explore social innovation which is being actively promoted across many of the post-industrial societies that provide aid financing. In brief, the three justifications were: (1) the aid terrain is populated by entities dedicated to solving wicked problems at scale. (2) Sixty years of heavily documented and analysed aid experience recount endogenous and exogenous innovations under diverse and highly stressed conditions that are a rich source of knowledge and examples. Put another way, there is significant potential for South to North learning about innovation and innovators as donor countries face their own stresses and relative impoverishment described in Part I. (3) The impending confluence of development aid and global development processes can provide unprecedented opportunities for the former to exert scalar influence on the latter. Part III works through these motivations in relation to testing the potential value of social innovation and social innovators.

Let us take at face value the proposition described in Part I that the world is facing a potential bifurcation of 'choice' in the direction that globalisation will take. A co-determining factor will be the extent to which international relations – with aid finance negotiations and development forums as mechanisms influencing global decision making – will nudge towards one or other alternative of Timely Transformation, Business as Usual or a messy/creative/zero sum mix thereof. In other words, might to tomorrow's aid agenda increase global capabilities for addressing the world's dilemmas?

More fundamental, therefore, than the technical content of a post-2015 aid agenda will be an answer to the political question: will a pluralising aid landscape and its management demands described by Greenhill, Prizzon and Rogerson, (2013) lead to the Hyper Collective Action called for by Severino and Ray (2010) to solve thickening problems, such as political destabilisation through inequality or preventing upheavals due to climate change? Put another way might the so-called End of ODA actually signal an opening up to a larger role that is not premised on its shrinking monetary value relative to a pluralising expansion in other sources of international transfer for developmental outcomes? Is the worth of a pluralised aid system post-2015 to be found in its convening, agenda setting and orchestrating potential rather than in its diminishing proportion of global financing? And, whatever the answer, where might social innovation fit in to aid scenarios and beyond?

Pluralising International Aid

The aid landscape is becoming more complicated. Table 1, shows how traditional development assistance (TDA) is being joined by many non-traditional sources and channels (NTDA). Inevitably, each source is tied to conditions and interests of both giver and receiver, leading to scenarios containing a highly complex mix of connections, forces, steering, alliances, relational potentials and challenges (Figure 1.).

Table 1
A taxonomy of development assistance

Development assistance flows considered		Other flows not considered
TDA	**NTDA**	
• Traditional bilateral cooperation • Traditional multilateral cooperation	• Non-DAC flows • Philanthropic and institutional giving • Social impact investment • Global vertical funds • Public climate finance • Korea • OOFs	• Domestic resource mobilisation • Export credits • DFIs (excluding those covered in OOFs) • Private remittances • FDI • Other private flows

* Further interactions on global estimates will also address the contribution of innovative financing across the different sources of TDA and NTDA flows.

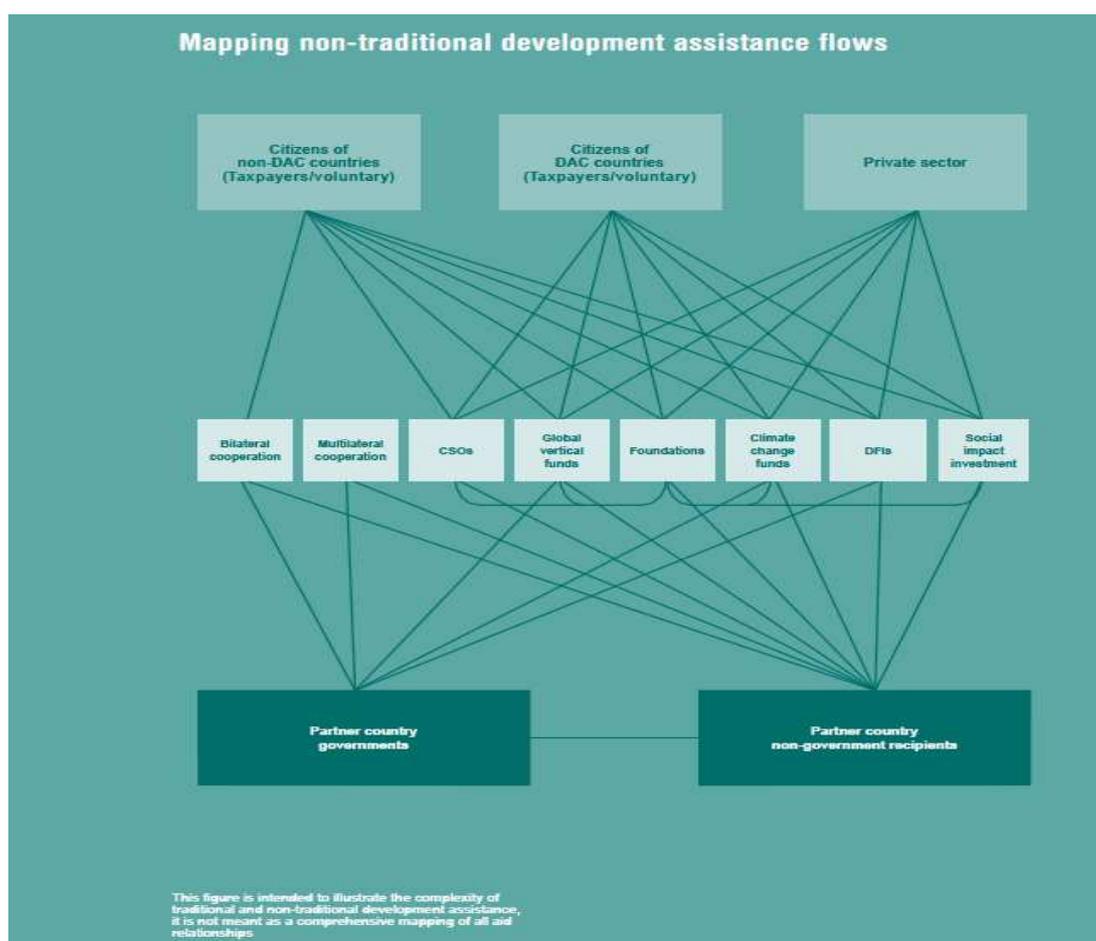Source: Greenhill, Prizzon and Rogerson, 2013:17.

It is beyond the scope and needs of this paper to' weight' the amounts involved based on a relative probability of exerting a 'tipping' influence one way or another. What is important is to gauge whether this proliferation of actors can be (self-)guided to forms of collective action that counter fragmentation, enhance effectiveness and hence increase the credibility of global public policy making in BAU or TT directions. In analysing this potential of development assistance, Severino and Ray (2010:2) reach the following conclusion.

'We argue that it is high time for a new conceptual framework to emerge, one which will help shape dynamic processes of multi-actor convergence that are more compatible with the political economy of international cooperation initiatives as they are taking shape in these early years of the 21st century. Improving actors' **performances** in the delivery of their share of the collective good will imply building a more open and comprehensive framework of collaboration for the provision of global public services – one which draws on the *five threads of cooperation* (rules and agreements; norms and standards; systems of incentives; information and discourses; networks and partnerships). (Emphasis added)'

These authors analyse in some detail limitations to aid harmonization in past practice – e.g., Paris, Busan - concluding that the future cannot be more of the same. Attempts at planning under conditions of increased actor complexity will be fruitless. Instead, complexity needs to be guided and steered towards greater effectiveness through a new way of thinking and repertoire of five cooperative threads- noted in the above quotation - that are threaded together.

