



SUMMER SCHOOL

MUMBAI

THE CONNECTED URBAN LIFE

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Introduction

On 4-6 November 2015, the Social Innovation Exchange (SIX) – in collaboration with ISDI, Okapi and Vihara - hosted the 8th annual SIX Summer School in Mumbai, India.

The SIX Summer School is an annual gathering bringing together leading social innovation thinkers, practitioners, grassroots activists and policy makers from around the world to explore key issues facing the social innovation field.

Previous SIX Summer Schools have been held in diverse cities from Lisbon to Seoul and have explored themes ranging from scaling innovations to shifting culture.



This was SIX's first event in India, and Mumbai was the perfect city to explore the Connected Urban Life.

As well as being the entertainment, financial and commercial capital of India, Mumbai is increasingly recognised as a hotbed of some of the most exciting urban innovations. With an exploding population, these innovations build on the civic consciousness and social infrastructures of Mumbai's dense and dynamic neighbourhoods.

The Summer School participants came from more than 20 different countries across six continents and from a range of sectors including foundations, designers, practitioners and academics. This diversity not only resulted in meaningful debates, but also resonated beautifully with the spirit and characteristics of the city-surroundings.

For Mumbai is a city of colour and contrast. High tech and low tech seem to work in harmony, while the juxtaposition, of old and new, informal and formal, poverty and wealth, temporary and permanent makes the city a source of inspiration. This is a city where systems and chaos function simultaneously. From the tranquillity of rooftop urban farm havens, to the trendy new maker spaces in the industrial districts, and the entrepreneurial small businesses in informal settlements, every SIX participant was captivated by the energy, speed and complexity of this, the world's densest mega-city.

Technology is a key enabler in these developments. It is reconfiguring relationships between businesses and consumers, politicians and citizens. It is also catalysing peer-to-peer connections, and transforming grassroots movements. Consequently, many of our old assumptions must be actively unlearned as technology enables citizens to reshape their cities. Related to these tectonic shifts, the main questions we explored during the event were: How can and should we be adapting to the possibilities that new technological and digital solutions enable? How can new ways of connecting make cities better for all?

After the 2.5 days of fruitful discussions around these questions – this report provides a brief insight into the discussions, themes and questions that emerged from the workshops, site visits, talks, presentations and informal participant conversations and discussions.



A truly global conversation

Although SIX is a global community of thousands of people from every corner of the world, debates around social innovation have mostly taken place in Europe, North America, East Asia and Australia. For this reason, and in order to make this a truly global community and conversation, SIX is widening its scope. Our most recent events outside the UK have taken place on the African continent: in Johannesburg last year, and in Nairobi earlier this year. With the 2015 SIX Summer School, we were delighted to bring the leading experts and innovators together in the emerging and exciting context of India.

Since the first SIX Summer School took place in Spain in 2008, the movement of social innovation has developed and spread dramatically. More and more organisations and institutions now see great potential in the field, and conversations have moved beyond the question of definition and terminology. Yet, moving discussions to South Africa, Kenya and India, the conversation is once again challenged and qualified by contrasting frames of reference and very different experiences – individually and collectively.

Not all topics are equally relevant in every context. For good reason, social innovations in India are more focused on issues directly relevant to economic development, such as improved access to water and sanitation, compared to Canada. And Japan or Spain, in contrast to Kenya, naturally has ageing populations and elder care higher up on the agenda. Public sector innovation might be extra relevant in strong welfare states, while social entrepreneurship is key in others. Furthermore, the very notion of ‘social’ in social innovation might vary a lot from place to place - with the boundaries between commercial and social innovation being very blurred in some developing countries. For instance, whether generating employment is considered a social innovation in itself, will often depend on the context.

Central to every discussion in India is poverty. This is evident when travelling around the country, but it is also influencing the movement around social change. As Aditya Dev Sood from the Vihara Innovation Network argued during the event:

“While social innovation can be afforded in the Western and developed regions, in India we’ve had to settle for social development.”

Lina Sonne from Okapi highlighted some other features that are characteristic to social innovation in India:

- » There is a long tradition of grassroots and frugal innovation in India, meaning that social innovation is not actually a new concept, but rather a new name for a longstanding practice.
- » There is limited involvement of academia: Social innovation is primarily based on experimentation and driven by practice – not theory development.
- » There is little government support especially for social innovation and no government procurement.
- » Solutions and practice do not translate internationally, so few know what is happening in India.

