

GROWING SOCIAL INNOVATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Will Norman, Catherine Russell, Karen Clarke & Declan Mackin / April 2013



About The Young Foundation

We are The Young Foundation and we are determined to make positive social change happen. We pioneered the field of social innovation with The Open University, UpRising and Studio Schools. We work closely with individuals, communities and partners building relationships to ensure that our thinking does something, our actions matter and the changes we make together will continue to grow.

youngfoundation.org

About RSM McClure Watters

RSM McClure Watters is one of Northern Ireland's largest firms of Accountants and Business Advisers and is part of the global network of RSM, which represents more than 32,500 people in over 100 countries. Our Management Consulting team has extensive experience in providing social and economic research, strategy development, and economic/policy consulting services to public, private and 3rd sector clients in Great Britain, Ireland and further afield.

rsmmcclurewatters.com

About the Building Change Trust

The Building Change Trust was established in 2008 by the Big Lottery Fund with a National Lottery grant of £10 million as an investment for community capacity building and promotion of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

The Trust supports the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland through the development and delivery of and learning from a range of programmes including commissioned work, awards programmes and other interventions.

buildingchangetrust.org

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Will Norman is Director of Research at The Young Foundation with overall responsibility for the strategic direction and implementation of research projects. Will specialises in ethnographic research methodologies and social innovation. Will has a PhD in anthropology from the London School of Economics (LSE).

Catherine Russell is an Associate at The Young Foundation. She is an experienced researcher and facilitator, specialising in focus groups, ethnography and 1:1 interviews. Catherine has a BA (Hons) degree in Human Geography from the University of Sheffield.

Dr Karen Clarke is a Senior Consultant in RSM McClure Watters. She has over ten years' experience of carrying out large-scale research and evaluation assignments, particularly within the areas of community, social and economic development.

Declan Mackin is an MBA and Partner in RSM McClure Watters. He has over 18 years' experience of providing research and management consulting services to private, public and third sector clients in Ireland, the UK and further afield. His key areas of expertise include: public policy/programme evaluation; social and economic research; and the development of organisational and area-based development strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Western societies have experienced profound changes over the last few decades. Globalisation, international migration and innovations in information and communication technologies have transformed the communities we live in and have brought about substantial improvements to the lives of many.

However, these developments have failed to stem the rising tide of social, economic and environmental challenges. We are in the midst of the worst financial and economic crisis for generations, with the highest levels of unemployment for decades. Climate change, social exclusion, inter-generational worklessness, material poverty, health and wealth inequalities and ageing populations pose real and significant challenges.

These challenges are swamping public budgets, as well as hampering our competitiveness and economic growth in the long term. The structures and institutions – both public and market based – that have historically met society’s needs are now struggling to cope. Barely a day goes by without the media referring to one or other potential ‘time bombs’, be they diabetes, ageing or obesity, which will further cripple our welfare system. Banking crises have led to sovereign debt crises, and financial bailouts of unimaginable sums now dominate the headlines. Some are beginning to argue that the current crisis marks a fundamental shift in the nature of our traditional economies.¹

There is a growing recognition that new and innovative approaches are required to meet the social, economic and environmental difficulties we are facing. The field of social innovation is developing rapidly. Across the world, millions of people are creating new and better ways of tackling social challenges. Solutions are emerging from across the public, private and voluntary and community sectors. Frequently, these innovations involve new technologies or are making better use of previously under-utilised assets and resources. And these innovations are not all small. Some of the successes are becoming part of everyday life, from micro-credit in rural communities, to web platforms linking teachers to learners, banking services using mobile phones, community land trusts, energy cooperatives, restorative justice programmes and more.

Northern Ireland is no exception to these global trends. The Peace Process, culminating in the formation of a devolved government, has undoubtedly transformed the country. However, a wide range of entrenched social problems remain. The legacy of conflict and social division continues to affect many parts of Northern Irish society today. Large parts of society face the underlying problems associated with deprivation, high levels of worklessness, educational under-achievement and poor health. Local and national public spending cuts are also beginning to take a toll. Yet, as with elsewhere in the world, social innovators and entrepreneurs are developing solutions that offer new ways of tackling the problems, new ways in which communities are better equipped to cope with change.

In this report we look at social innovation in Northern Ireland.² We argue that while there are significant examples of social innovation developing in different parts of the country, there is a lack of widespread understanding of the concept and of what it can achieve. At present we believe that Northern Ireland lacks the infrastructure to grow and develop social innovation. We conclude by detailing an approach that we believe will support social innovators across the country and mobilise stakeholders across different sectors to achieve the widespread and radical change that is required to meet the complex challenges communities will face in the future.

2. WHAT IS SOCIAL INNOVATION?

The field of social innovation is gaining momentum around the world. The concept is increasingly becoming part of the language of policy makers. Governments, businesses and foundations are beginning to make significant investments in supporting, managing and growing innovations to meet the social challenges of the future. Despite the growing levels of interest, the concept is not always clearly defined or well understood. In this section we outline what we mean by social innovation.³

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.