'Public authorities have a fundamental role to play in steering this complexity in a way that provides the best possible fit between the supply of global public policies and the demand for 'global public services' (i.e. efforts to guarantee a stable climate, to ensure a reasonably secure international and local environment, to preserve humanity from the spread of global pandemics, etc.). The challenge of hypercollective action and the stakes linked to its success will push national and regional political authorities to set their violins aside to reposition themselves as the *conductors* of a grand polyphonic symphony. As trustees of the public good, their collective task is to structure global hypercollective action into relevant, coherent and effective global public policies to deal with the most crucial threats to global prosperity. (Severino and Ray, 2010:32)'

Figure 1. Connections in non-traditional aid flows

Source: Greenhill, Prizzon and Rogerson, 2013:21.

In considering a development landscape increasingly filled with a diversity of players, the authors attribute the role of prime mover to public bodies because nations-states will remain the principal political actors determining global public policies and the treatment of global public goods. But what, then, is the added value of having a plurality of non-state actors?

> 'How does this recent trend of state resurgence fit with that of the increasing weight of non-state actors on the international scene? Both of these tendencies are compatible with – in fact, constitutive of – hypercollective action. It is a mistake to think the expansion of non-state actors and the continued presence of states in international relations as antagonistic. As they will continue to coexist in the management of international policy, both state and non-state actors will need to find new ways of interacting in the definition of public goods and in the structures to deliver them. (*ibid)*'

One answer, illustrated by the Gates Foundation, is to take over the driver's seat in public policy towards HIV/AIDS.[23] A variation is seen in public policy networks that convene, offer safe 'spaces' for interaction and provide high profile political leadership that attract and steer the attention of multiple actors: coalitions formed against child soldiers and land mines are examples (Witte, Reinicke and Benner, 2000). Another non-state angle is one voiced by Hilary Clinton. She speaks to their potential for coalescing actors in applying 'smart power' to tacking global issues of shared concern.[24] At issue – illustrated by the OECD initiative alluded to in Part I, - is the extent to which non-state actors will be more trusted to convene and orchestrate than governments.

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[23] I am grateful to Remko Berkhout for pointing me in the direction of these illustrations.
[24] http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-250_162-57566994/in-farewell-speech-clinton-calls-for-smart-power-on-global-stage/

Plurality harbours less obvious, but potentially important, grounds for arguing that multi-actor forums and collaborations dedicated to the small 'd' development of aided change may be of greater consequence for the big 'D' development of the world as a whole. The arrival of BRICS on the aid landscape has brought with it south-south cooperation (SSC), allied to a philosophy of horizontal, demand-driven 'development investment'. This notion actively couples domestic trade and foreign assistance – a 'discredited' link that featured some thirty years ago as the cornerstone of official aid. Illustrated by new Dutch aid policy (DGIS, 2013) and strategic analysis (Mitchell, 2013) a market + business principle of poverty elimination is being adopted by OECD-aligned aid agencies (Konijn, 2013). A re-connection of aid with a deepening global interdependence through trade, coupled to a pluralisation of little 'd' development actors, suggests a new scenario for global policy making that will still lack global governance or enforcement. Consequently, the requirement to seek and to 'orchestrate' topic-specific, multi-actor collaboration based on mutual interests and complementary competencies will be greater than ever.

In casting government-owned bodies in such a role, a critical underlying assumption is that they enjoy a mandate and legitimacy that the previous sections suggest is seriously in doubt. The study by Severino and Ray acknowledge this weakness by identifying three gaps in the market place for global public policies: in information availability, in broken beneficiary feedback loops – read 'poor' (global) democracy - and in lack of adequate performance measures. Overcoming such limitations may turn the pluralisation of aid actors into a vital asset for the more inclusive processes required to negotiate solutions to global problems that cannot be achieved through Western and state dominated aid arrangements exemplified by the OECD-DAC (OECD,2011). At the High level Forum held in Busan in November 2012, non- traditional donors (NTD) declined to comply with a proposal that they adopt OECD-DAC principles, choosing in favour of their own South-South Cooperation (SSC) philosophy (Konijn, 2013). However, such an obstacle to fostering hyper collective action may be less of a problem than the gap in availability of trusted and competent interlocutors. This raises the issue of the extent to which the notion and practice of a social innovator is a candidate for such a function.

What is to be tested?

The previous section invites speculation that a social innovation could be a pathway to finding and providing '… new ways of interacting in the definition of public goods and in the structures to deliver them'. Assessing this potential for a social innovator needs to be tempered by the unlikelihood that big players of government and markets will be amenable to being ''orchestrated' at all, let alone towards game changing directions. A related, challenging issue is the extent to which existing organisational forms would be fit for such a purpose. Are the new 'mega-philanthropies' and the arrival of new semi-corporate/semi-NGO forms seem in L3 corporations in the USA and Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs) in the UK (Morgan, 2013) precursors of what a social innovator might look like? Are, for example, the advent of social innovation design/change laboratories and information exchanges organisational explorations in such a direction?

Part IV – Social Innovation as an Organisational Choice

Previous sections have identified criteria against which social innovation and the role of a social innovator can be assessed. Pulling them together leads to four tests for social innovation as a potential game changer: systems not sectors; scope and scaling; sustainability; and complexity of actors in bringing about collaborative societal outcomes. Exploring these inter-connected dimensions relies on a narrow but growing range of publications about and arguments in support of social innovation as a distinct idea and emerging practice which are in the Annex or are cited in what follows.

Test 1 - Systems not Sectors

Social innovation contributes to an active debate about framing of problems and solutions in terms of sectors or systems or some combination of the two, which corresponds to the notion of domains used in civic driven change (CDC) (Biekart and Fowler, 2012). In 2007, Leadbeater attempted to explain how various types of sectors – the social enterprise sector, the private sector, the public

sector, the voluntary sector and so on – are to be systemically connected. Though a conceptual morass, the notion of sectors loosely equated with actor types and their logics. Now, he argues that a sector framing is not adequate: system innovation and innovators are the key to the future.

> 'This paper is an attempt to explain why systems innovation will become the most important focus for companies and governments, cities and entire societies. In the last decade there has been a growing focus on innovation in products and services as a source of competitive advantage. In the next decades the focus will shift towards the *innovation of new kinds of systems*. (Leadbeater, 2013:28, emphasis added)'

The choice between structure or system and the conceptual framing they rely on make a difference to thinking about the scope of a social innovation and an associated perspective on scale. In the case of structure, a typical point of entry would be actors. Usually, they would be located within a tri-sector arrangement of society that corresponds to the imperative of market capitalism under conditions of democracy (Alford and Friedland, 1985). In the system view, a starting point would be pinning down the processes, connections and relationships needed for collective action and impact. This latter framing requires an appreciation of the specific forces energising the system, but within boundaries which are meaningful with respect to the particular issue.

Opting for systems thinking and framing brings up a question about the validity of the proposition that social innovations differentiate from social entrepreneurship in that the former involves sustainability and scale, while the latter does not.