Coming from different places, we must learn to bridge these gaps and have these conversations in a beneficial way. As Namrata Mehta from CKS said (referring to a pre-event in Delhi), some discussions progress faster when people come from similar backgrounds (e.g. South and South East Asia). But since many topics are relevant across the continents, it might just be a matter of finding the right starting point.

For instance, as Samir Doshi from USAID pointed out, while some countries might struggle with the cost of caring for an ageing population, others experience the exact opposite with millions of young people looking for a job. This contradiction makes it a global question of demography and population growth – with a large potential for collective and international solutions across geography and nationality.

Although contexts may differ, questions about process and the need for innovative thinking are relevant across the world. What is the role of government? How do we fund social innovation? How do you find the right balance between people and technology? How do you scale or spread social innovations? How do you create smart cities or innovation districts? How do you formalise and take advantage of the activities in the informal sector? All of these questions were discussed at the event and will be reflected upon in this report.

Learning from Mumbai

Below are a snapshot of some of the key topics, themes and discussions from the 2.5 days of keynote speeches, panel debates, site visits and deep-dive sessions. In some cases, we link these topics with our event site visits.

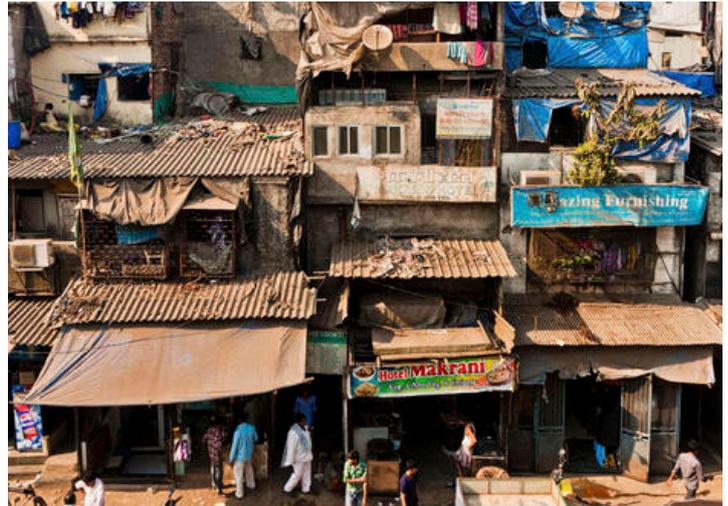


PHOTO: LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES/FRANK BIENWALD

A city with challenges and opportunities – on a different scale

The scale and intensity of Mumbai – the people, traffic, noise and heat - are inescapable. So too are its contrasts, particularly in relation to wealth and wellbeing. The city is one of the world's largest megacities with around 20 million inhabitants living together on a relatively small and narrow peninsula facing the Arabian Sea. Mumbai is a thriving centre of business, opportunity and entertainment, and the city is constantly expanding. Yet urban growth here is occurring at a slower rate than many other cities in the Global South – partly due to the high population density, the high rents in the city and its peninsular location.

However a large proportion of the people migrating to Mumbai are forced to live in informal settlements. These areas vary greatly in shape, size and development, and many of them are often too structured and functional to be classified under the controversial terminology of 'slum areas'. However, many neighbourhoods are still characterised by precarious living conditions – with hundreds of thousands of people still struggling with poor access to water and sanitation as well as larger issues of poverty, crime, illiteracy and gender-based violence. The whole city is also experiencing a high level of pollution – with congested traffic, toxic air and piles of rubbish present in many areas around the city.



The government is widely perceived to be slow in its response to all of these grand challenges, but the city is not only a case of difficulty and frustration. Technological innovations are rapidly expanding and most people live peacefully together in a wonderful mix of cultural diversity and cross-religious harmony. With different communities and religions living peacefully side-by-side for thousands of years, the legacy of the Gandhian principles – together with local ingenuity and high levels of civil society engagement – is both impressive and admirable. This spirit is nicely captured by the local term, *Jugaad*.

