Micro and macro approaches to social innovation:

mapping the approaches of significant funders and advocates

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Abstract

Despite the global interest in social innovation, there has been limited attention to the diverse ways in which this effort has been approached. Much of the literature highlights the bottom-up approach and does not deal with the complexity of the broader institutional setting that plays a role in the process. While there has been rhetorical attention to issues related to "getting to scale", this goal is often confronted by diverse structural and political institutions and actors. This diversity limits the ability of advocates to devise approaches that straddle sectoral and national divides.

This paper focuses on the approaches that have been undertaken by a number of different organisations that have emphasized social innovation in their work and have provided resources for the efforts now underway. We analyze and compare the work undertaken in Western countries, including that of the US Social Innovation Fund, the USAID Forward programme, the Kennedy School Innovations in American Government Awards, and the European Commission, with that undertaken in East Asia, including the more socially embedded approach to incubating social innovation in Hong Kong and South Korea. The analysis draws on extant studies and reports issued by these organisations, and provides a skeleton framework for future attempts to analyze the varied social innovation efforts.

Keywords: Social Innovation; Ecosystem; Intermediaries; Getting to Scale; Bottom-up vs. Top-down

Introduction

Social innovation has become a ubiquitous concept. It is a term that is used across the globe and in many diverse contexts, drawing on both public and private sector perspectives (Borins, 2014; Bornstein, 2004; Brown & Wyatt, 2010; Goldsmith, 2010). It began as an effort at the grassroots level with antecedents that probably date back to the community action programmes found in the United States in the 1960s. In many ways, it continued the patterns that Alexis de Tocqueville described in his wanderings in the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century. It became a way to capture energy emerging from community-based efforts. As it developed, it seemed to be a route to increase the effectiveness of programmes aimed at diverse populations and involving multiple players with different agendas.

Sometime around the end of the twentieth century, the ideas found in the social innovation movement meshed with approaches that were emerging from the private sector aimed at improving financial feasibility as well as increasing programme effectiveness. The concept of social entrepreneurs surfaced from both the private sector and through the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors as a way of linking private sector language to the grassroots approach. It also became a way to minimize politicisation of collective action at the local level. Concern about measuring performance of these activities emphasized the use of data as a way of determining the level of programme effectiveness.

But despite the explosion of interest in these activities and acknowledgement that these were ideas in good currency, there was a constant concern about getting these concepts beyond the single project at the local level. Increasingly, both researchers and practitioners called for finding ways to get these local efforts "to scale up" – identifying ways of reaching larger numbers of a target audience through programmes that moved beyond the single site.

This desire to "get to scale" raised a series of questions and concerns that seemed to collide with the traditional bottom-up approach associated with social innovation activities. That approach had emphasized the importance of processes of involvement and engagement at the

grassroots level and assumed that those processes would produce differences in efforts at different sites. These differences emerged from processes of adaptation (Berman, 1978) to a local setting where ideas that may have come from another community-based experience took on unique elements in their movement to a different setting. At the same time, it appeared to be important to find ways to disseminate the experience of individual settings to be used by others with similar problems.

This paper attempts to examine the experience of a number of organisations that have attempted to move beyond the single project level and have tried to move to a more macro approach to stimulating social innovation efforts. We have analyzed efforts of government agencies, foundations, and other players in several different settings by looking at their attempts to fund projects that move beyond the single project. This assortment of activities includes both public and private sector actors and provides some evidence of the different constraints placed on funders from different settings. These constraints determine the role of the funder, their definition of social innovation, their internal decision processes, and the way that they assess the effectiveness of their efforts.

Social Innovation Fund: United States[1]

The Social Innovation Fund is described as a key White House initiative and programme of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) that combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the United States. It invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, health futures, and youth development.

This effort began in the late 1990s when various social entrepreneurs were concerned about the lack of progress in combating major social problems in the United States resulting from a lack of capital to expand successful social programmes. These individuals drew on what was

called "venture philanthropy", an approach where investors would identify effective approaches or programmes, and invest in them. Efforts such as Teach for America and City Year became the model for a group of advocates who sought to use the growing number of experiences around the country to influence national policy and to find a way to free up federal money to support the effort.

The idea was floated during the 2008 presidential campaign and was marketed to both Republican and Democratic candidates during the primaries and eventual campaign. The effort itself did not envision a direct role for the federal government. Instead, a group of intermediaries would identify and award funds to successful social programmes. The concept of intermediaries was something that had already been developed in several of the large foundations in the United States and was viewed as a way of having people who were aware of the level of effectiveness of local programmes determine ways to improve the programmes and who might benefit from these ideas.

Candidate Obama was clearly interested in these ideas, reflecting his experience in community organizing and his concern about social entrepreneurs. The staff around Obama was comfortable with the idea of intermediaries and an emphasis on evaluation of programme results. During the campaign, several individuals who had been a part of the social entrepreneur movement were given the task of drafting legislation that would be submitted to Congress. Four goals for federal policy were identified: (1) improve access to growth capital, (2) provide seed capital to create a pipeline of innovation, (3) invest in tools to determine what works, and (4) remove outdated tax and regulatory barriers to innovation. The drafters envisioned the establishment of an Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation in the White House as well as a Social Innovation Fund in the CNCS. CNCS would award grants to intermediary organisations that, in turn, would identify successful or promising nonprofits to receive sub-grants. Evaluation was viewed as a way to avoid cronyism in these expenditures.

Although legislation that was introduced by Senators Kennedy and Hatch surfaced after the election, it failed to pass. The legislation was eventually passed by the Congress and signed by the president in April 2009, just a few months after Obama assumed office. The authorizing legislation still had to be joined by budget appropriations. It took several more months for appropriations acts to emerge from both houses of Congress. This fragmented decision process provided opportunities for members of Congress to raise issues about the wisdom of the effort. In mid-December 2009, the administration had $50 million for the Social Innovation Fund.

