Open Innovation
Platforms for Sustainable Development

Index

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda calls for transformational change and a new approach to supporting development. Open Innovation Platforms represent a departure from traditional, project based, "business-as-usual" efforts, recognizing that new approaches to address deep systemic development issues are necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

While their application in the public sector and development remain nascent, there is evidence from the existing initiatives that platforms provide unparalleled opportunities to apply innovative ways of delivering sustainable development more efficiently and at a greater scale, enabling countries to design and deliver integrated solutions for complex development problems and achieve the SDGs.

UNDP and "la Caixa" Foundation have joined forces to promote Open Innovation Platforms and are launching this publication with the aim of addressing questions such as:

1. How do Open Innovation Platforms provide mechanisms for a different way to design, manage and evaluate systemic interventions for sustainable development?

2. How can hierarchical organizations best manage the networking involved in platform business models, thereby breaking down silos and tapping into the collective intelligence of the ecosystem?

3. What are the implications for new ways of managing relationships and funding strategies between development agencies, program countries, the private sector, local communities, partners and investors given the situation of continued uncertainty where "learning" (as opposed to output) is the key result?

4. What can development organizations do differently as of tomorrow in order to realign their operations with emerging open innovation models (platforms) in an effort to design solutions that are a better fit with the scale and scope of the issues they are meant to address?

The Sustainable Development Goals are already inviting us to adopt a platform approach. We need to take advantage of this opportunity.

1

UNDP and Platforms
Discovering Better Pathways to Sustainable Development

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Why emergent business models for UNDP?

The world is operating under conditions that pose an extraordinary challenge to sustainable development: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA). Mixed progress on democratic governance after the euphoric wave of political liberalisation in the 1990s, the spread of new technologies and knowledge and big structural shifts such as a rapidly evolving global balance of economic power, urbanisation and climate change, together with shrinking resources relative to the scale and intensity of the effects unleashed, has accelerated the VUCA effect in the public and international development sectors. Many development organizations are asking a critical question: how can we navigate uncertainty while managing greater complexity and still deliver effective outcomes?

Recognizing these realities, the 2030 Agenda calls for transformational change and a new approach to supporting development. One core idea is that such interconnectedness, uncertainty and structural change cannot be solved by any single actor. At the same time, however, the pace of change is outstripping the ability of most organizations (and not just in the public sector) to adapt, evolve and collaborate. It is not surprising, therefore, that current development approaches are not making enough of a dent in 21st century challenges. This is leading to a growing consensus that addressing such problems effectively doesn't just require new solutions but also new ways of working and new models of collaboration driven by flexibility, adaptability and a spirit of innovation and learning about what works, what doesn't and why.

The UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-21) and ongoing UN reform agenda call for the UNDP to take a leading role in integrating work across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through innovative development solutions, with the aim of accelerating progress. To this end, the Plan shifts the organization towards a more user-centred and ecosystem-based approach by asking

the following questions: how can the UNDP become the fastest organization at learning about new trends, approaches and solutions? How can the UNDP incubate learning and improve decision-making among all players in its ecosystem to shift towards a more open source, platform-based approach? How can the UNDP mobilise these ecosystems to discover solutions and catalyze collaboration to take on the most complex development challenges at a country level; the challenges that must be overcome to achieve the SDGs?

In this report, we explore the evolution of governance models in the public sector with particular emphasis on current "networked" or platform governance principles, practical examples of platforms in development and the UNDP's efforts in translating theory and empirical evidence into emerging new practice in international development.

The platform approach in public organizations[1]

1. Traditional public administration
There are typically three ways to look at governance models or rather the evolution of governance models. Traditional public administration is the legacy inherited by most public institutions, both national and international. This is characterized by the assumption of a generally stable operational context, homogenous populations at a country level, and needs and problems that can be identified relatively easily by professionals. The state is mostly perceived as a producer. One of the core ideas is that public administration is carried out by public servants and public goods should be provided by governments.

2. New public management
Over the last 30 to 40 years, another paradigm has emerged called the "new public management". This is mostly a modification of the original public administration model but inspired by

market-based concepts and solutions and with a more limited role for the state. According to this concept, the context of public services should be more competitive and agencies and institutions should compete against each other to offer better outcomes at a lower cost. Target populations are seen as a more atomized group of individuals or consumers/customers that express their wishes through the market: it is an attempt to introduce market mechanisms and a variant of the purchaser/supplier relationship in the public sector. One of the key characteristics of this model is public choice: citizens can be perceived as customers and these customers can choose between different public services by voting with their feet (and their money), revealing their preferences conclusively in the process, thereby helping to allocate resources efficiently and effectively.