Frugal innovation and bottom up movements

Jugaad is a Hindi term for the practice of fixing things quickly and making do with what you have through improvisation and ingenuity. It is a way of responding to issues of scarcity and need through simple, but effective solutions. This is very characteristic of frugal innovation – as a problem-solving attitude that is naturally provoked by the many challenges in poor countries like India. As explained by Yolande D'Mello, editor of *Jugaad Magazine* at the *Maker's Asylum*, *Jugaad* is essentially about reinventing rather than inventing, testing things out, and thinking about maintenance – simple is sustainable, as Yolande said.

Liz Moreton from London's Battersea Arts Centre said: "*Jugaad* is a great concept. We all have lots of good excuses, but to just do stuff – even though you have no time or no resources – is a great inspiration". Frugal innovation in India is driven by necessity and scarcity – just like the wider field of social innovation has emerged in response to immediate and chronic societal challenges. However, social innovation is also about sustainability, radical innovation, and systemic impact – and the *jugaad* mentality of quick, short-term fixes must therefore be accompanied by long-term planning as there is still a critical need for visionary innovations and system shifts that will radically change society for the better.

In India, social change has often been characterised by grassroots movements and bottom up approaches – perhaps in reaction to the large gaps in social security and public services. This has resulted in a wide belief that change can come from anywhere and be delivered by anyone. As Professor Anil Gupta, founder of the Honey Bee Network, explained at the opening:

"Sometimes the best innovations might come from unsuspected places – from a farmer, or a school child. Even an eight-year-old girl might present you with a great idea. Social innovation requires that we recognise the aspirations of all people and that we harvest the creativity and ideas that exists at the grassroots level of society."

New ways of making – led by Imaginarium and Maker's Asylum



Situated just across the street from each other in the northern Marol industrial area of Mumbai, Imaginarium and Maker's Asylum showed the participants two inspiring, yet very different maker spaces.

Imaginarium, which is India's largest rapid prototyping 3D printing company, explained how 3D-printing works and why it holds great potential in terms of changing and democratizing existing structures of design, production, and supply-chain distribution through decentralized and additive manufacturing.

Maker's Asylum is a smaller community space of hands-on learning and creative thinking, where the member entrepreneurs can develop their ideas and use prototyping tools to solve real-world problems.

One of the key terms of the day was Jugaad. As Yolande from the Maker's Asylum explained, her mother – like many other Indian mothers - was a true practitioner of Jugaad, since she would always use whatever was already available in the house when fixing a problem, while Yolandes father, on the other hand, would immediately go to the hardware store to buy new tools or materials.

Frugal innovation and the Jugaad concept are good examples of the ways in which established cultural concepts and practices are giving a hyper-modern development like maker labs a distinctively Indian flavour. And they nicely capture the spirit and promise around 3D printing, rapid prototyping and additive manufacturing – as these are essentially about using fewer material to make more customized physical products. The effective utilization of resources (with very little waste) makes this a much greener way of manufacturing than what we are used to. And whether it's being used for commercial or social purposes, the tools and processes at the Imaginarium and the Maker's Asylum undoubtedly constitute great spaces for continuous experimentation, testing and learning.



However, challenges still remain, since high-quality 3D printing requires a lot of time spent on the pre-manufacturing process. The slow pace of the initial process underlines that 3D printing is not a mass-manufacturing methodology. But rather than building economies of scale, 3D printing is a tool that allows for very complex and customised products to be delivered fast, focused and widespread – although in relatively small numbers.

In order to fulfil the promise of maker spaces for social innovation, we need to make sure that making and printing does not become an end in itself. Making should be for a purpose – in this case a social purpose – and technical expertise should be complemented by social, cultural or economic skills and understanding. Thus, the greatest and perhaps most important challenge will be to make these spaces less isolated and more welcoming to the people outside the maker-community - who will have great knowledge about the challenges that cities and citizens face. Thus, bringing together computer scientists or mechanical engineers with local social workers or Dharavi slum-dwellers could result in incredible, ground-breaking product innovations that would truly benefit and transform the wider society.

Structure and chaos: The value and importance of the informal sector

One of the best examples of India's long tradition of grassroots innovation and Jugaad are the informal sector and the informal settlements – both in Mumbai and in many other places in India.