> 'Such successful social innovations have durability and broad impact. (Westley and Antadze, 2010:2)
>
> It is this process of scaling up that differentiates social enterprise activities from social innovation (Westley, Antadze and Riddell, 2013:4).'

This sustainability + scale differentiation is disingenuous. The concepts of social enterprise and entrepreneurship from the 1980s, speak to systemic change as a defining principle for both inspiration and application.

> 'Ashoka Fellows' new ideas are demonstrated in local settings. Because their solutions derive from an understanding of the larger systemic forces at work. … many fellows innovations are ready to re-insert into the wider systems that helped to inspire their interventions. (Bonbright, 1997:1)'

A system perspective is an important feature of innovative impact. But today's portrayal of social innovation being distinctive in this way is somewhat misleading. What can be said in its favour is that social innovation as currently conceived is less focussed on an individual 'entrepreneur' with its business overtones and takes a sophisticated, complexity-informed view of what a human+ecological system are all about. From a 'test' point of view, both features are relevant for better dealing with thick problems. The implications for becoming a social innovator are discussed later.

Test 2 -Scope, Scale and Ambition: Changing the Game or Changing the Rules of the Game?

The world works as a scalar complex adaptive system (CAS) (Rihani, 2002) that can create the unintended consequences seen in wicked problems. Conceptually, there is no part of a society outside of the global system. Any action, anywhere contributes to how the whole functions. A human CAS is made up of people and entities as interacting agents who learn from experience which feeds back to change their interactions next time around. This relational property operates throughout society. Learning from experience feeds continuous adaptation, creating relational patterns. CAS theory argues that, over a long period of time, patterns in people's interactions are 'attracted' by principles and purposes some of which work better than others, for example because they build trust which reduces transaction costs. Small local patterns or 'niches' add upwards to form a hierarchy of

structures with 'domains' or 'regimes' of behaviour that in turn feed up and back down to influence and control what formed them in the first place. Natural selection towards preferred social arrangements takes place and become embedded as institutions. Figure 2, illustrates this idea.

Figure 2. Structuration combining multiple levels of systems
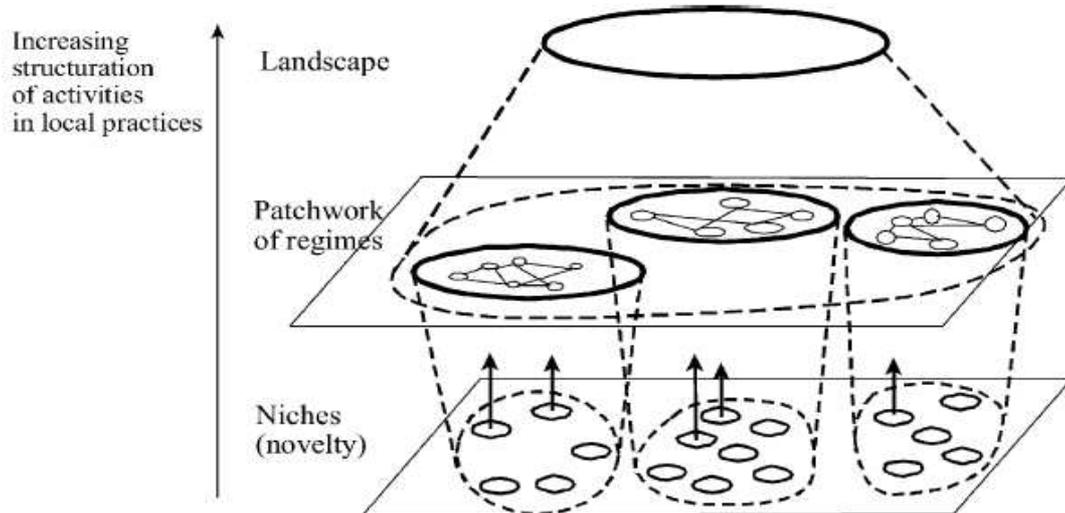

Fig. 8. Multiple levels as a nested hierarchy (Geels, 2002a).

Hence, institutions are an outcome of historical processes whose general effect is to help stabilise social relations to make life less costly, insecure and unpredictable, which reflects a human predisposition towards anxiety aversion. So, structuration of society is continuous, unpredictable scaling up and down from the individual and very local to the very big, the planet. Social innovations seek to identify interventions which can significantly alter and (re-)direct this endless process. For example, public policy is a type of intervention intended to influence a whole (sub-)system, such as incentivising self-help or energy conservation, combating child labour, preventing people trafficking, countering obesity, eradicating gender-based violence and so on. Consequently, a critical issue for social innovators is to determine how to gain systemic impact at what scale, which is tied to identifying what is a 'root' versus an 'intermediate' cause.

Root and intermediate causes

Complexity theory in social science (Byrne, 1998) often reflects four, nested and interacting levels of social organising - micro, meso, macro and meta - with their political/power equivalents of local, regional, national and international governance. A challenge for any social innovation to have systemic effects is, therefore, to be very clear about the location of the causation to be addressed. And, implicitly, this choice determines the scale of intended effects. A social innovator must have the competence to determine what is a 'cause' at what level of social organising. As illustrated below in relation to climate change, the task is both technically tricky and imbued with ideological and value-based premises that are seldom clearly articulated.

Literature and web presentations about social innovation laboratories makes reference to addressing 'root' causes, but with inadequate specificity in what is meant (see entry in Annex I). The quote from Forrester cited in Harich (2012:56) pins down the issue of causation in the following text.

'*Resolving a root cause set solves all the problems emanating from that set.* It follows that for a particular set of problems caused by a root cause set, if you can solve one problem you can solve them all. That's why instead of showing how to solve a specific environmental problem like climate change or freshwater scarcity, *this paper hammers home the strategy of finding root causes so systemic that resolving them solves the largest number of problems possible.*

> *Otherwise it's too easy to focus on the trees instead of the fores*t. Popular consensus sees things like the IPAT factors, the human system's growth loops, economic inequality and poverty, and lack of cooperation and other maladapted values as the root causes of the environmental sustainability problem, when in fact they are *intermediate causes*. These are also known as *proximate causes* or *apparent causes*, where the "apparent cause is usually a coincident occurrence, that, like the trouble symptom itself, is being produced by the feedback loop dynamics of a larger system" (Citing Forrester, 1971, p. 95, emphasis in original).'

By way of illustration, to answer the question: "…why, despite over 30 years of prodigious effort, has the human system failed to solve the environmental sustainability problem?", Hatch (2010:59) uses laboratory-style multiple simulations to determine the root cause of resistance to systemic change.