As it turned out, the implementation of the programme was more difficult than had been expected. A Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) was required that was not usually constructed in a way that met the Obama administration's agenda for the role of intermediaries; those intermediaries would actually pick the programmes that would get the funds and thus weaken the administration's control of where the funds were distributed. The emphasis on data and evaluation also was problematic since many people were concerned that few community-based social programmes had the capacity to conduct rigorous evaluations and CNCS had minimal experience in relying on evidence to design and implement programmes. A team of staff from the CNCS, the White House, and the Office of Management and Budget had the responsibility of drafting the NOFA.

The final version of the notice was released in February 2010, and eleven intermediary organisations were selected for the 2010 Social Innovation Fund competition. Table 1 provides an overview of the eleven intermediary organisations selected in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013.

(Table 1 about here)

According to the agency, its effort is described as follows:

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) is a powerful approach to transforming lives and communities that positions the federal government to be a catalyst for impact – mobilizing public and private resources to find and grow community solutions with evidence of strong results.

A key White House initiative and program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Social Innovation Fund has the simple but vital goal of finding solutions that work, and making them work for more people.

We unite public and private resources to evaluate and grow innovative community-based solutions that have evidence of results in low-income communities in our three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.

In just a few years the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) and our private-sector partners have invested more than half a billion dollars in compelling community solutions – $229.3 million in federal grants, plus $516.3 million in non-federal match commitments in 26 intermediary grantees and 217 nonprofits in 37 states and the District of Columbia.

Building on SIF's commitment to innovative, cross-sector approaches, in 2014 SIF selected its inaugural portfolio of Pay for Success (PFS) grantees. PFS financing, sometimes referred to as Social Impact Bonds, harnesses the same innovative spirit that defines the SIF.

At the same time, however, the programme is required to go through budget decisions each year and to justify itself in a tight fiscal environment. The political environment surrounding the activities supported by the fund is also volatile, and programmes that are supported are subject to extensive scrutiny and budget uncertainty.

USAID Forward: United States

This programme emerged from an effort by the US Agency for International Development in 2010 to develop what they called "an ambitious reform agenda".[2] It was designed to strengthen the agency in three ways: embracing new partnerships, investing in an innovation role, and focusing on results.

This was not the first time that USAID undertook a reform effort. The agency itself was created in 1961 during the Kennedy administration as an effort to pull together existing foreign

assistance organisations and programmes and place them into a single agency. The creation of the single agency reflected the post-World War II effort to devise an international development strategy that was linked to rebuilding the European infrastructure and to tie those efforts to foreign policy goals both in developing countries and involving the Cold War. Each successive policy and administrative reform effort was tied to shifts in US foreign policy. By the 1970s, USAID began to shift its focus away from technical and capital assistance programmes and, instead, to emphasize basic human needs (including food and nutrition, population planning, health, education, and human resources development). By the 1980s, the agency emphasized market-based approaches that led to economic growth. During this period, the development activities utilized private voluntary organisations as the means to accomplish its goals, and aid moved from individual projects to large programmes.

During the 1990s, USAID's top priority highlighted sustainable development and ways of helping countries improve their quality of life. Efforts were tailored to a country's unique economic condition and emphasis was placed on involvement of NGOs. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and shifts in the Soviet Union brought forward efforts that stressed market-oriented economic systems and creation of social safety nets.

The efforts during the early years of the twenty-first century emphasized the United States' role in Afghanistan and Iraq. USAID's programmes were designed to help those countries rebuild government, infrastructure, civil society, and basic services such as health care and education. Fiscal limitations made it rational to reach out to new partner organisations, especially the private sector and foundations, to extend the span and impact of foreign assistance activities.

Depending on the strategies employed at any particular time, the US development activities effectively emerged from a centralized set of policy goals. Specific projects could result from perspectives of specialized staff, for profit and nonprofit consultants (both in the 100

countries and in the United States). Some were seen as tools of US foreign policy, while others were devised and evaluated on more general development goals.

In 2009, following the election of Obama, a new leadership team came to the agency. They devised the reforms that they called USAID Forward, which were designed to make the agency "more efficient, effective and business-like than ever before". The new team was challenged to foster "a renewed spirit of innovation and investing in science and technology to bend the curve of development". Innovation was closely linked to what was termed "a more strategic, focused and results-oriented approach". Policy and budget management efforts were closely linked to the agency's evaluation policy. The programme also placed greater emphasis on public-private partnerships and working with local governments and civil society organisations.

For USAID, however, innovation emphasized efforts to leverage a diverse scientific and development community. They described their approach as one that would harness the successes of the past by focusing on technology: "Technology cannot solve every problem we face, but new tools can change the reality of what is possible". They emphasized the potential of the computer and mobile phones in what they call "mobile money" instead of classic efforts such as brick and mortar building of banks. They took steps to strengthen investments in game-changing scientific and technological solutions and created grant competitions designed to generate new ideas to save lives at birth, get all children reading, power agriculture through clean energy, and make all voices count. Partnerships were devised between universities to engage young people in the discovery of new solutions to development challenges.

This approach was designed to move beyond individual discoveries and innovations. The Obama era was focused on efforts to take these innovations to scale "to provide an accelerated pathway out of poverty for millions of the world's most vulnerable people". Further, they described their effort as one of

> fostering a culture of innovation and using our convening power to test and scale
>
> breakthrough innovations to solve development challenges faster and cheaper. USAID's

US Global Development Lab embodies this effort and seeks to increase the application of science, technology, innovation and partnerships to achieve, sustain and extend the Agency's development impact.