Contrary to the common (largely Western) belief that the informal sector is highly problematic (e.g. due to a lack of government control over tax payments or labour conditions) the sector is actually creating great social, economic and environmental value for society (even without support or encouragement from the government). With millions of people living in informal settlements – and estimates of 90 percent of all employment in India being informal employment – this sector is indeed large in both size and importance.

During the event many participants visited Dharavi – one of the world's largest informal settlements with more than one million inhabitants. However, Dharavi is not a typical slum area. Behind the informal and chaotic reputation is a highly structured and organised community, which has been in place for decades, and which contains well functioning local neighbourhoods and largely productive enterprise systems. With an annual productive output estimated to reach more than \$1 billion, Dharavi is a great example of the value creation in informal settlements. But economic activity is not the only value these areas create.

Like Dharavi, many 'slum-areas' functions as social safety nets – or extended families – for the people who might not be able to find shelter or employment elsewhere. And over time, some of these areas are recognised, formalised and turned into long-standing neighbourhoods. Many informal settlements in Mumbai and around the world have built up an extensive waste separation and recycling industry, where used materials are sorted and reused in economically sound, creative and environmentally beneficial ways.

Although these areas may appear chaotic and fragmented – they have great interconnectivity. As one of the local participants explained during the event, even without online technologies or social media, people in these communities know exactly who's doing what in the different areas and how to use the many different people, skills and services privately or as part of your own business.

The structures and activities of informal settlements underline the value and importance of the informal sector. And for all of us working in the field of social innovation we might ask ourselves if inventiveness, ingenuity and innovation should always be planned – or whether these informal and spontaneous problem-solving attitudes and environments could be a source of inspiration in our own work.



PHOTO CREDIT: CHARLES ANDERSON



PHOTO CREDIT: JORDI CASTELLSAGUE

The Dharavi ecosystem – led by URBZ



This site visit provided an opportunity to explore Dharavi, Mumbai's largest informal settlement. Officially home to over 300,000 people, this sprawling neighbourhood is widely accepted to accommodate around 1.3 million people.

Dharavi is a buzzing hub of energy and activity and URBZ (an experimental urban research and action collective) divided participants into four small groups, in order to avoid any sense of this being an 'urban safari'. Each group focused on a specific aspect of local life, as follows:

- » Micro-enterprise and entrepreneurship
- » Religion and shrines
- » Education
- » Architecture and building design

Each had a chance to explore the theme in some depth. For example, the micro-enterprise group visited a number of small workshops related to the garment and leather industries. In most cases the workers in each tiny workplace came from the same part of India – in one case Bihar, another Uttar Pradesh – with the men working six days a week and remitting money back to their village families.

There was an evident level of business sophistication amongst these companies. They were making orders for clients throughout Mumbai and beyond. Asked whether they were legitimate in the government's eyes, our guide explained only that "they will all be paying someone. If not the government, then someone else."

The workshop finished with a full group session, which gave an opportunity to draw some general conclusions. Amongst the key points were that:

- » In a city with a long history of intercommunal violence, Dharavi appears to have high levels of tolerance and religious coexistence – with temples, mosques and churches often located in the same areas.
- » Education remains a key challenge and the state system continues to struggle to meet the basic needs. Even in Dharavi, where they can afford it, parents will invest in privately provided education to support their children.
- » Although Dharavi has suffered from a poor external reputation, it functions as a local neighbourhood and demonstrates high levels of social cohesion. One of URBZ staff members explained that he works as a volunteer police officer, and that many residents volunteer their time through a sense of commitment and local belonging.
- » Dharavi represents a perfect example of the circular economy that Anil Gupta referred to in his opening remarks. There is a large recycling industry in the neighbourhood, and evidence everywhere of resources being recycled and used to their full extent.

The role of government and public services



The size and importance of the informal sector naturally leads us to ask about the role of government and formal institutions. Even if we recognise the value of informal activity, there is still a need to build better and more inclusive public services through a gradual formalisation of society. As Geoff Mulgan from Nesta argued:

“Any strategy that tries to romanticise the informal sector (focusing too little on the formalisation of the informal sector), or the opposite (focusing too much on formalising it) – will inevitably fail”.