Five core elements

Social innovation is a practice-led field and as such social innovations vary considerably in different policy contexts and geographic regions. What is socially innovative in urban planning might be very different to what is innovative in education. Similarly, innovation in rural Mozambique is likely to take on a very different form to social innovation in a London housing estate. Nevertheless, we believe that despite these contextual differences, there are five core elements that make an activity or practice socially innovative:

1. **Novelty.** Social innovations do not need to be completely original or unique. However, they do have to be new in some way – new to a particular region, sector, field, market or user. For example, there was nothing particularly novel about selling magazines, but it became innovative when John Bird developed the Big Issue to help homeless people support themselves.
2. **Implementation** (not just an idea). There is a distinction between invention and innovation. Invention is the product or service developing from an idea. Innovation requires the successful implementation and application of this idea. For example, Apple did not invent the MP3 player, but the iPod was innovative as it was the first successful commercialisation of the technology.
3. **Meets a social need.** One of the key distinguishing features of social innovation is that it is explicitly designed to meet a social need. Of course, there is much debate about what is a social need and how these can be context specific and highly subjective. We consider a social need as something which “can cause serious harm or socially recognised suffering” when not met.⁴
4. **Effectiveness.** A successful social innovation should meet these social needs more effectively than existing solutions.
5. **Enhances society's capacity to act.** The *process* of social innovation is as important as the final outcome. The process enhances society's capacity to act by creating new roles and relationships, developing assets and capabilities and/or better using assets and resources. It can involve changes in social relations, can encourage the participation of the most vulnerable or marginalised groups and ultimately involves changes to existing power relations.

Common features of social innovation

All social innovations contain the five core elements, but many social innovations share a number of other common features. Some of these features are closely related or overlap, and not all social innovations have to include them, but nevertheless we believe that most social innovations include at least one. The common features are:

Open and collaborative. Social innovations are often inclusive and engage a wide range of actors. While this happens in the ‘real world’ – examples include guerrilla gardening, transition towns, Habitat for Humanity⁵ and so on – new information and communication technologies have enabled people to come together in new ways and on a scale previously unimaginable. This open and collaborative form of production online has a number of interesting features. It entails large numbers of people working independently on collective projects without normal market structures and mechanisms (organisations, hierarchies, compensation etc.). Examples in the social sphere include Riversimple’s open source eco-car⁶, Fab Labs, open source houses, open source wind turbines, open source heating systems and open journals.

Grassroots and bottom-up. Social innovations often develop at the grassroots, local level and grow from the bottom up. We are beginning to see older models of service delivery that are based on a centralised command and control model being replaced by more distributed systems based in local communities.

Co-production. The boundaries between producers and consumers are becoming increasingly blurred. There has been a significant shift away from seeing individuals as passive recipients of services. The core idea, often termed ‘co-production’, is that “people who use services are hidden resources, not drains on the system, and that no service that ignores this resource can be efficient.”⁷ Co-production goes well beyond the idea of user engagement or consultation. Rather, it is about shifting responsibility and resources from professionals to users and involving people in the delivery of their own services.

Mutualism. Mutualism is the notion that individual and collective wellbeing is obtainable only by mutual dependence. Mutual organisations include worker, farmer, consumer and housing co-operatives, friendly societies, credit unions, mutual aid societies and so on. Co-operatives and other mutual organisations continue to flourish in many countries and in many fields. But a new mutualism is emerging – one that is network enabled and promotes mutual exchange in a variety of forms. Examples include peer-to-peer networks such as Etsy⁸ and FreeCycle⁹ as well as new models of care and support such as the Southwark Circle¹⁰ and Homeshare¹¹.

Creates new roles and relationships. Many social innovations are developed ‘with’ and ‘by’ users and not delivered ‘to’ and ‘for’ them. As a result, social innovations can also be identified by the type of relationships they create. Social innovations can create new social relationships in a number of ways – they can lead to new forms of governance, new and better forms of collaborative action, improve the inclusion and participation of marginalised and/or under-represented groups, or they can shift and change the relationship entirely, for example by enabling users to become producers, or patients to become carers (like the Expert Patients programme¹² or Patients Like Me¹³), or students to become teachers (the Barefoot College¹⁴). Often as a result of creating new social relationships, social innovations also create new roles for users and beneficiaries (as, for example, carers, producers and teachers). These new roles often enhance the capabilities of users and beneficiaries, thereby empowering them and enabling them to better satisfy their needs over the long term.

Better use of assets and resources. Social innovation often recognises, exploits and coordinates assets and resources which would otherwise be wasted, under-used or not used

at all. In some cases, these assets and resources can be latent (such as the skills that communities have at their disposal), intangible (finance) and/or physical (buildings and physical spaces). Uncovering and sharing latent assets helps to ensure that social innovation initiatives provide wins for all those involved, rather than the zero-sum game of many other types of activity which produce both winners and losers. Examples include the re-use and adaptation of physical spaces, such as the High Line in New York¹⁵, an abandoned railway line that has been turned into a public park, or Brixton Village in London¹⁶, a new initiative which saw the reclamation of the Brixton Arcade for community-based shops, cafes and stalls.