> '… the obvious influence of corporate industrialization on the course of civilization, suggests large for-profit corporations are now *the* dominant life form in the biosphere. The corporate life form's goal is to maximize the net present value of profits, while the goal of *Homo sapiens* is to optimize quality of life for those living and their descendents, which includes protecting the environment on which we depend for life. *These goals are mutually exclusive*, which causes a high anticipated net loss per proper practice for large for-profit corporations. We have thus found one possible root cause, one so pervasive it provides a steady drip, drip, drip that erodes even the best-intentioned efforts to solve common good problems like sustainability. It's tempting to call this a root cause of change resistance. But it's more accurate to see it as *a root cause of improper coupling*. If the goals of the corporate life form and humans were not mutually exclusive, then the economic system (which corporations dominate) would be properly coupled to the human system and hence the environment. (Emphasis in the original)
>
> We have found the possible root cause behind the success of systemic change resistance: is *high deception effectiveness*. Now then, where is the related high leverage point so we can resolve that root cause? Ever since the Age of Reason in the 17th century, educated people have prided themselves on building theories and making decisions based on reason, rather than intuition, tradition, emotion, or ideology. They don't do it perfectly, but they make reasonable decisions. They suffice. The model shows how those promoting their own agenda with deception effectiveness have found a way to make history run backward. They have found a way to reliably fool most people into acting against their own best interests, creating a sort of Age of Unreason, whose ultimate end is rapidly becoming mass ecocide. (ibid:63, emphasis added)'

Similar laboratory/simulation exercises might point to a meta-cause of economic ills - such as volatility and inequality. In this case, it could be argued that a root cause lies in perverse incentives associated with debt-driven growth, allied to the paradox of marketing which incites 'dissatisfactions' in order to sell commoditised remedies. Other examples of pinning down root causes with meta-effects show how difficult and contentious it can be. Social innovations that challenge the sanctity of marriage as exclusive to the reproductive relationship between men and women would probably have to deal with a root cause in axiomatic/religious disputes about the meaning and nature of 'family'.

The general point is that social innovation requires very careful delineation in terms of depth of diagnosis / rootedness. Establishing root or intermediate causes is not easy. But it is vital in order to determine the systemic boundaries involved and hence the scale of change.

Social Innovation – scale variations

One of the most fundamental decisions for social innovation and innovators is to determine the scale or system - usually a combination of sub-systems - that are *meaningful* for tackling the issue of interest. The HIV/AIDS pandemic can be addressed at many levels as can people gaining access to potable water. The scalar decision translates into the 'design' of a social innovation. Diverse scale examples can be seen in the following cases.

A macro example of social innovation is the Jubilee Campaign for Debt Relief, which was innovative in its framing of an international issue of unsustainable debt repayments by individual nation-states.

> 'The success of Jubilee 2000 is often attributed to the way it re-framed the debt issue. First of all the campaign used the end of the millennium to generate a sense of urgency and need for change. Secondly, it identified a lack of public awareness and civil society involvement in the debt

cancellation issue as the reason it was often dismissed by the political and financial elite. In response to this, the organisation reinterpreted complex issues surrounding the international political economy and developed simple concepts that were publicly accessible. Rather than economic policy, debt cancellation was linked to human rights and social justice. This alternative interpretation of the debt issue appealed to a much larger audience, many of whom had been previously uninterested or unaware of the issue. (Mann, 2010:49)'

The Jubilee campaign also innovated from traditions of transnational civic agency by refusing to lead or represent coalition members. In addition, from the outset, the organisers established and tracked external evaluation criteria to hold states and multi-later agencies accountable for their commitments. Though the aid system was not changed as such, one of its critical systemic rules on lending was, to the potential gain of millions of poor people in highly indebted countries.

To some extent this social innovation success was a milestone in signalling a shift to complex multilateralism and interdependence that has continued with CSO participation, albeit sometimes contested, in many international gatherings that increasingly co-determine global public policy.

'Starting in the 1980s and accelerating in more recent years, however, global governance has become increasingly transnationalised, meaning that it involves a growing number of non-state actors operating at different levels, from the local to the regional and global. Key drivers of this change include economic globalisation, technological change, the growing imbalance in information held by state and non-state actors, and evolving concepts of governance.[25]'

The following example of macro innovation is caste as an 'engine room' allied to a platform provided by hubs that connect and mobilize context-related players. The landscape involved is global in scope but focused on a specific issue of the changing the rules governing the economic system's propensity to create an inequality, which is beholden to a political elite.

'**TheRules.org** Our world has never been more connected or more prosperous than it is today. Yet one in every three of us alive today does not have access to the most basic needs for a decent life - food, education, medical care, a safe environment.

The good news is that for the first time, ordinary citizens like you and me have the power and ability to change the rules that are creating these injustices. Technology and the shift of global power mean that we can now demand our say in decisions that have traditionally been made by elites behind closed doors. But the truth is, these things will only change if we demand it. … Change the rules, and we change the world.

We operate as a decentralised network with several campaign hubs around the world, including in Johannesburg, Mumbai, New York and Rio. The focus of these hubs is to identify issues, opportunities, technologies and regional strategies for each campaign.

The 'engine room' for our campaigns is our Working Group, which is made up of more than 70 people from around the world. Members come as individual volunteers, not as representatives of their respective organisations. They come from a broad range of organisations – from civil society, to grassroots advocacy groups, to policy think tanks, to technology providers.

The sole objective of the Working Group is to help create campaigns for viable, alternative rules that serve the interests of the world's majority, with disproportionate benefit to the poor, vulnerable and marginalised among us.

We are supported from a variety of sources, including Purpose, the New Venture Fund and through crowdfunding. We do not accept money from governments or corporations.'

Which rules and the levels of cause the organisers have in mind are not spelt out. The challenge will be to work downwards from international decision forums into 'regimes' of legal jurisdictions and their regulators and further into various 'niches' occupied by banks, investment houses and mechanisms of corruption prevention and tax avoidance.

An alternative is a social innovation in a local, micro 'niche' of a bigger system. An example is an action-research initiative which adapted a traditional communication channel *Belandan-Bo* to involve

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[25] http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/global-governance

Queen Mothers as interlocutors between communities, their chieftaincies and elected official to stop child labour and child trafficking in Takoradi in the Western Region of Ghana, a location close to the border with Cote d'Ivoire. This modification to an existing and respected institutional set up relied on and reinforced the authority of queens as traditional leaders to change the way children were protected (Gadzekpo, 2013). A pathway to wider systemic change is lateral towards adjoining chieftaincies of the same ethnic group and vertical by involving 'regimes' of regional Houses of Chiefs with diverse ethnicity to the 'landscape' of the constitutionally recognised National House of Chiefs. Their relatively 'cost free' role in changing cultural rules of the game, for example to better align traditions with international codes and norms, can complement the relatively 'expensive' statutory compliance instruments of the state.

A different scale is illustrated in an innovation in social accountability which persuaded police in Sierra Leone to change traffic rules.

