Polski Komitet Narodowy Międzynarodowej Rady Ochrony Zabytków ICOMOS

Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco

Sapienza Università di Roma

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Fondazione Flaminia per l'Università in Romagna Ravenna

Sustainable Urban Rehabilitation in Europe

THE SIX STAGES OF SOCIAL INNOVATION IN DETAIL

OVERALL AIM:

Gaining knowledge of the main stages and techniques of social innovation

Erasmus+

Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses

1 Framing the question

- All innovations start with a central idea. But the idea itself is often prompted by an experience or event or new evidence which brings to light a social need or injustice
- One of the critical challenges at this stage is in identifying the right problem. A ‘good’ problem contains within it the seeds of the solution. The trick is in framing the question
- seeking solutions to the wrong problem can often make them worse. In other cases, it is a matter of breaking down a general problem into manageable bits, of getting down to the actionable parts.

Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses

1 Framing the question

- The prompts are triggers for action. They may take the form of imperatives, in that some action is needed without specifying what that action is, for example a budget crisis or a natural disaster.
- Such prompts are closely linked to problem recognition, and the myriad ways in which a problem comes to light and commands attention.
- Once the problem is recognised, it needs to be interrogated, and contextualised.
- This is the process of reformulating the problem in such a way as to stimulate workable solutions

Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses

2 Triggers and inspirations

a) Crisis.

Necessity is often the mother of invention, but crises can also crush creativity.

One of the definitions of leadership is the ability to use the smallest crisis to achieve the greatest positive change. Many nations have used economic and social crises to accelerate reform and innovation and in some cases have used the crisis to deliberately accelerate social innovation. New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina is one example, China's much more effective response to the Szechuan earthquake is another.

Both, in very different ways, institutionalised innovation as part of the response

Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses

2 Triggers and inspirations

b) Efficiency savings.

The need to cut public expenditure often requires services to be designed and delivered in new ways. Major cuts can rarely be achieved through traditional efficiency measures.

Instead they require systems change – for example, to reduce numbers going into prison, or to reduce unnecessary pressures on hospitals. The right kinds of systems thinking can open up new possibilities

c) Poor performance

highlights the need for change within services. This can act as a spur for finding new ways of designing and delivering public services. The priority will usually be to adopt innovations from elsewhere

Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses

2 Triggers and inspirations

d) New technologies

can be adapted to meet social needs better or deliver services more effectively. Examples include computers in classrooms, the use of assistive devices for the elderly, or implants to cut teenage pregnancy.

Through experiment it is then discovered how these work best (such as the discovery that giving computers to two children to share is more effective for education than giving them one each). Any new technology becomes a prompt

e) New evidence

brings to light new needs and new solutions for dealing with these needs, such as lessons from neuroscience being applied to childcare and early years' interventions or knowledge about the effects of climate change

Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses

2 Triggers and inspirations

f) Urban acupuncture.

Symbolic moves can give energy to an area, and create a context for social innovation. ‘urban acupuncture’ describes the effect that some small-scale symbolic projects can have in creating points of energy that make a city more open to innovation.

An example that incorporates a number of these elements is the Cheonggyecheon project in Seoul. Mayor Lee Myung-bak removed a two-tier motorway to reclaim the old river, which meandered across the city centre. The project, which entailed an intensive process of planning, consultation and construction, won the prize for architecture at the Venice Biennale of 2005,

- Other landmark projects : Angel of the North in Gateshead, the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square, Tirana’s move to repaint houses in vivid colours, and the Waterfire in Rhode Island.

Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses

3 Recognizing problems

- **Research and mapping** Many innovations are triggered by new data and research. In recent years, there has been a rise in the use of mapping techniques to reveal hidden needs and unused assets.
- **The circuit of information** New needs can also be brought to the fore through effective feedback systems. Such systems can help practitioners and front line staff understand the need of users and better tailor services accordingly. In industry and commerce the capacity to collect and analyse large quantities of data has been the basis for remarkable changes

Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses

3 Recognizing problems

- **New perspectives** New ideas are often prompted by new ways of seeing that put familiar things in a new light. These may be paradigms or models, and may be encouraged by formal roles that are designed to help organisations think in fresh ways
- **Making problems visible and tangible** Social phenomena are not automatically visible. One of the crucial roles of social science, and of statistics, is to bring patterns to the surface that are otherwise invisible to people living within them, or governing them. Seeing an issue in a new way can then prompt more creative thinking about alternatives

Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses

3 Recognizing problems

- **From symptom to cause** Diagnosing problems is a first step to developing solutions. A key challenge is to get to the underlying causes of a problem. To a hammer every problem looks like a nail. It's always easier to deal with symptoms rather than causes.
- Some of the methods for digging deeper involve the analysis of systems while others involve mobilising people's own experiences and perspectives.

