



A Breakfast on Networks and Systems Change

13 October 2017

SIX recently hosted [Tim Draimin](#) for a breakfast in London with individuals working in networks and systems change. Tim works for the McConnell Foundation in Canada, is seconded to be the Executive Director of Social Innovation Generation (SiG) and is a member of the SIX Executive Board. After 10 years, SiG is [sunsetting](#), as planned, at the end of 2017. This national, four-party partnership plus backbone organisation, has enabled social innovation to grow across Canada over the past 10 years by leveraging resources, developing capacity and making the case for social innovation. As the initiative prepares to close, Tim is working with a number of other stakeholders to develop what comes next.

With this context in mind, the breakfast on the 13th of October explored the challenges facing civil society, the power of partnerships and movements and reflections on Canada.

Key discussion points included:

Understanding networks and their potential

- How far do our various communities/coalitions/movements trap us and to what extent do they connect us?
- A conversation is great, but how do we go beyond? Do our networks tend to limit themselves to purely relational ones as they don't fully embrace the power of design and digital tools?
- At what point does bureaucracy help us and at point does it become a hindrance? Particularly in relation to the bureaucracy associated with managing people in networks. Given that, bureaucracy was created in the first wave of capitalism - is it time for something else as we become more decentralised?
- Do social innovation networks become too like-minded and reduce their diverse character thereby undermining their networking and innovation potential?

Furthering social innovation

- Innovation is still viewed as 'social'. How do we integrate social innovation into mainstream economic and innovation policy?
- Often we've found that those who are first introduced to social innovation feel as if they're being criticised for the quality of their work. How do we change this narrative?
- Is social innovation too broad to be a movement? Some of the most successful movements have been those that have focused on a specific mission. Does social innovation have this? Does social innovation need this?
- What are the social movements behind the innovations?
- Why are patterns of power created? How can you disrupt them? Where's the power shift?

The challenge of civil society - The dependency model

- Many civil society organisations are spins offs from the public sector and yet are being forced to compete in a market economy without being equipped for this. Too many organisations spend too much time searching for the holy grail - a business model for doing public good work. Is it inevitable that certain organisations will be dependent on support? Is it the moral duty of a foundation to accept this and support these organisations? Is there a dual economy - between those that should



operate in a market economy and those that cannot/should not. Although, the shadow side to this is that a well-supported third sector doesn't develop its advocacy function.

- How might we shape new markets that help us build more sustainable business models for emerging services?
- Too often we shy away from the political agenda when this work is political. Should protecting the welfare state be a cornerstone of social innovation?

SIX plans to host more of the breakfasts around the world to draw on the potential and vast knowledge of our global network and provide the space for these important conversations to happen.

You can get in contact with Tim via twitter at [@TimDrainin](https://twitter.com/TimDrainin)

References to valuable resources linked to themes above:

Benoît Godin, “Social Innovation: Utopias of Innovation from c.1830 to the Present”

<http://bit.ly/2yn9Sgl>

Abstract

Over the last ten years or so, “social innovation” has become a catchword in some sociological writings and in studies of innovation. The concept is generally presented as new, at least compared to technological innovation, which dates back to the 1940s. Yet the concept of social innovation is in fact two hundred years old.

This paper documents the origins of social innovation as a category and its development over the last two centuries. It suggests that social innovation owes its origin to socialism in the nineteenth century and its resurrection in the twenty-first century to technological innovation. The paper analyzes three key moments, or different meanings of social innovation over time: socialism, then social reform, then alternatives to ‘established’ solutions to social needs. The paper concludes with reflections on the residue of these ideas in current theories of social innovation.

Bridgespan with Rockefeller: Innovating Nonprofits <http://bit.ly/2wPmKMn> A new guide to help nonprofits grow their innovation mettle. There is an accompanying online nonprofit innovation self-assessment website found on Rockefeller Foundation’s website: <http://bit.ly/2vxU6e6>

Bridgespan: 15 Success Stories of Audacious Philanthropy <http://bit.ly/2xW7xby> This is an excellent set of short historical case studies of how philanthropy-supported social movement-type campaigns succeeded; the cases covered go back decades. A number of them cover health campaigns: eg Anti-Smoking, End of Life Care, etc. The research on these cases was used for the HBR article: “Audacious Philanthropy” by

Susan Wolf Ditkoff and Abe Grindle in the September-October issue of Harvard Business Review (HBR) <http://bit.ly/2fBy4V7> (Article is available and not behind a paywall.)