> 'The Centre for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA), Sierra Leone, supports a union for commercial motorbike riders, part of the informal economy offering taxi services around Sierra Leone's cities. At a meeting with boundary partners from the Sierra Leone Police, the Roads Authority, the media, and the bikers themselves, it was clear that the relationships being cultivated, around which new rules are being formed had come a long way since the beginning of the project: a whole new section of roads regulations based on some of the lobbying by the union was read at the meeting. The discussion centred on behaviours: how young people riding motor bikes commercially behaved and how the police could counter negative behaviour and encourage positive. The Police themselves had already, on lobbying from the Bike Riders Union, refrained from use of spikes on the roads to punish bike riders that were breaking the law. However, there was still so much to do in terms of controlling and enforcing good behaviour among the youth riders. At this interface meeting, the Traffic Police Commissioner exhibited the kind of patience that is necessary for collective action to work, remarking "we are massaging the problem, giving you time to work with the youths who are breaking the law: we do not want to put them in prison just like that". This is building citizenship within which both citizen responsibilities and state accountability are part. (Tembo, 2013)'

This citation points to both the importance of an interlocutor, in this case (CCYA) initiating a new type of multi-actor dialogue. The international development arena and experience are replete with examples of social innovation – social accountability is but one of many - in multiple contexts that are driven by stress and deprivation as well as by novelty and inspiration that merit systematic, comparative treatment. Doing so, should not simply assume that non-profits are the exclusive source of social innovation. Vodaphone's founding of M-Pesa as a national cell-phone based money transfer system in Kenya is positively impacting on the socio-economy as a whole and is self-financing. The innovation of real time conflict reporting and mapping set up by *Ushahidi* during the country's elections in 2007 is another.[26]

Observations

The examples given above are complemented by what is being promoted as social innovations from which others can learn.[27] Such 'exchange' examples can also be compared with the definitions of social innovation cited in the Annex. Doing so in a not too cursory way feeds a number of observations. One is the similarity between what is described as social innovation and what is already familiar for the aid systems as (integrated) social and community development projects and associated methods.[28] However, an interesting and valuable expansion is bringing together a much wide array of experiences and resources that avoid an implicit North-South divide.[29] But, by and large, the nature of the 'innovation' justifying inclusion in the Exchange is too seldom properly

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[26] http://www.ushahidi.com/; http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/31/kenyan-web-monitors-election-violence/; http://www.socialinnovationexchange.org/global/network-highlights/project/ushahidi-collaborative-crisis-mapping

[27] http://www.socialinnovationexchange.org/ This site has 34 categories of topics which do not include politics, governance or power relations.

[28] http://www.socialinnovationexchange.org/ideas-and-inspiration/methods-and-tools/features/project-innovation-social-innovation-toolkit

[29] The SIX resources are labelled: Article, Cases, Events, Features, News, Opportunities, Organisations and Projects.

explained and providing evidence to satisfy the criteria of 'new' leaves much to be desired. Put another way, inclusion does not seem to satisfy rigorous innovation criteria. Originality and inventiveness with the 'old' would be better descriptions of what most social innovators are up to.

A critical shortcoming in the learning value of examples is lack of information about the economics of the innovation and prospects of sustainability (see below). This lack is so endemic as to signal a conscious policy choice by the Exchange organisers. Why is not explained. In all likelihood examples on the web site are subsidy-based from traditional grant makers and newly created social investment funds. The significance of bringing about change in institutions appears from time to time but does not seem to inform intervention thinking and doing.

The organisational terrain of innovation agents is largely limited to the world of non-profits and their concern for the social at the cost of multi-disciplinarity and practical ways of orchestrating (hyper-) collective action. To a large extent, examples remain framed in terms of sectors and less so in terms of processes and relationships.

The application of complexity as a way of designing social innovation interventions is seldom evident, remaining more in the articles (e.g., Wheatley and Frieze, 2012) than demonstrated in practice.

Overall, the social innovation exchange (SIX) provides an interesting array of resources that might be useful components of tipping point inspired intervention designs, but the dimensions of power and authority would have to be brought in from elsewhere.

Test 3 - Sustainability

A further test of social innovation is that its effect is meaningful to people at the scale intended and that outcomes endure over time. In other words, social innovations should be carefully crafted and interventions timed to bring about a quality of change which becomes institutionally embedded in the how society works from small to large. Social innovators look for windows of opportunity to transition a social (sub-) system from one operating state to another which then stabilises.

From a sustainability point of view, an ideal social innovation is one which self-replicates and, in doing so, tailors to specific circumstances and contexts. Put another way, it is a 'viral' change that embodies the principle of adaptive self-replication by 'naturally' drawing on the resource environment around it. No pre-meditated resourcing is called for. Social media has this characteristic with network effects that self-scale.

One purposeful way of pursuing sustainability is by blending economic principles with social outcomes. A social cluster relying on this combination comprises social entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship and social (impact) investment. When describing social impact bonds, the *Economist* of Feb 23rd, page 63 alludes to a social innovation model designed to *combine commerce and conscience*. That is to shift the current amoral economic system of accumulative market capitalism to one with a concern for the collective good and the global commons. Lurking in the cluster is the need to enhance social capital in terms of engendering trust and fostering a principle of reciprocity. Social franchising is an enterprising, horizontal means to get to scale which follows proven market principles. This cluster points towards a modest system change that puts on a more human face and increases pro-social outcomes as Business more or less as Usual. But it typically relies on establishing new entities whose own sustainability is in play, which can compromise public perceptions of motivations and hence trust.

Social innovations that do not self-generate finance can face issues of dependency and compromised autonomy. As in the Ghana case, one-off financing as grants can be a practical option. An innovative intervention that 'cascades' through and alters existing institutional behaviours does not necessarily need to remain in existence. Indeed, **a sign of an effective social innovation is that it 'disappears' into a 'new normal' of institutional functioning.**

More problematic is scaling for system change which relies on continual and increasing resourcing. Such a constraint appears in a recent study on system-oriented social innovation strategies pursued by four Canadian NGOs (Westley, Antadze and Riddell, 2013). This work investigates and compares pathways – labelled scaling out and scaling up – which, starting from micro conditions, non-profit organisations adopt to bring about systemic outcomes. A process where 'more' changes into 'different' (Westley, et al, 2013:6), i.e., there is emergence in play which alters solutions, for example by establishing a new platform for collective advocacy or becoming more internally systemic by prioritizing a focus. In some instances, resource limitations work against reaching a systemic scale necessary to alter the environment by opening new resourcing channels.

Sustaining social innovations which require dedicated resourcing can be achieved through a paying membership and voluntarism. More generally, a citizen-based model of collective action and crowd-sourcing can ensure continuity of effort towards systemic change but may exclude sections of a population who do not have the free time or financial wherewithal that membership would require.

These, and many other examples currently relied on to illustrate social innovation, are often located in a supportive context of a stable, economically rich, rule-bound state with relative predictability in institutional behaviours and accountabilities. Such conditions cannot be relied on elsewhere. To be of practical use, laboratory designs and simulations must be able to factor in and test against sustainability variations in (sub-)system-relevant contextual variables.

A nascent addition to the 'social' is social solidarity economy, which is unclear in terms of a resourcing model. The concept appears to have similarities with social enterprise but with its stated difference from capitalism as an economic model (Kawano, 2103; Utting, 2013). Put another way, as noted above, the goal of social solidarity enterprise is to gain sustainability by changing the economic game, not just the rules of the existing economic system.

In and of itself, social innovation does not implicitly pass a test of bringing about self-enduring change. The general point for a social innovator is: (a) to carefully work out what sustainability, or sustainabilities, would look like as criteria for testing a systemic social innovation outcome that; (b) either self-generates from within the changed system or not. From sustainability and systems perspectives, scaling of social innovation that does not rely on self-sourcing from (expansion in) operating environment(s) is inherently problematic. As presently conceived and articulated, social innovation has problems in passing a sustainability test.