Develops assets and capabilities. Many social innovations explicitly aim to develop the capabilities of beneficiaries, enabling them to meet their needs over the longer term. This capabilities approach is based on the notion that people are in control of their own lives and the source of their own solutions. This is in marked distinction to approaches which parachute in solutions from the ‘outside’. It also challenges relationships of power; which is important in terms of social innovation. Examples include participatory approaches to development pioneered by Robert Chambers¹⁷ as well as initiatives such as the Barefoot College. This is closely linked with asset-based approaches which focus on the skills, talents and resources that communities have at their disposal.

Types of social innovation

It is important to draw a distinction between incremental and radical innovation. Some social innovations build on what went before whereas others are more radical as they provide entirely new models for thinking and doing. Incremental innovations build on existing knowledge and resources (usually by an established player in the field). A radical innovation marks a significant departure from what was available before – such as the creation of a new market, or the deployment of a new technology – and therefore usually requires new knowledge and resources.

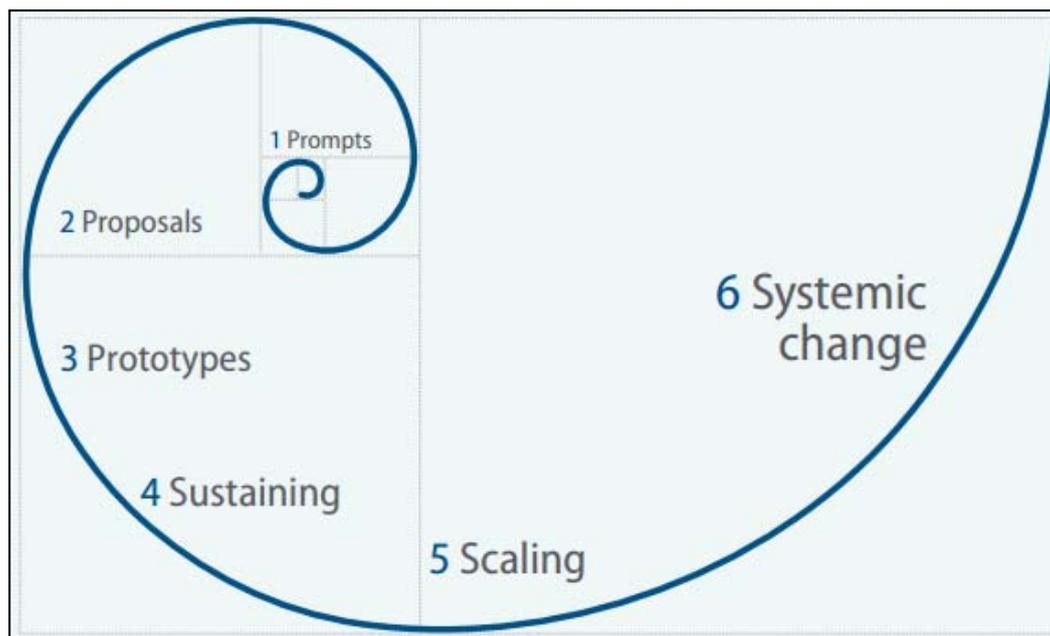
Social innovation, whether radical or incremental, can take a number of different forms:

1. **New products**, such as assistive technologies developed for people with disabilities e.g. voice synthesisers and Braille readers.
2. **New methods**, including services, such as mobile banking (e.g. M-Pesa in Kenya¹⁸), new processes, such as continuous improvement methods and crowdsourcing, and new markets, such as Fair Trade¹⁹, or time banking²⁰.
3. **New platforms**, such as new legal or regulatory frameworks or platforms for care (e.g. Tyze²¹ which helps older people and their carers keep track of the various forms of informal and formal care that they receive).
4. **New organisational forms**, such as community interest companies or networks (e.g. the Hub Network²²), or new business models such as social franchising, or ‘just in time models’ applied to social challenges (e.g. the Aravind Eye Care System in India²³ which carries out over 250,000 eye operations each year at a fraction of the usual costs).

The process of social innovation

A useful framework to understand the process of social innovation is to view it through the various stages that take an idea from inception to impact. These stages are rarely sequential. Innovations can jump stages, the stages often overlap and, as many feedback loops exist between them, the process is more iterative than linear. As such, we represent the process of social innovation as a spiral with six different stages starting with the prompt that may spark an idea to eventual radically changing an entire social system:

The innovation life cycle²⁴



- 1. Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses.** In this stage we include all the factors which highlight the need for innovation – such as crisis, public spending cuts, poor performance, strategy – as well as the inspirations which spark it, from creative imagination to new evidence. This stage involves diagnosing the problem and framing the question in such a way that root causes, not just symptoms, will be tackled. Framing the right question is half way to finding the right solution. This means going beyond symptoms to identifying the causes of a particular problem.
- 2. Proposals and ideas.** This is the stage of idea generation. This can involve formal methods – such as design or creativity methods to widen the menu of options available. Many of the methods help to draw in insights and experiences from a wide range of sources.
- 3. Prototyping and pilots.** This is where ideas get tested in practice. This can be done through simply trying things out, or through more formal pilots, prototypes and randomised control trials. The process of refining and testing ideas is particularly important in the social economy because it's through iteration, and trial and error, that coalitions gather strength (for example, linking users to professionals) and conflicts are resolved (including battles with entrenched interests). It's also through these processes that measures of success come to be agreed upon.
- 4. Sustaining.** This is when the idea becomes everyday practice. Sustaining involves sharpening ideas (and often streamlining them) and identifying income streams to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the firm, social enterprise or charity. In the public sector this means identifying budgets, teams and other resources such as legislation.
- 5. Scaling and diffusion.** At this stage there are a range of strategies for growing and spreading an innovation – from organisational growth, through licensing and franchising to federations and looser diffusion. Emulation and inspiration also play a critical role in spreading an idea or practice. Demand matters as much as supply: how market demand, or demand from commissioners and policy makers is mobilised to spread a successful new model. This process is often referred to as scaling, and in some cases the word is appropriate, as the innovation is generalised within an organisation or the organisation itself expands. But scaling is a concept from the mass production age, and innovations take hold in the social economy in many other ways, whether through inspiration and emulation, or

through the provision of support and know how from one to another in a more organic and adaptive kind of growth.

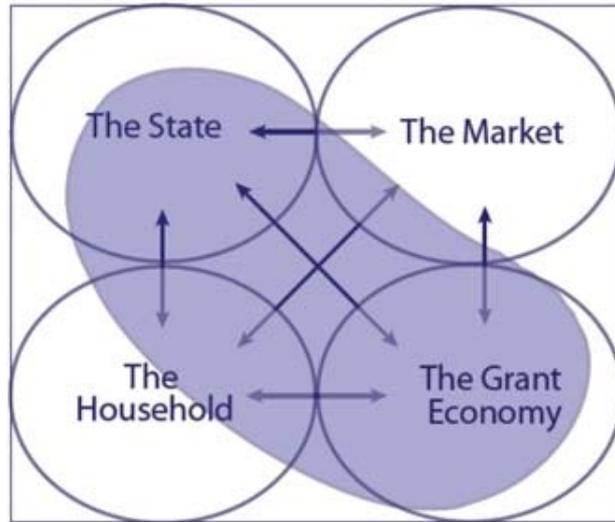
- 6. Systemic change.** Social innovations are inherently about changing the way things are done and the way social needs are conceptualised. In this sense, systemic change is the ultimate goal of social innovation, even if very few social innovations reach this stage. The founders of Grameen Bank²⁵ and Fair Trade, for example, wanted to show that an alternative model was possible and that, in time, this new model could become the established norm.

Systemic change is never achieved through a single organisation or sector; it always involves a complex interaction of culture, consumer behaviour, business practice, legislation and policy. Moreover, it always involves a change to attitudes and behaviours and requires people to see and think in new ways. Systemic change requires that there are sufficient incentives for incumbents to change their practice and behaviour. For this reason, systemic changes are more likely to follow periods of upheaval or crisis than times of stability.

A recent example of systemic change can be seen in the development of the green movement. This was initially driven through social movements ('conservation' and later 'environmentalism') and third sector campaigning organisations (for example Greenpeace). As academia provided evidence of man-made climate change, governments began to regulate and make major public targets for carbon reduction. The business sector responded by making adaptations to products and reporting its environmental impacts with greater transparency. And consumers began changing their behaviour (adopting recycling as an everyday rather than niche practice) and preferences (for sustainable products, for example). This kind of systemic change inevitably brings with it more opportunities for innovation in terms of products, services and systems. We are still in the midst of this shift and many vested interests are continuing to resist it, but the green movement provides a good example of the cross section of institutions and actors involved in any systemic change.

Where does social innovation take place?

Social innovation should not just be considered the sole preserve of the voluntary and community sector. Social innovations develop and grow in all sectors of the economy: within the public sector (the state); within business and the private sector (the market); in the voluntary sector (grant economy); and within the household sector which includes individuals and households who are not necessarily part of a formal organisation. Some social innovations involve partnerships between sectors, for example the famous example of the Grameen microcredit organisation partnering with the French food manufacturer Danone to develop fortified yoghurts for low-income groups in the developing world. Other social innovations move between sectors as they develop and grow, for example a group of friends may start with an idea that begins to solve a social issue in their community, as it grows it may become a registered charity and eventually the charity's role could become mainstreamed into the public sector.



For the most part, putting social innovations into practice invariably involves cutting across organisational, sectoral or disciplinary boundaries. Some of the most exciting innovations we see today come from interactions between different sectors, such as the fair trade movement, or urban farming. Social innovations thrive where there is a cross-pollination of ideas and a mix of actors. They leave behind compelling new relationships, which contribute to the diffusion and embedding of innovation, and pave the way for further innovations.