In his opinion, it is really a question of making the formalisation process as easy and beneficial as possible by giving people a legal title and gradually including them in the formal economy

This is not a question of a strong civil society versus a strong state. The two sectors are interdependent, and any country will necessarily depend on the services that both sectors can provide. On one hand, every society needs a reliable, transparent and inclusive public sector, where core public services are reliable and meet the needs of the public delivered by trained professionals. On the other hand, citizen driven public services have different qualities. Less technical services that essentially rely on human interaction or mental support might work better if provided by civil society – with volunteers who are doing it out of their own free will.

Different actors within each sector thus have an important role to play. As Namrata Mehta from CKS said, often times public sector employees will actually be the best and most knowledgeable experts on a given issue, but just as often, they lack the means to develop and implement solutions due to their workload or the specific scope of their work duties. This is an example of why we need flexible public institutions that allow for multiple actors and approaches to be included in bringing about change and improvements in society.

Finally, as underlined by Seema Redkar, formerly of Bombay Metropolitan Council, who has more than 30 years of experience in community development in Mumbai, pressure is often the only way to make the Indian government act and accept change. Thus, in order to create pressure, people should organise from the bottom up and in national and international organisations – to support, document and push for the change that is needed. Seema has tried to create such pressure groups through “Advance Locality Management”, where citizens of Mumbai function as watchdogs by reporting local issues to public representatives.

The urban child – led by Atma



Atma is an accelerator programme that works with education non-profits and social enterprises in Mumbai helping them to increase their impact. The organisation exists to build the capacity of education NGOs to achieve sustainability and scalability, thereby enabling the delivery of quality education in a country where the public schooling system is unable to provide for a vast number of children. Atma provides a systematic approach to grow and amplify the impact of the organisations they work with, working holistically with all aspects of these organisations – from human resources to business models. By providing detailed and inclusive support, Atma is transforming these organisations and the state of quality education in Mumbai.

Children face many challenges in Mumbai and there is a desperate need for good quality education in Mumbai and India. Figures are shocking with only 14 girls out of every 1,000 reaching grade 12. 30% of urban girls are married under the age of 18. However, with over 66,000 education charities operating in just Mumbai alone – this is crowded space. Atma exists to help connect the dots and take small-scale projects to the next level by helping these organisations to better realise their potential.

Atma is an accelerator for schools and school-related programmes to improve efficiency and teaching techniques. Atma's strength lies in working alongside (not for or on behalf) of the charities and developing a strong relationship. They have nurtured a culture of trust by focusing on relationships and emphasising transparency and openness.

Atma's future challenge lies in translating their strong partnerships and collective knowledge into a bigger impact and true systemic transformation.

Smart cities and innovation districts

A recent effort from government to bring about change has come from Prime Minister Modi who recently launched India's 100 Smart Cities Programme. In light of this initiative, and since the event took place at the Indian School of Innovation and Design (ISDI) in the Lower Parel Innovation District, the question of smart cities, urban development and public-private partnerships was particularly relevant in this context. In a late after-noon debate, panellists discussed how to best establish and grow innovation districts and ecosystems.

Some argued in favour of a 'coolness' factor – believing that new technology, cool offices and trendy cafés are necessary preconditions for attracting talent and developing a buzzing community. This hypothesis rests upon a belief that innovation districts can be initiated top-down through building the right physical environment. Others argued that innovation districts must develop organically from the bottom up – only to be backed meaningfully by government after this has happened. Physical spaces are important, but people and culture are the real drivers of innovative communities. In this way, the creation of innovation districts requires both civic and private initiative as well as government support. As Geoff Mulgan underlined:

“Any attempts to create a cluster of innovation that doesn't already exist almost always fail. That being said, I don't know of any innovation districts that have succeeded without involvement from government. Governments can enable and you can't do without them, but you don't need them too much either.”

In a different session on smart cities Rahul Srivastava from URBZ and Sumit Chowdery from Gaia Smart Cities all provided some critical reflections on the Modi Government's Smart Cities programme. Acknowledging that many smaller cities in India are already functioning highly effectively, many cities might be classified as 'smart' – even if

on low-tech solutions and effective civic engagement. Transparency and trust between local politicians and citizens were identified as key factors in a well-functioning city – and in many ways much more important for the Indian context than ‘technological solutions to urban problems’. As Sumit underlined, Indian cities need to adopt an approach which at once utilises leading edge technology, whilst also not overlooking the basics – for example in relation to sanitation and education.