Proposals and ideas

- **Imagining Solutions** There are a series of methods, especially within the field of design, which bring people together to develop solutions. Often this is called ‘co-design’. Increasingly, some of these approaches are being used within the public sector to re-design services.
- **Thinking differently** New solutions come from many sources – e.g. adapting an idea from one field to another, or connecting apparently diverse elements in a novel way. It’s very rare for an idea to arrive alone. More often, ideas grow out of other ones, or out of creative reflection on experience. They are often prompted by thinking about things in new or different ways.

Proposals and ideas

- **Open innovation** Open innovation describes the process of harnessing the distributed and collective intelligence of crowds. It is based on a number of principles, including: collaboration, sharing, self-organisation, decentralisation, transparency of process, and plurality of participants. The term was first used by Henry Chesbrough to describe a new model of product development based on the free flow of information and ideas across departments and organisations. It has taken on a wider meaning and application thanks to the internet, which has enabled large numbers of people to interact andparticipate at a relatively low cost.

Proposals and ideas

- **Participation** Many governments are now trying to find ways of engaging the public in shaping what they do. These methods are still being experimented with, and are as much about creating a culture of openness to ideas as they are about generating ideas themselves.
- **Facilitating participation**
- There are also a range of techniques – widely used in the developing world – for engaging participants in more effective and meaningful ways. Face to face meetings remain the most important in generating commitment to innovations, but increasingly technologies of all kinds are helping to transform meetings, enabling people to interact verbally, visually, and through simulations.

Proposals and ideas

- **Institutions** There are a range of organisations and multidisciplinary teams involved in the generation of workable ideas. Elsewhere, we look at institutions involved in all stages of innovation and across all sectors, but here we look at the innovation animators, those who can bring in different perspectives, and come up with innovative solutions

Prototyping and pilots

- **Prototypes, pilots and trials** As an idea progresses through multiple stages of rapid prototyping, it faces many challenges: the feasibility of making the product, delivering the service, how to deal with particular issues, what the economics look like, and how it could be made cheaper. The driving principles at this stage are speed, keeping costs low, tangibility and feedback loops from users and specialists
- **Finance for emerging ideas** A wide range of financial tools can be used at these early stages: small grants, convertible loans, to quasi equity, prizes, direct commissions, and tendering. Some of the most useful approaches link money to development

Sustaining

- **Creating a business** Turning a good idea into something sustainable outside of the public sector depends on a business model – a clear idea of how it will generate a sufficient income stream that covers more than costs. Effective supply and effective demand need to be brought together. Effective supply means that whatever is being provided has been shown to work and to be cost-effective. Effective demand refers to the willingness of someone to pay for what's on offer, which may be a public agency or the public themselves
- **Ownership and organisational form** There comes a point when every venture has to decide what organizational form to take. This task is time consuming and costly. Getting it right early on provides structures and systems which act as skeletons that help hold the organisation together. Forms of ownership set out rules related to an organisation's mission, its governance structures, and how its yield is distributed.

Sustaining

- **Governance** Ownership structures bring with them important dynamics that may help or hinder the organisation in realising its mission. The best forms of ownership and governance reinforce relational capital, creating a source of resilience for when the enterprise goes through difficult times
- **Organisation and management models**
- **Operations** The distinctive value and values of a social venture show up not just in its structures but in its operations – how it works with others, uses technologies or works in partnership
- **Relational capital** New ventures put much of their energy into securing financial capital – money to invest in fixed assets on the one hand, and working capital on the other. But relational capital is just as important. This is both the knowledge and trust built up between a venture and its users and suppliers, and the relationships between a venture and its staff and volunteers. Conventional accounting takes little account of this intangible capital, yet in all social ventures it is the foundation of their strength, and of their distinctiveness.

Sustaining

- **Venture finance** Every innovation process requires some finance. For social ventures it is key that the sources of finance should share the venture's social goals as the primary driver of the enterprise. This may not always be possible. Raising capital may involve some compromise with the providers of capital, but the goal should always be to find ways for the core finance to come from those who share the venture's mission
- **Sustaining innovations through the public sector** Sustaining ideas in the public sector involves different tools to those needed in markets or for social ventures. There are similar issues of effective supply (the proof that a particular model works) and effective demand (mobilising sources of finance to pay for the idea or service).