Analytic tools were developed and used by the agency that would assist staff in determining strengths and weaknesses in host country systems. The agency saw itself as an evaluator and completed more than 250 evaluations in fiscal year 2013 that were employed to make mid-course corrections in implementing projects.[3] Current global targets include the following:

- Maximize impact through focused, strategic planning.

- Improve decision making in programs and budgets.

- Strengthen and retain our best talent.

- Strengthen local capacity, enhance and promote country ownership, increase sustainability.

- Strengthen staff core development capacities, build host country capacity.

- Enhance sustainability of programs, facilitate scale-up of interventions, maximize resources by leveraging private-sector resources. (USAID Forward, 2013, pp. 28–29)

Kennedy School Innovations in American Government Awards: United States

In 1985, in the midst of an era of government bashing in the United States, the Ford Foundation began a series of annual grants to the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University to conduct a programme of awards for innovations in state and local government in the United States. As Sanford Borins (2008, pp. 1–2) put it, "the foundation's objective was ambitious and, in an era of 'government *is* the problem' rhetoric, determinedly proactive". The effort highlighted innovative and effective programmes by seeking out and publicizing "good news" in government. From its earliest days, the programme sought to move beyond boosterism by

providing information about winning programmes, encouraging replication, and supporting

research on innovation in government.

For approximately five years, the programme recognized nearly 150 government

initiatives with grants of $100,000 each and 135 programmes that reached the finalist category of

$20,000 each. In 2001, the Ford Foundation shifted from an annual grant and gave a $50 million

endowment grant – the largest it had ever made – to the Kennedy School. As she announced this

grant, Ford Foundation President Susan Berresford commented:

> Creative solutions for public problems abound in government at all levels. That has been
>
> amply demonstrated by the Innovations awards in the United States. . . . The Kennedy
>
> School incubated this idea with great success, and this significant support will allow its
>
> new institute to make connections and engage others on an international scale. (Harvard
>
> Kennedy School, 2001, p. 2)

According to journalist Jonathan Walters, Berresford linked this initiative to the policy shift in

authority for programmes at the state and local level. She was attempting to counter the

perception of states and localities as institutions that were not innovative and subject to corruption

(Walter, 2008, pp. 14–15).

A few years later, the Kennedy School also received funds from Roy and Lila Ash for the

innovations programme and related programmes. This addition emphasized the connection

between innovation and democratic governance and placed the innovations programme in the

new Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation. The original three strands –

recognition, replication, and research – continued to be the goals of the effort.   Since the

programme was located in a prestigious academic institution, the research agenda drove much of

its operation.

Eligibility for grants

The Innovations Awards programme started out by identifying and celebrating examples of problem solving at the state, city, town, county, tribal, and territorial government level. In 1995, the programme was expanded to incorporate innovations in the federal government. It accepts applications in all policy areas as long as they are administered under the authority of one or more governmental entities, in operation for a year, currently in operation, and submitted by the governmental entity responsible for the effort.

While the programme encompasses all levels of American government, it focuses primarily on domestic programmes. Innovations that arise within defense and international agencies are eligible if they have significant domestic policy content. In 2010, the programme launched a new initiative called Bright Ideas. It is designed to allow government leaders, public servants, and other individuals to learn about notable ideas and adopt those initiatives that work in their own communities.

Selection criteria

Applicants are evaluated according to the following criteria:

- Its *novelty*, the degree to which the program or initiative demonstrates a leap in creativity.
    - Does the program or initiative represent a fundamental change in the governance, management, direction, or policy approach of a particular jurisdiction?
    - Does the program or initiative represent a significant improvement in the process by which a service is delivered?
    - Does the program or initiative introduce a substantially new technology or service concept?
- Its *effectiveness*, the degree to which the program or initiative has achieved tangible results.

- Does the program or initiative respond to the needs of a well-defined group of clients?

- Does the program or initiative demonstrate its effectiveness in meeting its stated goals and objectives quantitatively and qualitatively?

- Does the program or initiative produce unanticipated benefits for its clients?

- Does the program or initiative present evidence of already completed, independent evaluation?

- Its *significance*, the degree to which the program or initiative successfully addresses an important problem of public concern.

  - To what degree does the program or initiative address a problem of national import and scope?

  - To what degree does the program or initiative make substantial progress in diminishing the problem within its jurisdiction?

  - To what degree does the program or initiative change the organizational culture or the traditional approach to management or problem solving?

- Its *transferability*, the degree to which the program or initiative, or aspects of it, shows promise of inspiring successful replication by other governmental entities.

  - To what extent can this program or initiative be replicated in other jurisdictions?

  - To what extent can this program or initiative serve as a model that other jurisdictions will seek to replicate?

  - To what extent are program or initiative components, concepts, principles, or insights transferable to other disciplines or policy areas?

Decision process

The Innovations Awards cycle consists of five rounds of review:

Round l: Experts – both practitioners and scholars – screen all submitted applications and bright ideas are invited to submit a substantive, supplementary application (approximately 8,000 words).

Round 2: Experts evaluate applicants' supplementary applications and select 25 programs from the applicant pool to advance in the competition. Each of the 25 programs receives press coverage and a certificate for their achievement.

Round 3: This involves additional research on each of the top 25 programs and results in the selection of finalist programs to move forward in the competition.

Round 4: Innovations Award evaluators visit each of the finalist programs to conduct a two-day assessment. Following the completion of a successful site visit, each of the finalist programs are officially named an Innovations Award finalist and receive further press coverage.

Round 5: During the fifth and final round of competition, representatives from the selected finalist programs present their innovations before the members of the Innovations National Selection Committee, who then select the winner of the award. The winner is eligible to receive a grant of $100,000, and each finalist receives a $10,000 grant.