Connecting the micro and the macro



All of the above-mentioned topics have revolved around the relationship between the informal and the formal, and the micro and macro, and the dichotomy between these was underlined in Harvey Koh’s opening remarks. But as Giles Bristow from Forum for the Future mentioned during the event, this is not a question of either micro or macro – or of civil society or government. Instead, we should focus on the relationship between the two and consider how to combine them in a meaningful way.

Reflecting on her previous experience in the Netherlands, Chris Sigaloff from Kennisland was quick to make this a key reflection:

“By working mostly with government in the beginning, Kennisland later decided to shift their focus to bottom up innovations instead. But what they found was that neither approach really worked [...] the sweet spot is when you have one leg in civil society and one leg in government; it is about the meso-space between micro and macro.”

Rather than the typical notion that social innovations on the micro level should first demonstrate value and then eventually be adopted or supported by the government, this discussion highlighted a need for a different take on connecting the micro and the macro. Successful micro-level social innovations should not just influence policy (or be used by government as an excuse not to act); it should connect and work with government in a partnership of mutual experimentation and learning. As Chris Sigaloff and Ada Wong from the Good Lab in Hong Kong emphasised, this is essentially a question of overcoming the large disconnect between people, policymakers, professionals and researchers – and about creating a space of connecting stories and networks where initiatives are developed in the middle ground, with learning on all levels along the way.

Food systems and urban farming - led by Fresh & Local



The Flyover Farm is a community rooftop farm located in the heart of Mumbai. It is an initiative of Fresh & Local and has been up and running since 2012, when it received funding from a Kickstarter campaign. Flyover Farm serves as a teaching place and R&D lab, providing free workshops and consultations as well as developing and testing new products to facilitate urban farming. Participants heard stories about the process of setting up, maintaining and developing the farm and took part in two design challenges: One – to set up a small-scale home garden to expand their ideas about what is possible in a city like Mumbai. The other – to help Fresh & Local build one of its newly invented tools for urban composting.

Fresh & Local is more than just a space to grow plants in the city. Fresh & Local is helping to shift culture and help people reconnect with nature in urban areas. Founder Adrienne Thadani's vision is to make urban farming accessible for anyone in Mumbai – and to make people aware of the many empty but workable spaces on the city's rooftops. This is important in a congested and densely populated city like Mumbai. The focus is on exemplar projects over scale and the aspiration is to create brilliant projects that inspire people to go away and create their own green spaces. This is why Fresh & Local don't for example want to set up a garden for a client, but rather teach the client and work with them over time to help them set it up themselves. This changes the dynamic and ownership between Fresh & Local and its clients.

Part of what Fresh & Local does is invent new equipment adapted to the Mumbai context- so local residents can replicate it at home. When they started urban farming it was difficult to find suitable equipment, so Fresh & Local are using its everyday farming experience to find better solutions that others can take advantage from.

One challenge with urban farming is the cost of growing organic. The equipment required to invest in organic growth is more expensive than people think, and costs more than buying local produce. Although most people would like a garden, few are willing or able to make the time or financial commitment. A key challenge for Fresh & Local is therefore to shift people's perception of the reality of gardening while at the same time emphasising its value.

Funding Social Innovation

Part of the discussion on micro and macro circled around the question of funding. Jon Huggett, Chair of SIX, brought this discussion forward by presenting his thoughts on innovative funding. This led to a wider conversation on the various elements and challenges of funding – and the relationship between funders and grantees.

Key points included:

- » The need to back leader-rich movements and ideas with wide support,
- » Invest in good people doing smart things, rather than smart people doing good things,
- » Collaborate as peers and bring different funders and organisations together,
- » Invest in spreading change rather than scaling organisations to become big and powerful.

Finally, Jon emphasised that he thought we should welcome and embrace rage and avoid the thought of innovation and collaboration as being harmonious and painless endeavours. Even for funders, finding out where the rage,

controversy and clash of opinions are, might be a way of tracking down the most radical and promising innovations.