Test 4 – Complexification and the Social Innovator

Proponents of social innovation recognise that inducing systemic change in a complex adaptive system will face the principles of non-linearity and contingency with unpredictable effects that tend to increase with scale and duration. This condition is faced by much aided change as it moves from outputs, to outcomes, to self-enduring impact. Supporters also recognise that the processes involved are intrinsically relational and multi-actor. Such realities, plus sensitivity to initial conditions, will work against replication without associated context-specific adaptation. In dealing with these factors, development studies call for a pragmatic approach to complexity which expands the space for iteration and adjustment (Jones, 2011; Kania and Kramer, 2013; Hummelbrunner and Jones, 2013).

Such a position reflects scepticism about complexity-based social innovation modelling that is 'prescient' and time-sensitive enough to intervene in ways that initiate systemic transitions that turn out as anticipated: such occurrences are seldom planned, they just happen. Their scepticism is supported by prospect theory used in behavioural economics which confirms a human pre-disposition to underestimate the role of chance in how society evolves (Kahneman, 2011). Too much social change is attributed to purposeful human agency than is actually justified by the evidence of how societies evolve. This finding invites caution in assessing the creation of social innovation / change / design laboratories that can act as social innovators by 'harnessing' complexity principles and applying them as interventions at the 'roots' of social dilemmas described in Test 2.

> 'Simply put, labs are rigorous meetings of diverse groups of people who seek breakthrough solutions to serious problems. The Social Innovation Generation (SiG) team is working on cultivating lab processes, recognizing their potential to affect positive social change.
>
> A Social Innovation Lab methodology is in development, merging existing lab elements with new ones specific to social innovation. The proposed SI Lab will focus on broad system change to address the root causes of complex social and ecological problems.[30,]

In other words, one can question whether these emerging entities can overcome the paradox of creating adequately predictable systemic outcomes under conditions of complex uncertainty involving multiple agents and scales without the presence of an overarching force able to ensure compliance. Such a doubt is reinforced by what appear to be a blind spot in laboratory composition and thinking.

A defining feature of these initiatives is one of adopting holistic, multi- and trans-disciplinarity described by Torjman (2012). What seems to be missing from the mix of four 'traditions' he alludes to (Annex I) are those of deep context-determining 'tradition' of anthropology and of the power embedded in all human systems which is the 'tradition' of political disciplines. In fact, political and power perspectives seem to be generally lacking in current social innovation definition, discourse and design.   Put another way, there seems to be little in the way of recognising **a hierarchy of 'traditions'** which can differentially influence the effectiveness of a system-changing intervention. Such a hierarchy was constructed by Donella Meadows and cited in Harich (2010:44). Seen in her intervention points 1 to 5, it is readily apparent that 'power' matters most in the effectiveness of system interventions and the reactions they generate.

Places to intervene in a system (in increasing order of effectiveness)
12.   Constants, parameters, numbers (such as subsidies, taxes, standards)
11.   The size of buffers and other stabilizing stocks, relative to their flows
10.   The structure of material stocks and flows (such as transport network, population age structures)
9.   The length of delays, relative to the rate of system changes
8.   The strength of negative feedback loops, relative to the effect they are trying to correct against
7.   The gain around driving positive feedback loops
6.   The structure of information flow (who does and does not have access to what kinds of information)
5.   The rules of the system (such as incentives, punishment, constraints)
4.   The power to add, change, evolve, or self-organize system structure
3.   The goal of the system
2.   The mindset or paradigm that the system—its goals, structure, rules, delays, parameters—arises out of,
1.   The power to transcend paradigms.
        Reproduced from *Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System*, by Donella Meadows, 1999. Available: sustainer.org/pubs/Leverage_Points.pdf.

Of interest is the last page, where Donella writes: "The higher the leverage point, the more the system will resist changing it."

It is difficult to explain the relative lack of attention to the issues of power and politics and reliance on questionable assumptions about people everywhere being allowed to bring about systemic change of their inspiration and choosing. Whatever the reason, the lack of political primacy in a contemporary concept of social innovation is a serious blind spot. The more so, where Parts I, II and III suggest that a central feature of interventions for systemic change will involve modification to existing rules or to the game itself which would, more often than not, mean *orchestrating* collective action under conditions of polycentric governance (Ostrom, 2010). In other words, interventions must accurately discern and sensitively engage with how power and authority are distributed and interact. This feature of societal change – aided or otherwise – is reflected in the nature of a social innovator with a

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[30] http://sigknowledgehub.com/

(trusted) remit, position and a capability as an effective 'assembler' of diverse actors, guiding them to and through complex collaborative processes.

> '… if they don't already exist, the *creation or mobilisation of intermediaries* can be crucial, to articulate the direction of systemic change, and *link big ideas to individual innovations.* In retrospect this role was sometimes played by networks, clubs, think tanks and development agencies. Their overtly visionary work helped to clarify a desired end point, often in partnership with experts from the field (e.g. on how to create a zero–carbon city, or a people–centred eldercare system). Intermediaries of this kind can also orchestrate advocacy and campaigns (focused on key points of leverage, such as laws, or corporate behaviour), and deliver demonstrations of whole alternatives (which will necessarily be small scale and partial). (Mulgan and Leadbeater, 2013:20, emphasis added)'

In other words, social innovation will typically rely on the presence of:

> 'Interlocutors: the organisations or individuals with the necessary 'game-changing' characteristics to address a collective action problem or situation so that appropriate solutions can be found. Where, Interlocution processes are the processes involved in finding solutions: the game-changing actions themselves. Some of these interlocutor characteristics can be enhanced through capacity development initiatives. (from Tembo, 2013:10)'

In this test, social innovation as a theoretical concept shows more than enough awareness of the multi-actor challenges a social innovator will face. But, as noted previously, current examples do not consistently reflect this complex actor/process universe. Moreover, definitions do not speak to what a social innovator would look like in terms, for example, of legal standing, governance organisational form, competencies, political-economy and so on. But before delving into this topic, it is necessary to summarise what the tests tell us about social innovation as an organisational choice from, but not limited to, the perspective of international aid.

Part V Social Innovation – Discursive Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the concept and practice of social innovation from the perspective of taking on this type of activity and function as an organisational strategy. This section draws conclusions in terms of the likely limitations and potential merits in the context of international development and beyond. It does so from the perspective of social innovation as a developmental option and from the possible implications of being a social innovator.

Social Innovation as a Developmental Option

Social innovation is currently a poorly delineated marker for all sorts of initiatives from all sorts of agents in all sorts of institutional locations directed at changing how society works for whom over different time frames. The flexi-label obscures a site of political struggle identified by Godin.

Crudely, the recent advent of social innovation to the social family seeks, amongst other objectives, to reclaim and widen 'innovation' from technological and corporate capture where social innovation remains marketization now sold in terms of 'unthickening'. The current push for social innovation as a societal property reflects a position that commodification in the service of a capitalist market economy is a significant cause of thick problems and hence an unlikely candidate for their remedy. Reclaiming innovation within society as core principle - rather than as a tool for product marketing - is part of the underlying contestation. However this contention is confused by the way in which definitions of social innovation conflate the two so that politics and ideological differences are not readily apparent. A result is lowest common denominator definitions of social innovation that offend no one and inadequately delineate what does or does qualify. A charitable view would be that the nascent state of social innovation theory and practice makes this condition inevitable but transient, which remains to be seen. Whatever the case, one conclusion is that a social innovator needs to be explicit about where and why they attribute root causes of thick problems. Their values and ideology must be on show.