In addition to the awards themselves, the Harvard programme has also served as the source of information to a growing research community concerned about issues related to innovation.[4] Applicants and awardees have provided data about their experiences and have allowed academics to develop a more detailed picture about the innovation process. The focus of this data collection is not on evaluation of specific activities but on broader analysis of the innovation movement. Including both researchers and practitioners in the selection process has generated an understanding of the complexity of the process and the difficulty involved in assessing its effectiveness.

Social innovation in the European Commission: Europe

Activities related to social innovation are found in many aspects of the European Commission's (2013) agenda. These activities emerge from an acknowledgement that there is no consensus about the term "social innovation". The commission defines

> social innovations as innovations that are both social in their ends and in their means, remaining open to the territorial, culture, etc. variations it might take. So, the social is both in the how, the process, and in the why, the social and societal goals you want to reach. (European Commission, 2013, p. 5)

Commission officials argue that social innovation is present in a range of policy initiatives of the commission – the European platform against poverty and social exclusion, the Innovation Union, the Social Business Initiative, the Employment and Social Investment packages, the Digital Agenda, the new industrial policy, the Innovation Partnership for Active and Healthy Ageing, and Cohesion Policy.

In its description of its innovation activities, the commission notes that it relies on citizens, civil society organisations, local communities, businesses, and public servants and services. It views both the public sector and the market as participants in meeting four main elements: (1) identification of new/unmet/inadequately met social needs, (2) development of new solutions in response to these social needs, (3) evaluation of the effectiveness of new solutions in meeting social needs, and (4) scaling up of effective social innovations. It notes that social innovations contained a social mission – one that is necessarily shared and can be both economic and social. For the commission, innovation is often related to change in service delivery and ways of empowering people at the local level to work together.

A set of values is explicitly stated by the commission. These are:

- Open rather than closed when it comes to knowledge-sharing and the ownership of knowledge;

- Multi-disciplinary and more integrated to problem solving than the single department or single profession solutions of the past;

- Participative and empowering of citizens and users rather than "top down" and expert-led;

- Demand-led rather than supply-driven;

- Tailored rather than mass-produced, as more solutions have to be adapted to local circumstances and personalized to individuals. (European Commission, 2013, p. 8)

The commission describes its approach as one that goes through stages.

It starts as ideas, which may then be piloted or prototyped. If successful there is a process of sustaining the new model in the implementation stage – perhaps as a new venture or as a new policy within an existing institution. The final stage is to scale up so that the new approach makes a real impact and becomes part of the norm. (European Commission, 2013, p. 9)

The strategy employed by the commission is one of integrating the innovation process into the standard operating processes of the organisation and what are called the Structural Funds – the form of support traditionally used. These funds have a delivery system based on the principal of "shared management". This begins with overall guidelines for investment and a seven-year investment programme with the member states. A Managing Authority in each country is established for each programme that is responsible for launching calls for proposals, receiving applications, making selections, and monitoring projects. The commission itself does not select the projects and relies on the Managing Authorities as a form of intermediary.

The European Social Fund is the oldest of the funds and has been the source of many social innovation activities supported by the commission. Its initial focus on employment issues has been modified over the years to respond to problems of specific communities throughout Europe. During the period from 2007 to 2013, it invested close to 10% of the EU total budget,

and approximately 20% of its total funds are expected to be used in the future on social inclusion measures that have social innovation approaches.

In recent years, the commission has expanded its activities to highlight the diffusion and dissemination stages of its innovation process. A European Social Innovation Prize was established in the memory of Diogo Vasconcelos, a Portuguese citizen who chaired the Business Panel on Future EU Innovation Policy established by the commission, and was also active in the work of the Informal Panel on EU Innovation. Three prizes of EUR 20,000 each were awarded to the best social innovation solutions to help people move towards new types of work. In addition, the 30 projects that were designated as semi-finalists were given the opportunity to participate in a Social Innovation Academy, a multi-day meeting that included talks, information about the competition, face-to-face sessions with mentors, and opportunity for interactive and peer-to-peer sessions. The semi-finalists were given a chance to refine their detailed plan, which they were required to submit in the final phase of the competition (where ten finalists were selected).

The award also involved the support and involvement of the Social Innovation Exchange (SIX), the global community for social innovation. SIX advocated more attention to social innovation activities and suggested that social innovation become a theme for Europe. With a short time period available, it gathered examples of effective innovation activities throughout Europe and received more than 100 case studies from 25 countries. SIX realized that the following needed attention:

1. Innovators need support to sell their stories, to measure and communicate the value of their initiatives.

2. Peer support is needed to encourage, replicate and scale-up innovation projects.

3. The sector needs to understand European language to engage in policy and get access to funding and the EU needs to improve the language they use to communicate to the innovators.

4. The EU needs to help the sector to connect to social innovation agenda overcoming misunderstanding, suspects, and fears. This means spending more time publically supporting innovative projects to grow and thrive. (Collins, Pulford, and Addarii, Accessed 2015, p. 3)

Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund (SIE Fund): Hong Kong

In September 2013, the government of Hong Kong launched the HK$500 million Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund (SIE Fund) with the objective of supporting and nurturing social innovation in Hong Kong. The fund was steered by a task force established under the Commission on Poverty (CoP), a statutory organisation tasked with advising and coordinating the government's poverty alleviation efforts. The fund adopted a broad definition of "social innovation", which referred to the process and outcome of "the creation of new products and services that create social value and meet changing social need" (SIE Fund Task Force, 2013). The fund focuses on capacity building, with an emphasis on creating a facilitative ecosystem/platform that incubates new ideas, nurtures entrepreneurship, facilitates knowledge-sharing and collaboration, and supports experiments.