Mariana Mazzucato: Mission-Oriented Innovation Policy, RSA <http://bit.ly/2yvNwWB> Mazzucato’s overview of what’s required to intentionally shift mainstream innovation policy to be more aligned towards social and environmental impact, what others sometimes call inclusive innovation and inclusive growth. There is a very valuable presentation, from the launch of the new Centre for Innovation and Public Purpose, on building a new narrative around the role of the public sector revitalizing its role advancing public purpose: <http://bit.ly/2xNusag>

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors: Scaling Solutions for Shifting Systems <http://bit.ly/2y0Gb29> RPA’s new review of the value of a systems lens for foundations’ philanthropic strategies.

Global Development Incubator (GDI): More than the Sum of the Parts: Making Multi-stakeholder Initiatives Work <http://bit.ly/2xTL0gA> The New York based GDI (a startup incubator for international development coalition backbone institutions that was developed by Dalberg Research Associates) reviews a number of international development “collective impact” type initiatives and draws conclusions about how

they can best operate. Excerpt on financial sustainability of multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs): “Several MSIs noted an economics conundrum with membership fees: public goods cannot be self-sustaining, as they will always be underfunded by the contributing organizations and will thus create free-rider problems.”



Connecting to Change the World: Harnessing the Power of Networks for Social Impact

<https://islandpress.org/book/connecting-to-change-the-world> Plastrik, P., Taylor, M., Cleveland, J. Easily understandable and full of actionable advice, Connecting to Change the World is an informative guide to creating collaborative solutions to tackle the most difficult challenges society faces.

Social Innovation Educational Curriculum, originally developed by the Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience (WISIR), is partially available as learning modules: <http://bit.ly/2zxO2Va> It has been spread via individuals who have built on WISIR’s work at other academic settings. Additional resources are available from Darcy Riddell, director of strategic learning at McConnell Foundation. (Twitter: @DarcyRiddell). There is also a SiG Knowledge Hub with WISIR and other SiG-generated resources: www.sigknowledgehub.com

Dominic Chalmers, Social innovation: An exploration of the barriers faced by innovating organizations in the social economy, a 2013 article raising questions about the social innovation movement and the need for social innovators to engage with broader networks. Exhaustive reference listing. <http://bit.ly/2zxhafi> (Behind Sage paywall)

Abstract

Social and community-based organizations are increasingly viewed as wellsprings of valuable social innovations. Government policies, most notably David Cameron’s Big Society initiative, have entrenched the concept of localism across the UK, and the move towards smaller government has placed the onus on communities to creatively tackle their own problems. While antecedent research on social innovation has largely concentrated on success stories, few have stopped to consider the profound nature of this shift and the operational obstacles it may pose for small resource-constrained organizations. This article seeks to contribute to current debates on social innovation by critically reviewing extant literature and proposing a model of ‘open’ social innovation. Furthermore, it serves as a tool to stimulate further discussion around the ‘opening up’ of the social innovation process and raises some timely questions about the efficacy of localism policy measures.

Charles Leadbeater, The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur, 1997 Demos <http://bit.ly/2xMlhWD> This is the pioneering publication that Charlie cited that he wrote in the late nineties that contributed to recognizing and understanding the social entrepreneurship phenomenon and its value.

Attendees of the 13 October breakfast meeting:

Name	Organisation
Alberto Masetti-Zannini	Impact Hub Kings Cross
Cassie Robinson	Doteveryone
Charlie Leadbeater	
Faiza Khan	Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Jordan Junge	SIX
Julie Munk	SIX
Peter Ramsden	URBACT
Shirley Cramer	RSPH
So Jung Rim	SIX
Tim Draimin	SiG