3. SOCIAL INNOVATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

This work is based on extensive reviews of secondary literature as well as visits to a range of organisations, and interviews and discussion groups with practitioners and policy makers across Northern Ireland. It was clear that social innovation is not a commonly used term and is regarded by many to be a new concept. Indeed, a number of the people we spoke to went so far as to say that there is not a culture of innovation in Northern Ireland. However, as we probed and dug deeper it became clear that although the terminology of social innovation is not widely referred to, people were aware of exciting projects and programmes that were tackling social challenges in new and innovative ways.

In this chapter we feature four of the examples of socially innovative practices and projects that we looked at in Northern Ireland. The evidence demonstrates that social innovators are changing society and improving people's lives in Northern Ireland, but there are significant barriers and challenges exist which prevent social innovation achieving its full potential.

Case Studies

1. Community-based Restorative Justice

The 30 years of political violence which scarred Northern Ireland left deep divisions between the Catholic and Protestant communities. It also fostered widespread mistrust of the police and criminal justice system. This mistrust of state policing led to the evolution of violent paramilitary systems of punitive beatings, banishments and attacks. Such paramilitary violence came under increasing local and international scrutiny and criticism in the build up to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. In 1996 two ex-prisoners undertook research into understandings of justice in their own communities and concluded that a non-violent system of community-based justice was needed to replace the existing systems of punishment beatings. Projects were set up in both communities: Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA²⁶) in the Loyalist areas and Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI)²⁷ in the Republican areas.

The development and success of these community-based approaches to restorative justice have been remarkable. The concept has been readily adopted by communities and the idea of restorative justice has become widespread across different interventions and practices in Northern Ireland. The community-based programmes originally operated independently of the formal criminal justice system, sometimes often experiencing fraught relationships with statutory authorities, particularly the police. However, as they have demonstrated their value, relationships have improved and they are now formally accredited by government. This has allowed them to receive public funding and develop formal partnerships with the police, a wide range of statutory services and professional organisations.

Community-based Restorative Justice programmes exemplify social innovation. They were created to better meet an unmet social need. The concept emerged from the community itself, in opposition to existing institutions, and now has scaled and is widely used across different sectors in Northern Ireland. There is now growing international interest in these successful programmes.

2. Gaeltacht Quarter

The economic, social and physical needs of the communities around the Falls Road in West Belfast are profound. The area is among the most deprived in Northern Ireland, with high levels of economic inactivity and educational under-performance. In 2001 the Ministers for Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Social Development commissioned the West Belfast and Greater Shankill Task Forces to develop a regeneration strategy for the area. The Task Forces recommended establishing An Ceathrú Gaeltachta/The Gaeltacht Quarter to “secure wealth creation by maximising the economic opportunities provided by a growing cluster of Irish Language and cultural based enterprises and activities which additionally have significant tourist potential.”²⁸

Belfast's Gaeltacht Quarter is now an area in which the Irish language is spoken widely. The area is home to Gaelscoileanna (Irish-medium primary schools), Gaelcholáistí (secondary schools), naíonraí (crèches) and naíscóileanna (nursery schools). The area has Irish language restaurants and agencies and it has Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich²⁹ (the city's Irish language cultural centre) at its heart. Cultúrlann is an arts and cultural hub and contains a café and shop, 100-seater theatre, an Irish Language radio station, a television production company and also acts as an incubator for start up organisations.

The Gaeltacht Quarter demonstrates how government and community organisations can work together innovatively to tackle entrenched social and economic problems. This model helped create a new market, based on the Irish language, which now generates income through a range of media and cultural activities as well as bringing in over 60,000 visitors a year.

3. The Derry Playhouse³⁰

The Playhouse is a community arts centre based in central Derry/Londonderry. It was established in 1992 by Pauline Ross in an empty former convent school that had fallen into disrepair. Ross, a former community arts liaison officer working for the council, was working with teachers, youth workers, development workers, nurses and other groups who would tell her how much they wanted facilities somewhere in the city for dance or drama. With an initial grant of £300, Ross opened the Playhouse. It has grown to become one of Ireland's leading arts centres.

In 2009 the build underwent a £4.3 million renovation, funded by the Arts Council Northern Ireland, Heritage Lottery Fund and others. Since re-opening, the Playhouse has been nominated for, and won, some prestigious awards for the design of the building. It now houses an awarding winning 189 seater theatre, Contemporary Art Gallery, Dance Studio, Art Resource Centre and Northern Ireland's largest Education and Outreach Department, as well as being home to several cultural and art based tenants. It offers a year-round programme of events from theatre to comedy, from dance to music.

The Playhouse is a grassroots, bottom-up driven community development project that uses arts and cultural activities to engage, entertain, educate and empower local people. Like many social innovations it transformed an under-used asset to provide new services that help build resilience and new capabilities among people living in the community.