In its first year of operation, the fund focused on engaging stakeholders and sharing experiences so as to support the social innovation community in Hong Kong (HKSAR SIE, 2015). Visits to innovative initiatives and talks by overseas social innovation practitioners were organised; social media such as launching a SIE Fund website, a mobile app, and a YouTube channel was drawn upon to disseminate information and engage interested parties. Other than raising the public's awareness of social innovation and its importance, the fund leverages existing social networks and knowledge in civil society for promoting and nurturing social innovation. In December 2014, four organisations from different sectors of Hong Kong were appointed intermediaries to lead the capacity-building effort. These four intermediaries include a federation of NGOs, an academic unit, an impact investor, and a philanthropic organisation. In their

respective domains, these intermediaries were given the mandate and resources to draw upon their local knowledge and social capital to develop an ecosystem in which new ideas are nurtured, solutions identified, and collaborations fostered (SIE Fund, 2014).

The government's approach to nurturing social innovation through the SIE Fund to a large extent reflects the governance style of an administrative state that jealously guarded the scope of government involvement in public affairs, and relies upon a bureaucratic logic in policy formulation and implementation.

The social innovation movement in Hong Kong began in the early 2000s, when the government desperately looked for ways to combat poverty and the growing income gap between the rich and the poor, which had become a social problem so serious that the government could no longer ignore. The traditional mode of social service delivery, which relied heavily on government funding with non-profits serving as service deliverers, was found inadequate for coping with the problem. Like in many other developed economies where economic development has brought about structural unemployment and a widening income gap, the government realized that poverty relief could not rely on welfare alone but hinges upon creating economic opportunities, or more specifically employment opportunities, for those who do not possess the skills required by the new economy. As a strategy to combat poverty, the government set up various schemes to promote work integration with a view to generating employment opportunities through social enterprises that were then mainly run by non-profits. From the government's perspective, social innovation is not a goal per se but a means to achieve poverty alleviation (Kao, 2013).

While the Hong Kong government no longer hails laissez faire as a guiding principle for public governance (following its colonial predecessor), the idea of limited government remains entrenched in the modus operandi of Hong Kong's administrative system. Although the government is well aware of its role in dealing with the increasingly complex social problems, it is more comfortable with the role of a facilitator than a proactive actor. Instead of being directly

involved in social service delivery, in this case, the promotion of social innovation, the government provides funding but relies on social organisations and actors for actual delivery of the services. In recent years, particularly, many funds have been set up by the government for specific policy purposes: the Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities Fund, the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund, and the Community Care Fund are some of the more prominent examples.

An advantage of the funds, from the government's perspective, is that they help minimize uncertainty in policy implementation that might be caused by political controversies. First, once a fund is established, it does not have to ask for annual appropriation in the legislature. Second, the operation of the funds is not subject to government rules and regulations, and hence is more flexible; it provides the government with the necessary leverage to experiment with new programmes and policy ideas. In fact, compared to direct government provision, which often involves an increase in recurrent expenditures, funds are of a one-off nature that can spare the government of long-term commitment. Third, as the funds are usually policy specific, they straddle administrative divides that often stifle coordinated public action in coping with "wicked" problems. Last but not least, the funds are usually led by a steering committee comprised of actors from different social sectors. These committees not only provide advice on the operation and activities of the funds but often help absorb and transform political opposition into policy discussion in the committees.

Perhaps the most interesting and unique feature of the SIE Fund, as compared with the other funds in Hong Kong, is its use of intermediaries as the vehicle to leverage existing social capital in nurturing and promoting social entrepreneurship. While the Task Force steers the general direction of the nurturing effort, the actual allocation of resources, incubation of ideas, development of collaboration and partnership are managed and coordinated on the ground by the intermediaries.

That the four intermediaries come from different sectors further ensures a degree of inclusiveness of stakeholders and actors in the nurturing effort. Such an institutional design is meant to combine top-down steering and bottom-up capacity building in promoting social innovation and entrepreneurship.

It has been argued that the major obstacles to social innovation in Hong Kong include a lack of effective communication between grassroots organisations and government agencies, difficulties in aligning the social and business visions, and a shortage of socially minded business practitioners. The use of intermediaries allows the leveraging of local networks and the straddling of sectoral divides, which seems to be an appropriate strategy to address these obstacles. In fact, the SIE Fund Task Force is well aware that social innovation involves a whole array of activities taking place in different sectors and domains, and that the promotion of social innovation and entrepreneurship calls for an ecosystem comprising actors and organisations of different types and a whole array of relationships developed among them. So while much emphasis is still put on social enterprises and a blending of social and financial values, the four intermediaries also focus on forging cross-sector collaboration, and different activities and enterprises that facilitate idea generation, prototyping, starting up, and scaling up. With the bottom-up approach and a focus on ecosystem, stakeholders are no longer non-profits doing business or businesses with social missions, but also impact investors, academics, government officials, philanthropists, corporate actors, social entrepreneurs, and so on.

The PolyU Technology and Consultancy Company Limited, one of the four intermediaries, is a case in point. This is a knowledge transfer company housed in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, with a mission of providing a collaborative platform for social designers, intellectuals, civic leaders, professionals, and ordinary citizens to engage in dialogue pertaining to Hong Kong's future. By utilizing university expertise to conduct interdisciplinary studies and to forge partnerships, it helps articulate innovative and socially conscious solutions to complex problems of urban sustainability. Projects organised by the company, such as "Ageless

Catwalk" (*Apple Daily*, 2013) and "Hawker Reload: Fa Yuen Street Market Project" (Hong

Kong's Information Service Department, 2013), were designed to utilize innovative ideas to cope

with such tricky urban problems as accessibility of the disabled and the use of public space.

Social innovation movement: South Korea

Like many other developed economies, South Korea has been facing thorny social problems that

accompany economic development and restructuring. In particular, a growing unemployment

rate and an aging population have brought about challenges to the Korean society. The

government has sought alternative, presumably more effective and impactful, approaches to

tackle these problems. The growth of social enterprises and nurturing of an ecosystem of social

innovation have been considered pointing the way forward.