One of the implications of Jon's analysis was that we might be moving from a centralised to a decentralised system of funding for social innovation. And according to some of the participants, this might be a step in the right direction. As Geoff Mulgan commented, the large donors and philanthropists will often be the people benefitting most from the status-quo, which can be contradictory to the process of social change. Ada Wong agreed that many funders are conservative, but that it might be possible to create new hybrid models of funding – where foundations fund large (stable) and smaller (risky) organisations and innovations at the same time.

From an African perspective, Precious Njerere from Hivos argued that sometimes funders have to go against the grain and support causes that lack public sympathy. She cited her own organisation's work tackling HIV in sub-Saharan Africa as an example of this. In this respect, risk is part of their core business.

Peter Ramsden commented on the need to better understand the mind-set of the funders. Recognising that funders find it very difficult to fund something that they are not sure will work, we might have to convince them to fund initiatives that are by the outset experimental and risky if we want to change the funding mechanisms for social innovation. Peter's argument resonated with a wide belief that prototyping and experimentation were necessary first steps in the funding process – to avoid jumping to 'blind' large scale implementation without substantial knowledge and learning.

Finally, Tim Draimin from SiG commented that funding is essentially about the relationship between grant-maker and grant-seeker: "We all know that a grant-seeker is more successful if they have a strong relationship with the funder", he said, "but sometimes this might be an unequal relationship, which is why grant-seekers should perhaps work together with other grant-seekers to align their efforts and strengthen their position".

Balancing people and technology – the connected urban life

With rapid technological progress all across India, what is the role of technological solutions to the field of social change – and is there a limit to how much technology can do?

As Namrata Mehta emphasised, civic technology is in many ways spearheading social innovation in India. New digital solutions, ICT's, open data and social media are truly instrumental in delivering change more rapidly, increasing motivation for action and making it easier to connect with like-minded people. In other words, technology is enabling and accelerating many of the promising initiatives and developments that are already happening on the ground. By bridging many of the seemingly fragmented actors and sectors of social change – whether it's informal communities and tech-companies, or international corruption programmes and local civil society organisations – technology is redefining social relationships, structural institutions and individual agency.

Using open data to fight gender violence, smart-phone applications to expose corruption, or even SMS-services to assist women during childbirth – these are all great examples of the possibilities that technology enables. However, technology cannot stand alone. In the field of social innovation, technological development is not an end in itself, but a means of achieving something else. To bring about social change, technological solutions should always be based on a deeper understanding of human behavior and cultural differences.

Warning the participants against a 'blind' belief in technology, Samir Doshi from USAID referred to a new book, *Geek Heresy*, by Kentaro Toyama who is an award-winning computer scientist, who challenges the idea of technological quick-fixes to poverty and puts forth a strong argument that technology does not solve problems – people do.

Therefore, while embracing and exploiting the many new opportunities of technological progress – we should remind ourselves of finding the right balance between people and technology. As put by Carolyn from TACSI: “Digital solutions and social media might be able to change the way we care for our relatives. But nothing is going to change the importance of your close relations and the trust you built offline.”

CASE STUDY

Culture and regeneration at Dharavi Biennale – led by SNEHA



The Dharavi Biennale is a three-year art, health and recycling festival, with a series of standalone workshops (called Art Boxes) led by SNEHA, the Society for Nutrition, Education & Health Action. The hub for the Biennale is at the Colour Box, located in the Kumbharwada pottery quarter of Dharavi, where local artists and residents are invited to participate in the creation of artworks using recycled material.

This project was created to give residents the opportunity and space to openly discuss the issues they face in Dharavi, particularly around health. Examples include:

- » Mapping the hurt: a map woven together by different recycled fabrics and material to highlight areas where women experience violence in Dharavi
- » Safety deposit boxes: participants examined their emotional and physical boundaries to create dioramas to showcase their safe spaces
- » ISHARA puppet play: a street play on understanding tuberculosis
- » Hope and Hazard: a collection of recycled oil tins with photographs of the different trades in Dharavi
- » The Healers of Dharavi: portraits of respected members of the community dedicated to improving the health of the residents



The intention behind the Biennale is not to change mindsets, since the existing beliefs and values are deeply embedded in the culture. Instead, the project aims to empower residents to take a more active role in instigating change in their own lives. An inspiring example of this comes from the “Mapping the hurt” project, where participants identified a particular area in which they frequently had to pass but felt quite unsafe due to the men that lingered in the area and often harassed them. In a group, the participants decided to go out in the area – talk to residents, bring the issue to their attention and band together to make sure that women can take that route everyday and feel safe.