4. The NOW Project³¹

NOW (North and West Belfast) is a social enterprise that was set up in 1999 by parents and carers to meet the needs of local people with learning disabilities. It delivers training and employment services to people to help them gain qualifications and life/work experience. NOW runs two social enterprises: Gauge, which provides social research and evaluation

services; and Loaf Catering, which runs two cafés and a catering business. The income from these enterprises is invested back into NOW's work.

NOW works with partners from across the public, private and voluntary sectors. It is a good example of a market-led enterprise set up specifically to create good quality jobs for people disadvantaged in the labour market. Social innovations such as NOW not only help meet the needs of those involved, but also play an important role in changing people's attitudes to learning disabilities. Learning disabilities remain poorly understood and many people with a learning disability can be isolated and excluded from society. NOW, and innovative projects like it, support people with learning disabilities to take an active role in their communities and help change public attitudes and raise awareness.

Challenges to growing social innovation

There are significant examples of social innovations changing and improving the lives of people living in communities across Northern Ireland. However, our visits and discussions also showed that there are a number of serious challenges that are currently preventing the growth of social innovation. These include:

- **Lack awareness of innovation.** Social innovation was not a commonly used term and is not widely understood. Many of those we spoke to stated that although there were pockets of innovation activity, these are relatively isolated examples and there is not a culture of innovation (social or otherwise) in Northern Ireland. There is an absence of policy direction in relation to social innovation in Northern Ireland. Whilst there are a number of policies and strategies which could relate to social innovation, the main thrust of innovation policy (and associated funding support) relates to private sector R&D and social enterprises.
- **Tough economic climate.** The economic downturn and public spending cuts are increasing the demand for services that meet social needs while at the same time reducing the resources available to deliver them. There was general agreement that innovation is urgently required to meet a range of social challenges, but the growing pressures on services and funding made it difficult to 'step back' and think creatively.
- **Funding for innovation.** It was also noted that in addition to the current economic pressures, there are also changes occurring to existing funding structures, including the winding down of some of the larger funds such as Atlantic Philanthropies, International Fund for Ireland and the end of the current round of EU programmes.
- **Attitude to risk.** Innovation is about taking risks and understanding that not everything will have a positive result. There is a need to allow organisations and individuals to take risks to be innovative on the understanding that not everything will be successful. But in doing so a full and honest evaluation is required to ensure that lessons can be learnt from failure. Many of those we spoke to believed that funders are often too risk averse and will only consider funding established or 'proven' projects rather than support a riskier innovative approach which could fail.
- **Limited support.** The lack of support to those who have innovative ideas was not restricted to financial support. There was a widely held view that there is also an absence of the vital non-financial support, such as mentoring, business planning, networking and training, required to take a social innovation from idea through to implementation.

4. GROWING SOCIAL INNOVATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

There is growing interest in social innovation in Northern Ireland. Social entrepreneurs and innovators are developing new and effective ways to meet the challenges they see in their communities. Yet many of these initiatives remain small and have yet to scale or be replicated by others. Although interest in the concept is growing, there remains very little detailed understanding of what social innovation entails. People do not consider it to be a priority in the policy agenda and there is insufficient infrastructure in place to grow and develop social innovation across the country.

We believe that a clear strategy is required for social innovation to realise its full potential and meet the challenges that people are facing in their daily lives. In this section we outline our recommendations as a ‘road map’ to grow social innovation in Northern Ireland.

Throughout this report we have emphasised that social innovation involves collaboration between different types of organisations and individuals from across the economy. As such, no single institution can ‘own’ the social innovation agenda in Northern Ireland. The road map that we outline requires cooperation and partnership. However, leadership is required to drive this process. We believe that The Building Change Trust is in an excellent position to use its resources and influence to play a leading role in building the alliances and partnerships that are required to ensure the development and growth of social innovation in Northern Ireland, ultimately generating new solutions to the complex social challenges that communities are facing now and into the future.