In the promotion and nurturing of social innovation, South Korea has adopted a holistic

approach that emphasizes the development of an ecosystem in which leadership, cross-sector

collaboration, a supportive government policy, civic participation, and a diversity of organisations

all contribute to an environment in which new innovative ideas are nurtured, put in place, and

scaled up.

Leadership development is important in capacity building for bringing changes to the

society and fostering forward-looking policy and business innovations (Snyder et al., 2012). The

mayor of Seoul, Won-Soon Park, is an enthusiastic social entrepreneur. In fact, he started his

endeavor long before he ran for the position of mayor. He established the Hope Institute, which

has the aim of "redesigning" South Korean society through active engagement. The institute

consists of eight centers and conducts various activities to promote and support social innovation.

For instance, the local governors' club serves as a platform for local government heads to gather,

cooperate, and exchange views towards sustainable development (see http://eng.makehope.org/).

The Education Center disseminates knowledge about social innovation to members of the

community, and provides teenagers with training. The Social Innovation Center was established

to collect and experiment citizens' innovative ideas with a view to fostering cross-sector collaboration. After Park was elected mayor of Seoul, he established the Seoul Innovation Planning Division (SEPD) to collect systematically examples of social innovation from around the world and examine whether and how Seoul can learn from them.

The third sector, which is composed of nonprofit and civil society organisations, can help ameliorate negative impacts of market and government failures. The government of Seoul has taken a proactive approach to facilitate the collaboration among the government, businesses, and the third sector to cope with social problems. An interesting example is the "Job Creation for the Elderly" programme launched by the government in 2004 (Bidet & Eum, 2011). Local governments and different welfare communities and elderly groups worked together in an array of projects, such as the creation of temporary job places and the provision of information about their availability, which not only create job opportunities for the elderly but more importantly promote social inclusion.

The government of Seoul has put much emphasis on citizen engagement, and integrated it in the policymaking process. Civic participation not only allows the government to learn about what citizens want but, more importantly, fosters innovation in service delivery (Snyder et al., 2012). To facilitate civic participation, a large variety of online and offline communication tools have been developed and put in place by the Seoul government with a view to nurturing a culture of communication between government officials and citizens (Nordstokka, 2014). The mayor opened a Twitter account to serve as a platform for real-time deliberation with citizens on controversial social issues such as nuclear energy (Park, 2013). Online platforms, such as Ten Million Imagination Oasis, have been launched on which citizens can post and share their ideas.

Like Hong Kong, existing social networks and resources in South Korea have been drawn upon to help promote social innovation. A variety of intermediaries have been established to help nurture and develop innovative endeavors. For example, the Korean Social Enterprise Promotion Agency (KoSEA) has been established to promote and foster new social enterprises with

mentoring, consulting and incubating services (Mee-Hyoe, 2013). The Korean Central Council

for Social Enterprise (KCCSE) is a national network organisation of Korea's social enterprises

that promotes a facilitating environment for its members. The Seoul Social Economy Network

(SSEN), another major network organization, has worked closely with the national and local

governments in promoting social economic policy.

Perhaps the most prominent tool of the Korean government in promoting social

innovation is a set of laws and regulations that empower and facilitate social innovation

endeavors. The most important piece of legislation is the Social Enterprise Promotion Act (SEPA;

Act No.8217) enacted in 2007 by the Ministry of Labor. Article 2 of the act provides a precise

definition of social enterprises:

> An organization which is engaged in business activities of producing and selling goods
>
> and services while pursuing a social purpose of enhancing the quality of local residents'
>
> life by means of providing social services *and* creating jobs for the disadvantaged, as
>
> certified according to Article 7.

Creating jobs for the vulnerable was the focus. In 2010, SEPA was amended to give a broader

definition of "social enterprises", referring to them as organisations that "pursue a social objective

by providing vulnerable groups with social services *or* jobs while conducting business activities"

(Article 2, Act.10360). Based on the definition, SEPA (2010) stipulates the certification

requirements and procedures of social enterprises. Specifically, a social enterprise must be

incorporated, have at least 30% of its business serving a social purpose, set aside a certain

percentage of profit to be reinvested in the enterprise, and be able to generate enough profit to

cover a percentage of its labor cost (see Lee & Kim, 2013, p. 17).

The act also outlines an array of educational support and financial incentives provided by

the government to promote the development of social enterprises. The Ministry of Employment

and Labor, for instance, may provide certified social enterprises with support and advice in such

areas as management, technology, and taxation requirements. The ministry also organises

education and training programmes with a view to improving the skills of social enterprise

workers. In addition, private companies are encouraged to support social enterprises (Bidet &

Eum, 2011). Private companies that support social enterprises in various means, such as

providing capital, are defined as "associated enterprises" which can enjoy tax reduction.

Mapping approaches to fostering social innovation: commonalities and diversity

A review of the various programmes to promote social innovation in different places as

mentioned above suggests that there is no one best way to proceed. While the programmes are all

grounded upon a recognition of the limitations of current ways of public problem solving and the

importance of innovation, they have adopted different definitions of social innovation, relied on

different policy tools to attain the task, focused on different stages of the process of social

innovation, assigned different degrees of importance to an ecosystem for social innovation, and

embedded their efforts into the broader policy context to varying extents. The diversity could, to

a certain extent, be attributed to specific political-economic attributes of the contexts in which the

efforts took place; it is, however, also a reflection of the diverse ways that social innovation is

understood as well as the contesting approaches to fostering social innovation. Instead of a sign

of ignorance and fluidity, we argue that the diversity in fact points to the great potential and

possibilities of social innovation for public problem solving. Table 2 provides a comparative

analysis of different dimensions of the experiences of the six programmes reviewed in this study.