This example highlights a clear benefit of the project, which is the development of new social relationships. For most women in Dharavi, the home is their primary domain – making any errands outside a rarity. By being involved in the Biennale, it gave the women a chance to meet other residents whom they can relate to and share experiences with. One particular participant remarked that it gave her the confidence to leave the home without fear or need of her family’s approval.

Tracking these qualitative outcomes and generally finding the most effective way to convey the progress of the Dharavi Biennale is still work in progress for SNEHA, but nonetheless, the project has garnered media attention from all over the world. The Dharavi Biennale is a strong example of how the creative arts can be a vehicle for social change, generating dialogue and shifting public perception of life and potential within informal settlements.

Closing Remarks

The SIX Summer School in Mumbai was in essence about contrasts and connections. Whether it's connecting micro and macro, formal and informal, civil society and government, funders and grantees, cities and villages, maker spaces and 'slum' areas, technology and people – new ways of connecting holds great potential for making our cities and societies better and more inclusive for all. We saw this first-hand at the site visits around Mumbai – and we heard more about this in the deep dive sessions and panel discussions.

Both online and offline, people in communities all over the world are constantly developing new ways of doing business, providing services, solving problems and sharing new ideas. Even with very limited resources, new solutions come to life from many different and sometimes unexpected sources – through means of creativity, stubbornness, a strong desire for change – and the spirit of Jugaad. But just as technology needs to be connected with people in order to bring about social change – people also need other people, other tools, and other connections to find new solutions to the chronic challenges we face.

This year's SIX Summer School is a great example of how valuable it is to bring people together – from different backgrounds, sectors, and geographies – to learn from each other, be inspired by the surroundings, and build new relationships. As Ada Wong highlighted at the end of the event:

“SIX is a knowledge-building and connecting platform that empowers meaningful and disruptive collaborations.”



We hope that this is true – and we look forward to continuing all of these conversations by following and supporting the many new relations, collaborations and ideas that emerged in Mumbai.

We also look forward to the continuing development of social innovation across India, building on its rich cultural traditions, global connections and resources, both technological and human.

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

Social Innovation Exchange (SIX)

socialinnovationexchange.org

SIX is now the world's primary network focusing on social innovation. Our vision is that people all over the world can become better innovators by more easily connecting to their peers, sharing methods and exchanging solutions globally. We work with governments, businesses, academics, funders, practitioners and leading social innovation intermediaries and practitioners. By linking all these actors across sectors, fields and geographies, we can spread the most effective models more quickly.



The Indian School of Design and Innovation (ISDI)

isdi.in

The Indian School of Design and Innovation (ISDI) is committing to a new educational model, inspired by the idea of design and innovation as transformative forces in society.

ISDI is in collaboration with Parsons The New School for Design, a global leader in design education. The partnership with Parsons enables ISDI to bring a world class, rigorous curriculum, prominent faculty, student exchanges and global relationships to India. They believe the disciplines of design and innovation play a significant role in addressing issues of economic development and social improvement.



Lower Parel Innovation District (LPID)

LPID is a network and hub for people with great ideas to connect and engage with people with great talent, capital and resources to pursue their innovative and entrepreneurial ambitions - through cerebral and experiential events, bringing infrastructure and expertise to members and visitors for learning, making and incubating new creative ventures that address the new needs of the future



The Vihara Innovation Network

vihara.asia

The Vihara Innovation Network (VIN) is a network of innovation-oriented organizations, based in India, Singapore and Indonesia, working towards (i) building innovation approaches and process within private, public and social sector organisations, (ii) exploring innovative approaches to learning and entrepreneurship as well as (iii) creating an ecosystem that nurtures innovation through the facilitation of workshops, conferences, events, programs, design jams and hackathons.



Okapi

okapia.co

Okapi is an Indian-based research and consulting group focused on institutional design for complex goals in changing times. Their work draws extensively on academic social science research for insights and innovative approaches to the challenges our clients face: from regulatory design and public investment prioritization to mapping actors, networks, and dynamics in innovation ecosystems or integrating social and financial goals in organizational processes. Okapi is incubated by IIT Madras.



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SUMMER SCHOOL