Inadequate specification of cause(s) creates another limitation. This is uncertainty about system boundaries, scale and prospects of self-sustainability. A lack of boundary clarity is significant in that it relates to whether a social innovation is dedicated to *changing the game itself or the rules of the existing game.* Crudely, this parallels the distinction between timely transformation (TT) and adaptations to business as usual (BaU). By and large, much that is in the whole social family, including social innovation, appears to concentre on changing the rules of existing economic games played out at different system levels rather than changing the games themselves in terms of, for example, accelerating non-monetised complementary currencies to expand alternative economic systems and in exploring potentials of 'netocracy' (Bard, and Söderqvist, 2002; MacKinnon, 2012) for alternative political self-organising seen in Germany's Pirate party and in Italy's recent elections. Whether net-enabled transnational activisms are becoming potential game changers remains to be seen (Biekert and Fowler, 2013). Within the social family, only the notion of a social solidarity economy has an explicit 'change the game' agenda at a grand scale. While well formulated and argued, the concept is too recent to demonstrate a potential, but is worth engaging with.

However, we need to beware of creating a false paradox. The core issue is whether or not – as complexity thinkers contend - a well thought through and systemically connected constellation of social innovations that alter 'small' rules and institutional behaviours in many domains and places of change today can self-scale to prompt a disproportionate re-orientation/tipping of the system as a whole in the longer term. This approach to changing the game would call for a worldwide constellation of social innovators that are conceived as 'nodes' in the SIX set up.

A prospective beyond aid is that the value of a social innovator lens and function is its resonance with both little 'd' and big 'D' analysis, a distinction that Part I suggests is on the way out as globalisations proceed and pluralising aid and commercial trade 'reunite'. An argument has been made that much being put forward today as social innovation in (austerity facing) developed countries has equivalents in decades of development cooperation. Actively exploring South to North reversal in learning about what makes social innovations succeed or fail probably has much to offer in terms of organisational relevance and capitalising on accumulated experience.

Strange as it may seem, in gaining ground in the post-industrial countries, economic disillusionment and political disenchantment are possibly creating more enabling 'tipping' conditions that social innovation, properly conceived, can use to good effect. The timing for social innovation efforts appears propitious, but probably not at all locations in the world.

There are two more potent perspectives on the value of adopting social innovation as a development approach. One potency is to not jettison but help transcend a fixation on the poor bottom billion and the socio-politically marginalised towards the growing five to six billion people of the 'middle classes' across the world, which is where transformation must occur. The impoverished and marginalised base of an economic and political 'pyramid' is an unlikely pivot point for tipping. (In fact the global socio-economic shape is more akin to a squat onion.) The transformative forces called for will have to emerge from the ways in which the bulk of the world's population recalibrate their aspirations and expectations in terms, for example, of consumptive 'rights' or entitlements in a global commons.

An additional potency of social innovation is the prospect of realising the anticipated 'promise' of complexity thinking and principles in development work (e.g., Rihani, 2002; Ramalingam, Jones, Reba and Young, 2008). A lot of concentrated intellectual effort – in design labs and think tanks – is adding momentum to identifying practices that can add to systemic 'tipping' forces. If identified shortcomings are overcome, social innovators could make serious progress in launching non-palliative interventions that change the game along the principles described above.

The probability of these processes occurring requires attention to the politics of human action and agency that lie within intervention choices. There is abundant evidence that politics is critical for development anywhere and everywhere. A recent study in five Dutch cities is useful in showing the significant role of individuals as critical factor in communities taking ownership of micro governance reconfirms the fact that almost all politics is local somewhere (Hulst, de Graaf and van den Brink,

2012). If contextually sensitive and carefully crafted, what appear to be small gains in people's rights on the edge of society can self-aggregate as a significant force towards a new order. The principles and lenses of civic driven change are one way of understanding what the micro-politics of social innovation interventions might contain (Fowler and Biekart, 2012, 2014).

An era in front of us where volatility and expanding precariousness of livelihoods are likely to be the 'new normal' offers an interesting opportunity. This is to make use of the anxieties of uncertainties associated with such endemic conditions to bring about a Donella Meadows level 1 intervention of a paradigm shift. The 'big' idea would be to adopt and maintain a long haul (political) social innovation strategy that: (1) concentrates on critical domains and their institutional constituents, to; (2) selectively shift the framing of 'thick' issues in the mass of people's daily experiences towards (inter-generational) transformative public policies supported by a suitable vocabulary, while; (3) stimulating 'disruptive' and 'learning' innovations on socio-political peripheries that are designed to self-propagate by resourcing from institutions that are targeted with this objective in mind.

So, an answer to the question is social innovation a development option worth considering is yes, but. The 'but' is because social innovation is too widely caste to be a reliable guide to what it means in theory and practice. However, a positive consequence is that a social innovator can, and must, self-determine what it means for them as a change agent. There is no template for what a social innovator looks like. At best, the information, arguments, observation and conclusions provided so far can suggest what this role would probably require, the topic of the following and final section of this study. A separate discussion paper provides an interpretation towards humanism and Hivos.

Being a Social Innovator

A summary of findings suggests that, at present, social innovation is conceptually attractive, empirically messy and politically under-dimensioned if not wilfully naïve. The organisational features of social innovators that are not businesses are too diverse to pin down but should not be conceived in the resource 'intermediation' format common to NGOs involved in foreign aid. But what current social innovators appear to have in common with such NGOs is a political-economy which relies on grants. This condition may bring limitations on the scope of innovations that can be explored.

By inference from the material covered in this paper, a social innovator requires a particular set of features and competencies. These include: the clear ideological positioning required for root cause analysis; practical interpretations of complex processes; domain-specific and societal systemic frameworks; multi-disciplinary creativity in designing interventions that have not been tried before, which implies an extensive (comparative) knowledge base; accurate insights about how relevant institutions work; strong relational capabilities, networks and linkages; sophisticated appreciation of power types and distributions; and a resource stream and quality that, on the one hand is not dependent on whether an intervention scales or not while, on the other hand, is not so special that scaling is inhibited. Looking across the resource landscape raises a concern that a social innovation role may call for innovation in organisational forms that enable self-resourcing.

Part I provides reasonable grounds for an assumption that there will be an increasing need for interlocutors, orchestrators- call them what you will - that are able to stimulate, initiate and guide multi-actor processes at any number of scales involving diverse domains of change in a society. There is no reason why being a social innovator cannot be translated in this functional direction.

Social Innovation: New Game, New dawn or False Promise?

Social innovation is a work in progress. Its practices are not yet in sync with its rich, complex conceptualisations and nor are they likely to be any time soon. And while not necessarily aiming at transformation to a new game, the recent impetus towards and investment in social innovation seen in post-industrial countries stems from confrontation with deep structural and systemic societal issues that signal a, for many, painful new dawn for how people and planet must relate. Paradoxically, anxiety at the prospect of a more precarious future facing more and more people is a force opening up opportunities for 'tipping' the world order onto a different trajectory where:

'We can "choose" collectively a new stable system that essentially resembles the present system in some basic characteristics - a system that is hierarchical, exploitative, and polarizing. There are, no doubt, many forms this could take, and some of these forms could be harsher than the capitalist world system in which we have been living. Alternatively we can "choose" collectively a radically different form of system, one that has never previously existed - a system that is relatively democratic and relatively egalitarian. (Wallerstein, 2009:22-23)'

Not exploring social innovation as a force to influence such a choice may ensure that it is a false promise.