1. Raising the profile of social innovation in Northern Ireland

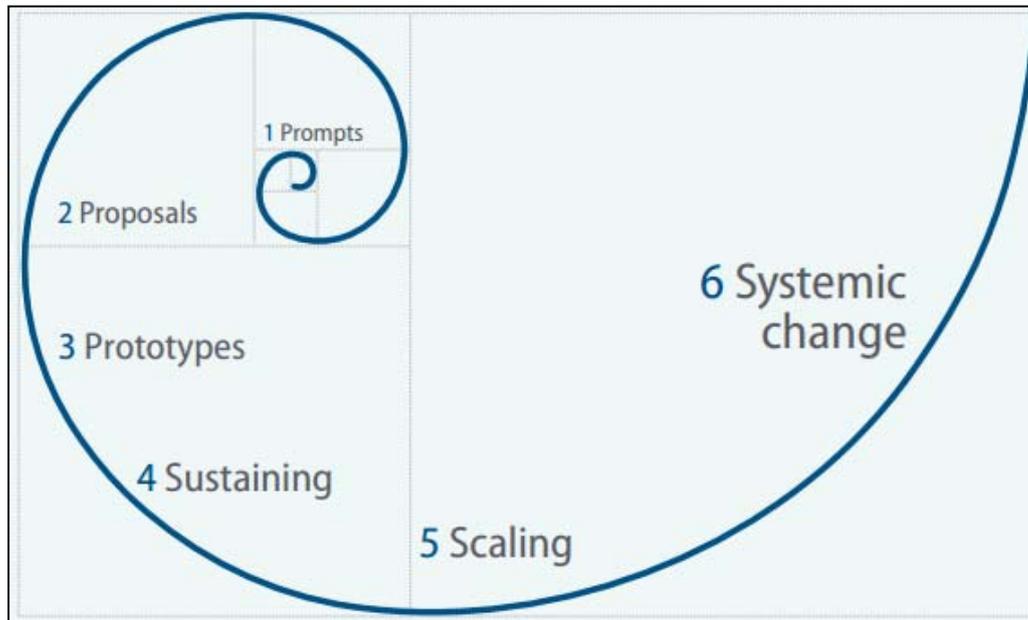
The first stage of the roadmap is to raise awareness of social innovation in Northern Ireland. As we have already noted, social innovation occurs across the four sectors of the economy: the public sector, in business, in the voluntary and community sector, and with individuals and households. To successfully raise the profile of social innovation, leaders from all of these sectors need to publically demonstrate their commitment to being open and supportive of new ideas and approaches that can help deliver better services and better meet social needs. Leaders from the different sectors need to send out a clear statement to all of those who are thinking of trying something new or different, that they are open to suggestions and will support a new culture of innovation.

- **Social Innovation Award Ceremony**

A high profile awards ceremony, showcasing and celebrating social innovation in Northern Ireland should be organised once a year. This ceremony should be hosted by leaders from government and civil service, from businesses and the commercial sector and from leaders from charitable foundations and the voluntary community sector. This ceremony would aim to promote awareness of social innovation as well as demonstrate the commitment of sector leaders to encourage a new culture of innovation in Northern Ireland. The event would help foster a community of social innovators working in different regions and on different policy areas. It is important that the awards recognise

success and good practice but are non-financial; they should not be confused with prizes or funding mechanisms.

The road map follows the different stages of social innovation we outlined above. The stages model is not only helpful in terms of understanding innovation, but also offers a useful framework for thinking about the different kinds of support that innovators and innovations need in order to grow.



2. Prompts for generating social innovation in Northern Ireland

There are a number of specific approaches that can help to generate new ways of thinking about particular social challenges. Two of these would work well in Northern Ireland, both increasing the awareness of social innovations and helping stimulate new ways of thinking and responding to challenges:

- **Thinker in Residence**
A ‘thinker in residence’ programme can help governments and other large organisations stimulate cultures of innovation. Thinkers – renowned academics or leading innovation practitioners – are invited by governments or large organisations to stimulate creative thinking and practical innovation. The Thinker in Residence programme in South Australia started in 2003. Each year, up to four internationally renowned experts spend between two and six months helping the government to identify problems and explore original solutions to issues ranging from climate change to childcare.
- **Innovation exchanges**
Visiting other innovative projects which are addressing similar challenges in other contexts (for example, elsewhere in the UK, Eire or other European Countries) is an effective way of sharing ideas, developing new approaches and building networks. Travel bursaries for exchanges could be part of the innovation awards. The Social Innovation eXchange (SIX³²) runs a programme of exchanges.

3. Proposals

- **Challenge Prize**

A challenge prize is an effective means of uncovering and funding new sources of social innovation. One of the traditional arguments in favour of prizes and competitions is the way in which it provides those giving out the prize a means of finding a solution to a problem without shouldering the burden of risk. In the social economy, however, there are arguments for sharing rather than shifting the risk. This can be achieved through a stage-gate process, where participants increase the level of investment as they pass through the various stages. A specific challenge is set, for example asking for an innovation to reduce isolation among older people in rural areas, and people are asked to submit their ideas. A group of applicants are shortlisted and are supported to develop their ideas into detailed plans. A small number of finalists are selected and are funded to test their ideas over six months. A final prize is awarded for the solution that is judged to most effectively meet the challenge.

NESTA's Centre for Challenge Prizes³³ manages such prizes, building on the expertise gained through its successful Big Green Challenge launched in 2007.

- **Social Innovation Safari³⁴**

Social Innovation Safari brings together different practitioners and thinkers to focus their expertise on developing solutions to complex social problems. The concept was developed by Kennisland in the Netherlands. Their model is a week-long action learning programme that brings up to 30 participants from diverse backgrounds to help a local organisation develop a solution to a problem they are struggling with. The participants are a mixture of local and international innovators who act as a 'solution brigade' as well as sharing experiences, skills etc.

4. Prototypes

- **Social Innovation Camp³⁵**

Social Innovation Camp brings together software developers and designers with people who understand social problems to build web- or mobile phone-based solutions. Over the course of a weekend small groups work together to design and build a working prototype website or application. Examples of successful innovations which have grown out of Social Innovation Camps include GoodGym³⁶, which connects runners with isolated elderly people, and MyPolice, an online feedback system for the police service. Northern Ireland's first Social Innovation Camp is being funded by The Building Change Trust and will take place in June 2013.