(Table 2 about here)

Definition of social innovation

There seems to be an agreement that social innovation is concerned with the search for new ways

of generating social values in a sustainable way. "Social" in general means that the values

generated are accrued to communities rather than individuals or organisations. Some

programmes, however, have more specific definitions of what "social" entails and which

communities are to be served than others. For instance, the USAID programme has an explicit

25

focus on the development community, aiming at "bending the development curve". Similarly in Hong Kong, the SIE Fund has focused on the "social" goal of alleviating poverty. The Social Innovation Fund Initiative of the US government and the South Korean social innovation movement, on the other hand, adopt a more diffuse, if not looser, definition of social innovation.

Some programmes emphasize the products/outcomes of the search for new ways of doing things, focusing on the design of novel projects and packages, and its dissemination. The Harvard programme is perhaps the most explicit on its focus on social innovations as novel projects. Through competitions and awards, the programme not only provides incentives for local governments and agencies to innovate but also identifies and publicizes successful novel programmes. The programme further supports research on the successful programmes with a view to systematically drawing lessons for programme design. The Social Innovation Fund Initiative of the US government seems to adopt a similar focus on novel programmes.

The two Asian initiatives and the European Union, on the other hand, target on the process of social innovation per se. Instead of asking the question of what a novel project is like, they ask how the process of innovation could be nurtured and sustained; some of them further aspire to put in place a culture of innovation in society. The USAID Forward programme has a similar emphasis on the process of innovation, too.

A cursory overview of the programmes would suggest that the US programmes tend to focus on outputs/products, whereas the non-US programmes, including the Asian and European Union cases as well as the USAID programme that serves the developing world, emphasize the process. One might surmise that the US advocates and funders have more confidence in the capacity of their systems to innovate; as long as adequate incentives and platforms for knowledge dissemination and learning are made available, social innovation will follow. For the non-US programmes, setting up and energizing the process of innovation is considered key.

Stages of social innovation and the building of ecosystems

A conventional formulation of the process of social innovation is that it comprises five stages: incubating new ideas, building prototypes, implementing and evaluating the ideas, scaling up successes, and learning (Mulgan, 2006; Brown & Wyatt, 2010). While the programmes that we have reviewed have all sought to scale up successful innovations, they adopt very different coverage regarding the five stages. Specifically, while a number of programmes have focused solely on the stage of scaling up, investing in identifying successes, and facilitating replication, others have adopted a holistic perspective, looking at the process of innovation as a coherent whole. The five stages are considered to be so enmeshed with one another that they cannot be treated independently. An implication is that scaling up cannot be confined to replicating successful experiences, disseminating information, and sharing knowledge; instead, it has to be built upon a coherent consideration of all the components of the process of innovation. The SIE Fund in Hong Kong, for instance, has multifaceted focuses. Other than providing funding for the implications of novel programmes, it also pays attention to raising the community's awareness of social innovation, transmitting knowledge and skills of design thinking, helping build communities of innovators, and setting up incubating platforms for social entrepreneurs. Similarly, the EU initiatives are multifaceted, adopting an integrated approach that provides support for every stage of the process of innovation.

An integrated view of social innovation entails the development of an ecosystem that can nurture and sustain the various stages of the social innovation process. In particular, incubating new ideas, prototyping, and learning all require a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship; the development of such culture hinges upon continuous exchange and experimentation of ideas and the existence of virtual or physical platforms that can serve as incubation hubs. Perhaps more importantly, the scaling up of social innovation often involves behavioral change in a multitude of individuals that is possible only if it is sustained by a vibrant ecosystem. The Korean government's effort to support social enterprises is a case in point. Other than financial incentives, the government has also made educational support and professional business

27

management advice available. Social enterprises, however, cannot be dependent on government funding. To encourage private corporations to support social enterprises, for example, tax benefits have been introduced to facilitate contributions from the corporate sector.

Indeed, a focus on building an ecosystem is a response to the dilemma of using a top-down approach to foster social innovation that is inherently grassroots and based upon community action. The top-down effort helps build an ecosystem that, in turn, is able to mobilize local resources and initiative, and to adapt to specific situations using local information.

Policy tools to promote social innovation

With no exceptions, all the programmes reviewed provide funding to support social innovation initiatives. Funding support can take different forms. A minimalist approach incurs organizing competitions and awards to encourage innovative efforts and publicize successes; the Harvard programme is a case in point. A more aggressive approach provides seed funding for the launch of novel programmes. While governments are a major source of funding, some programmes do leverage the private sector to contribute.

Some programmes have resorted to other tools than monies. The USAID Forward program, for example, emphasizes the importance of technology and its role in facilitating social innovation. In fact, many social innovations have been made possible by technological advances. Some of the innovative initiatives in the South Korean case, such as the Ten Million Imaginations Oasis and the online town hall, have leveraged on information technology. Another tool used by the Korean government to promote social innovation is the legal framework that facilitates the establishment of social enterprises and lowers the transaction costs involved in social innovation experimentation. In fact, antecedents of social innovation around the globe have suggested that, at the core of social innovation is a change of working relationships among individuals in problem-solving situations; many innovative initiatives are built upon the development of communities of shared interests and concerns.

Degree of embeddedness

While the Social Innovation Fund Initiative and the Harvard programme aspire to promote social innovation for its own sake, other programmes take social innovation as part of the larger effort with broader policy objectives: the USAID Forward programme leverages social innovation to implement development goals in developing countries; the SIE Fund in Hong Kong is explicit on the instrumental role of social innovation in poverty alleviation; and both the Korean government and the European Union integrate the promotion of social innovation in the large array of programmes they manage. Programmes that adopt an integrative approach to the promotion of social innovation tend to be more embedded in policymaking systems in particular policy domains. The Korean case is a case in point. Other than setting up a specialized agency –SEPD – to systematically manage knowledge of social innovation for particular policy domains, related government agencies are heavily involved in promoting and complementing the implementation of innovative initiatives. A similar situation can be found in the case of Hong Kong, where the SIE Fund was steered by a task force under the auspices of CoP, which in turn is tasked with an advisory role of working closely with government agencies involved in poverty alleviation.