ANNEX I

The Family of the Social

Social enterprise: *is business whose primary purpose is the common good.*
> In its early days, the social enterprise movement was identified mainly with nonprofits that used business models and earned income strategies to pursue their mission. Today, it also encompasses for-profits whose driving purpose is social. Mission is primary and fundamental; organizational form is a strategic question of what will best advance the social mission. [31]

Social entrepreneurs (1): *focus on transforming systems and practices that are the root causes of poverty, marginalization, environmental deterioration and accompanying loss of human dignity.[32]*
> In so doing, they may set up for-profit or not-for-profit organizations, and in either case, their primary objective is to create sustainable systems change.

Social entrepreneurs (2): *are individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems.[33]*
> Rather than leaving societal needs to the government or business sectors, social entrepreneurs find what is not working and solve the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution, and persuading entire societies to take new leaps.

Social entrepreneurship: *the practice of combining innovation, resourcefulness and opportunity to address critical social and environmental challenges.*
> Social Entrepreneurship is the product of individuals, organisations, and networks that challenge conventional structures causing inadequate provision or unequal distribution of social and environmental goods by addressing these failures and identifying new opportunities for better alternatives.[34]

Social (impact) investment: *Social investment is the provision and use of capital to generate social as well as financial returns.*
> Social investors weigh the social and financial returns they expect from an investment in different ways. They will often accept lower financial returns in order to generate greater social impact.[35]

Social capital: *the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively.*
> In focusing on sources, this definition recognises that trust and reciprocity are developed in an iterative process. (Bebbington, Guggenheim, Woolcock and Olson, 2006:32-33)

Social franchising: *is the application of commercial franchising concepts to achieve socially beneficial ends, rather than profit.*
> Franchising refers to a contractual relationship wherein an independent coordinating organization (usually an NGO, but occasionally a governmental body or private company offers individual independent operators the ability join into a franchise network for the provision of selected services over a specified area in accordance with an overall blueprint devised by the franchisor. [36]

Social movements (1): *can be understood as a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others.*
> They are a major vehicle for ordinary people's participation in public politics. (Tilley, 2004)

Social movements (2): *are collective challenges [to elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes] by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities.*
> They are distinguished from political parties and activist groups. (Tarrow, 1994)

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[31] https://www.se-alliance.org/what-is-social-enterprise (Accessed 20th May, 2013)
[32] http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/centres/skoll/about/Pages/whatisse.aspx (Accessed 20th May 2013)
[33] https://www.ashoka.org/social_entrepreneur (Accessed 21st May 2013)
[34] http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/centres/skoll/about/Pages/whatisse2.aspx (Accessed 21st May, 2013)
[35] http://www.bigsocietycapital.com/what-social-investment (Accessed, 20th May, 2013)
[36] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_franchising (Accessed 20th May, 2013)

Social activism: *self-initiated actions intended to change the way society works for a group or for the whole of a polity.*

Social transformation: *a far-reaching alteration in the ways in which a society is structured and functions for its members.* This is often catch-all term which requires specificity in terms, for example, of scale and the populations that experience a meaningful change in the trajectory of their society, life situations and prospects.

Social accountability: *can be defined as an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement, i.e., in which it is ordinary citizens and/or civil society organizations who participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability.*

In a public sector context, social accountability refers to a broad range of actions and mechanisms that citizens, communities, independent media and civil society organizations can use to hold public officials and public servants accountable. (Malena, Forster and Singh, 2004:3)

Social media*: refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.*

Social media depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. It introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals. Social media differentiates from traditional/industrial media in many aspects such as quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy and permanence. [37]

Social solidarity economy: *seeks to change the whole social and economic system and puts forth a different paradigm of development that upholds solidarity economy principles.*

"It pursues the transformation of the neoliberal capitalist economic system from one that gives primacy to maximizing private profit and blind growth, to one that puts people and planet at its core.*"* [38] *"*In today's world five key dimensions need to be addressed simultaneously: economic development, social protection, environmental protection, gender equality and sociopolitical empowerment. The field of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) seems to have considerable potential in this regard. Can that potential be realized?" (Utting, 2013). [39]

Social innovation (1): *Social innovations are new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes etc) that simultaneously meet a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources. In other words, social innovations are both good for society and enhance society's capacity to act.* (Caulier-Grice, Davis, Patrick and Norman, 2012:18)

Social innovation is context dependent - it takes place in broader social, cultural, economic and environmental contexts – and it is in these specific contexts that social innovations are formulated and embedded. However, these contexts are not necessarily features of a definition. Similarly, social innovation is not value neutral. It is …socially and politically constructed. As such, social innovations are not necessarily objectively 'good' or socially positive. They could in theory 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.

Social Innovation (2): ***Social innovation is an initiative, product, process or program that profoundly changes the basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of any social system. Successful social innovations have durability and broad impact.*** *Frances Westley*[40]

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[37] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media#cite_note-1 (Accessed 20th May, 2013)

[38] Kawano, 2013.
http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/newsview.nsf/%28httpNews%29/F1E9214CF8EA21A8C1257B1E003 B4F65?OpenDocument

[39]
http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/newsview.nsf/%28httpNews%29/AB920B156339500AC1257B5C002 C1E96?OpenDocument&utm_campaign=ebulletin_23_5_2013&utm_medium=email_html&utm_source=en &utm_content=content_link

[40] http://sigknowledgehub.com/2012/01/01/introduction-to-social-innovation/

Social observatories: *are typically centres dedicated to monitoring and providing advice on the effects of social policies.* Often operating outside the public service, these entities are often established or supported by governments and other institutions to aid in gaining policy effectiveness.

Social innovation laboratories: *are rigorous meetings of diverse groups of people who seek breakthrough solutions to serious problems. A SI Lab will focus on broad system change to address the root causes of complex social and ecological problems.*[41]

Participatory, user-centric approaches to solving problems are gaining momentum as alternatives to traditional organizations. Among these approaches is the innovation Lab, a creative, multi-disciplinary environment that employs a proven and repeatable protocol to seek disruptive, potentially systems-tipping solutions.

> So, to make a long story short, the pairing of the words "social" and "innovation" is a response from *within* the Innovation Society by people and organisations who subscribe to most of its ideology, but are trying to steer the Innovation Society in a direction that they regard as socially desirable. (Lane, 2013:5)

Social Change Lab/Design Laboratories: *Known as innovation labs, change labs or design labs, they are collaborative places where stakeholders with diverse perspectives engage in a workshop process to understand complex problems and design new approaches and solutions. They provide the opportunity to develop prototypes designed and tested by participants from diverse perspectives before large investments are made.* (Bellafontaine, 2012:1)

Focus is on the integration of "at least four distinctive academic/scientific traditions: a) group psychology and group dynamics; b) complex adaptive systems theory; c) design thinking; d) computer modelling and visualization tools." The merging of these traditions offers an opportunity to marry expertise drawn from different disciplines into new initiatives that support social innovation (Torjman, 2012).

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[41] http://sigeneration.ca/Labs.html (Accessed, 20th May 2013)

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