Scaling and diffusion

- **Generative diffusion** There are many methods for growing social innovations – from organisational growth and franchising to collaboration and looser diffusion. Some of these involve scaling – a metaphor taken from manufacturing. Others are better understood as more organic – 'cut and graft', with ideas adapting as they spread, rather than growing in a single form. Indeed, most social ideas have spread not through the growth of an organisation but through emulation
- **Inspiration** Some ideas spread because of their qualities as ideas – they are inherently inspiring, arresting, and engaging. Relatively few, however, spread on their own – more often clusters of ideas spread together, each creating the conditions for others to be received more easily

Scaling and diffusion

- **Diffusing demand** The promotion of social innovation has tended to focus on the supply side and how innovations can be diffused among service providers through experts, intermediaries, and collaboration. However, we argue that the design of services should start from the user, and that its diffusion should be approached from the perspective of users, not least because they are in many cases also coproducers. We also argue that a distinction should be made between services where demand can be expressed in the market (for fair trade or green goods, for example), those where demand is expressed through the state (lobbying for disability provisions or swimming pools, for example), and those involving intermediate demand (public commissioning on behalf of citizens).

Scaling and diffusion

- **Scaling and diffusion in the public sector** Scaling in the public sector has some overlaps with other fields but also important differences. Governments can grow an idea simply by legislating it, or turning it into a programme. Or they can encourage it by persuasion, or through the influence of regulators. The methods described above for sustaining an idea are also key to spreading it, including defining the idea in policy or programmes.
- **Commissioning and procurement** Governments are big customers of goods and services – for example, the UK Government purchases £125 billion worth of goods and services per year. Alongside initiation, escalation and embedding, public procurement plays a role in relation to consolidation by purchasing services at scale.

Scaling and diffusion

- **Suppliers of innovation** In particular, we will look at how the organisational structure can remain open and innovative, and reduce the overhead costs of centralised production
- **Transmitters** We look at platforms as the nodes of the new economy, and at other ways in which users and originators can engage in the evaluation and adaption of innovation.
- **Organisation and scale** There are currently pressures to promote mergers and takeovers within the grant economy. However, we suggest that in a distributed economy a different conception of scale is needed, one that focuses on economies of information and communication, and structures that can deliver that. Organisations within the social economy have less compulsion to organisational growth and more towards collaborative networking as a means of sharing innovation

Scaling and diffusion

- **Metrics to show what works and what deserves to be grown**
- There are many metrics for judging whether innovations are working – at various stages of development. Metrics can play a decisive role in determining whether innovations are scaled up, or deserve to be. Over several decades a great deal of work has gone into the design of measures of social value. A recent survey found 150 different metrics in use in the non-profit sector. However, relatively few of these are actually used to make decisions

Systemic change

- **Ideas that energise systemic innovations** We have shown how new frames and ideas can prompt innovation. These can be even more important in giving shape to systemic changes – helping the participants to make sense of their changing roles.
- **Infrastructures and interstructures to support new systems** Some new systems depend on infrastructures. Widespread broadband infrastructures, for example, are the precondition for some new models of care in the home; mobile phone infrastructures may be the precondition for organising new models of low-cost banking

Systemic change

- **Formation of users and producers** Users and citizens often need to play a part in the design and implementation of new systems. They may require new skills and approaches (what the French term ‘formation’) as may professionals and managers. This is evident in many of the examples listed above – such as personalised healthcare which requires patients to become more skilled in monitoring and managing their own conditions, and healthcare professionals to expand their skills of personal support.
- **Strategic moves that accelerate systems change** Every story of systemic innovation involves key moments when the tables are turned on older models and incumbents

Systemic change

- **Regulatory and fiscal changes** Almost every systemic change involves legislation and the state at some point. There are a few exceptions, such as the rise of new online infrastructures for retailing. But every movement involved in profound change, from the environment to equality, has depended on recognition of its principles in law. New legislative and regulatory architectures can be the keys to unlocking systemic change, whether through new rights or new trading or building standards, social and environmental performance requirements, or new ways of handling or measuring value
- **Information, accounting and statistics** Information and accounting systems can block innovation – in many cases, they will need to be reorganised to enable or reinforce systemic change. What gets measured shapes what gets done. In many fields, attempts are underway to reshape measurement to better handle holistic systems effects.

Systemic change

- **Progressive coalitions and social movements** Social movements often act as champions of systemic alternatives, for example mobilising people with disabilities to engage in the redesign of cities, and lobbying for reforms to legislation and regulation. Progressive coalitions play a critical role in mobilising support for systemic changes.
- **Systemic finance** We describe many different finance tools in other sections which can contribute to systemic change. For investment funds to finance truly systemic ideas they need different methods to those used for investment in established systems. At an early stage there is unlikely to be any clear revenue model, or any benchmarks to draw on. Instead, assessments need to include some judgement of the broader direction of change in the field as a whole; some judgement about the qualities of the key individuals; and some rough assessments of the relational capital they bring.

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