5. Sustaining social innovation

- **Innovation Funding**

Every innovation process requires some finance. A social innovation fund should be developed based on the innovation spiral model. This could contain different stages, starting with small grants to support the development and prototyping of an idea, then increasing grant size to build up and sustain an innovation, and finally loans and/or equity investment to help scaling.

6. Scaling and diffusion

- **Innovation accelerator**
Scaling up successful social innovations is a particular challenge. An accelerator programme can provide established organisations with the support, confidence and expertise to grow and extend their impact. The Young Foundation's Accelerator³⁷ is a six month taught programme that propels and rapidly accelerates small but successful social enterprises through combining expert tuition, business support and advice on social investment.

7. Systemic change

Facilitating systemic change is far from straight forward. By definition, no single organisation or institution can achieve systemic change; it involves the complex interaction between multiple stakeholders from all parts of the economy, resulting in widespread behavioural change across society. Specific recommendations on how to create systemic change are, therefore, hard to come by. However, systemic innovation requires working in partnership, learning from each other and, ultimately, creating strong relationships between different actors. One way to start building such relationships is through the creation of an innovation hub.

- **Social Innovation Hub**
A social innovation hub brings different groups of people and organisations together with the express purpose of working together to affect change around a group of great ideas, rapidly. An effective hub should enable a mixing of art, technology, private sector, NGOs and public sector, as well as small, mid-size and larger companies) to find innovative social solutions to a variety of specific social challenges. By helping a wide variety of people to work together, either physically (or virtually), this would both build up tacit knowledge and speed up the innovation process around a particular issue, in a particular field. There are currently many models on which this could be based (Living Labs, MIT labs, the HUB, CSI Toronto, or DenokInn in Bilbao).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was commissioned by The Building Change Trust. We would like to thank all of those people who helped us with this work, generously giving up their time to host visits and take part in interviews and discussion groups. We are grateful to the members of the Research Advisory Group who helped steer the project. In particular, we would like to thank the Group's chair, Robin Murray, for his enormously helpful guidance and advice.

This report represents the views of the authors and not necessarily those of The Building Change Trust. Any omissions or errors are those of the authors.

REFERENCES AND ENDNOTES

-
- ¹ Murray, R (2009) *Danger and Opportunity: Crisis and the New Social Economy* London: NESTA
- ² This work was commissioned by The Building Change Trust. This short report builds on research undertaken by RSM McClure Watters and The Young Foundation in 2012-13. A full technical report of this project is available on The Building Change Trust's website: www.buildingchangetrust.org.
- ³ This draws on recent research undertaken by The Young Foundation as part of the European Commission funded TEPSIE programme (www.tepsie.eu). See: Caulier-Grice, J., Davies, A., Patrick, R. & Norman, W (2012) *Defining Social Innovation. A deliverable of the project: "The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe"* (TEPSIE), European Commission – 7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research.
- ⁴ Doyal, L. & Gough, I. (1991) *A theory of human need*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Palgrave
- ⁵ www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk
- ⁶ www.riversimple.com
- ⁷ Boyle, B. & Harris, M. (2009) *The Challenge of Co-production*, London: NESTA
- ⁸ www.etsy.com
- ⁹ www.uk.freecycle.org
- ¹⁰ www.southwarkcircle.org.uk
- ¹¹ www.homeshare.org
- ¹² www.expertpatients.co.uk
- ¹³ www.patientslikeme.com
- ¹⁴ www.barefootcollege.org
- ¹⁵ www.thehighline.org
- ¹⁶ www.brixtonmarket.net/info/brixton-village
- ¹⁷ See for example: Chambers, R. (2002) *Participatory Workshops: a source of 21 sets of ideas and activities*. London: Earthscan
- ¹⁸ www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/programmes/mobile-money-for-the-unbanked/mmu-examples/m-pesa
- ¹⁹ www.fairtrade.org.uk
- ²⁰ See for example: www.justaddspice.org
- ²¹ www.tyze.com
- ²² www.the-hub.net/network
- ²³ www.aravind.org
- ²⁴ Murray, R., Caulier-Grice, J. & Mulgan, G. (2010) *The Open Book of Social Innovation* London: The Young Foundation & NESTA
- ²⁵ www.grameen-info.org
- ²⁶ www.alternativesrj.org
- ²⁷ www.Crji.ie
- ²⁸ See: www.dcalni.gov.uk/index/language-cultural-diversity-r08/irish.htm
- ²⁹ www.culturilann.ie
- ³⁰ www.derryplayhouse.co.uk
- ³¹ www.nowproject.co.uk
- ³² www.socialinnovationexchange.org
- ³³ www.nesta.org.uk
- ³⁴ www.socialsafari.org
- ³⁵ www.sicamp.org
- ³⁶ www.goodgym.org
- ³⁷ www.growingsocialventures.org