Embeddedness does not have to be confined to government policymaking systems. Some programmes are keen to draw upon the social network and resources of the business and social sectors, and forge a collaborative relationship or partnership with these actors in the promotion of social innovation. The collaboration could take different forms. At the minimum, corporations and foundations are invited to participate in some joint activities and encouraged to make financial contributions (the Harvard program and, to a certain extent, the Social Innovation Fund Initiative). Alternatively, the private and NGO sectors are given incentives and empowered to be active partners in social innovation projects (the many welfare and community programmes in Korea). Also in many programmes (including the SIE Fund in Hong Kong, the Social Innovation Fund Initiative, and the EU programmes), the promotion of social innovation is done through intermediaries that leverage existing social capital and knowledge.

Conclusions

The picture that emerges from an analysis of these six programmes that identify themselves as social innovators indicates the variety of approaches to this topic. As such, it is difficult to generalize about these efforts. While all of these groups would likely acknowledge that they are concerned about "getting to scale", each of them has different starting points and likely pathways that they believe might lead to that goal.

This paper represents a point of departure for those who seek to devise a typology for this field. It is clear that while most groups seem to reach out beyond an individual agency and highlight the bottom-up approach, they do not deal with the complexity of the broader institutional setting that plays a role in the process. This setting is often confronted by diverse structural and political institutions and actors. This diversity limits the ability of advocates to devise approaches that cross regional and national lines. The relationship between public organisations and non-government organisations is often the centerpiece of those limitations.

Notes

[1] This draws on the description of the process found in Haskins and Margolis (2015, chap. 5).

[2] This discussion draws on extensive information on USAID that is found on the web (see http://www.usaid.gov/usaidforward/).

[3] GAO's assessments of evaluations involving Emergency Plans for AIDS Relief were much less positive about the effectiveness of these efforts (see GAO–12–673).

[4] The Brookings Institution Press, in conjunction with the Ash Center, supported a book series on "Innovative Governance in the 21st Century". Two books by Sandford Borins were published within that series.

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Table 1. Intermediary organisations selected for the Social Innovation Fund competition

Intermediary	Number of subgrantees	Project issue area
Jobs for the Future	21	Economic opportunity
Local Initiatives Support Corporation	47	Economic opportunity
Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City	18	Economic opportunity
REDF (Roberts Enterprise Development Fund)	9	Economic opportunity
Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky	9	Healthy futures
Missouri Foundation for Health	7	Healthy futures
AIDS United	13	Healthy futures
New Profit	6	Youth development
Edna McConnell Clark	12	Youth development
Venture Philanthropy Partners	6	Youth development
United Way of Greater Cincinnati	8	Multi-issue

Source: adapted from Haskins & Margolis (2015, pp. 158–159). See Corporation for National and Community Service, "Funded Organizations" (2014; http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/social-innovation-fund/funded-organizations).

Notes: CNCS made both one-year and multi-year grants to these intermediary organisations. In subsequent years, CNCS provided continuation funding to intermediary organizations based on their progress and performance, according to the terms of the original grant.

Table 2. Comparison of the six programmes

Patterns of funders and advocates	US Social Innovation Fund	USAID	Kennedy School	European Commission	Hong Kong	South Korea
Funders' attributes	Government	Government	Foundation/ university	Government	Government	Government
Source of funds	Separate fund	General funds	Foundation	Separate and general funds	Separate funds	Separate and other sources
Goals/focus of activity	Economic opportunity, future, youth development	New partnerships, innovation, focus on results, shifts in foreign policy	Publicizing good news in government	Integrate into existing programmes, meet unmet social needs	Support existing social innovation, leverage existing networks	Local and national efforts, jobs and employment
Definition of social innovation	Embedded in venture philanthropy	Policy goals, efficient and businesslike	Found in existing programmes	No single definition	Creation of new products and services	Ecosystem for new ideas
Research/evaluation activities	Used evaluation to avoid cronyism	Focus on results to assess effectiveness	Relied on research to assess effectiveness	Used stories to document efforts	Knowledge transfer, interdisciplinary studies	Did not emphasize
Dissemination	Relied on intermediaries	Did not emphasize	Relationships to research community	Case studies as dissemination strategy	Emphasized role of intermediaries	Emphasized role of intermediaries
Antecedents of activity	War on Poverty, venture philanthropy	Past development activities	Funding by Ford Foundation	Past efforts of European Union	Hong Kong Commission on Poverty	Mayor of Seoul, civil society organisations
Criteria for funding	Successful or promising non-profits	Tied to policy and budget management efforts	Novelty, effectiveness, significance, transferability	Find new and unmet needs	Limit role of government	Facilitate cooperation and collaboration
Funding processes	Constrained by government processes	Use of analytic tools	Involved academics and practitioners	Multidisciplinary and participative, demand driven	Public awareness, broad involvement	Leadership development, engagement
Freestanding or integrated	Freestanding in government but integrated into non-government activities	Freestanding	Freestanding	Integrated into SOPs	Integrated into other government efforts	Links to Ministry of Employment and Labor
Intermediaries	NGOs designated in policy areas	No formal intermediaries	No formal intermediaries	Used contacts in member countries	NGOs, academic unit, investors, philanthropic organisation	Variety of organisations
Role of other actors	Drew on others, especially political actors	Involved political actors	Not with NGOs	Multiple players	Mostly NGOs	Multiple players