3. Platform governance models
Another model has been emerging over the past 10 -15 years, widely called the **platform governance approach**. This model is built on concepts of network governance. Network governance recognizes that today's world is driven by digitization, globalization and technological change, and is evolving continuously in significant ways. In addition, the population that needs to be served by the public sector is increasingly heterogeneous. People's problems and needs are now more complex, diverse and changing and their wellbeing and the operational context are much more prone to risk. Under such circumstances, strategy, governance and the determination and implementation of solutions need to extend beyond the circle of the "usual suspects": the traditional combination of government, service providers (such as consultancies), development partners and a limited range of non-state actors (such as think tanks and selected private sector firms and civil society organizations). In a platform governance approach, civil society, the private sector,

Evolution of governance models

	Legacy: Traditional public administration	Current: New Public Management	Platforms: Networked governance
Context	Stable	Competitive	**Continuously changing**
Population	Homogeneous	Atomized	**Diverse**
Needs/problems	Straightforward, defined by professionals	Wants, expressed through the market	**Complex, volatile and prone to risk**
Strategy	State and producer centred	Market and customer centred	**Shaped by less traditional partners, civil society, private sector, individuals, etc.**
Governance through actors	Hierarchies Public servants	Markets Purchasers and providers Clients and contractors	**Networks and partnerships Civic leadership**
Key concepts	Public goods	Public choice	**Public value**

the tech sector, finance and banking, the "cultural industry", the media and also individuals play a much larger role, together with government, through networks and partnerships focused increasingly on civic leadership and co-production. One central concept in the platform approach is public value and the idea that publicly-funded organizations should create value in terms of better outcomes for people. This approach embeds the ideas of the "whole of society" and the "whole of government" as catalysts to create public value.

For most public organizations, built up over decades on a mix of traditional public administration (classic bureaucracy) and new public management (such as outsourcing and systematic programme evaluation), a platform approach entails a *comprehensive shift in the governance model.* The rationale for shifting to a new governance model, i.e. a platform approach, is to enable the organization to generate better outcomes at a higher level of efficiency while further strengthening transparency and democratic control. It is about scaling to the level most likely to have an impact on a complex problem. The platform approach is also designed to change *how* complex problems are tackled, moving away from

the application of often sectoral and standalone solutions towards a heterodox mix of interrelated solutions that impact key points in the systems that shape outcomes.

A platform approach can therefore be understood as leveraging all society's resources (local, regional, national and global) to achieve better public outcomes in a new way. Current platform models, though, are likely to represent hybrid governance models consisting of different elements drawn from the past and present and directed towards the future. They are likely to apply the platform approach as an "overlay" to encourage further evolution of an organization's policies, practices and processes (partnership modalities, advocacy, learning and M&E, procurement and finance, etc) and the design of new "platform" interfaces to encourage more seamless, open, peer-to-peer methods of collaboration and thereby create public value.

Emerging practical examples

Practical examples of platform or networked governance are emerging around the world. The UNDP has looked at efforts to mobilize

society's resources to bring about more transparent public financial management and distributed decision-making on new legislation (**Decide Platform, Madrid**), a project which has subsequently been rolled out to over 50 cities around the world. Estonia's **e-Residency programme** offers a transnational digital identity that anyone in the world can apply for to obtain access to the European Union's business environment and digital public services. It enables the simplified online registration of businesses from any part of the world, and a growing community development function that encourages more appropriate growth of joint business ventures among members.

The UNDP has also looked at platforms that focus on integrating evidence from a range of sources (satellite data, academia and think tanks, the insurance and banking sector and also global food suppliers) to design an early warning risk mitigation system to protect both food consumers and producers from climate-driven risks (**Climate KICs Winners Project**). There are others that leverage data and technology to help residents segregate and recycle non-biodegradable waste, connect local scrap dealers with residents who want to dispose of solid waste, and prevent recyclable waste from ending up in landfills (**Kabadiwalla**), or tap into decentralized real-time information from citizens on rainfall and flooding in order to improve situational awareness and improve disaster response (**Peta Bencana, Indonesia**).

UNDP: Platforms in Action

One of the commitments made by the UNDP in its Strategic Plan is to provide its services through **country support platforms**. The aim underlying this commitment is to offer flexible opportunities to apply new ways of advancing sustainable development in a manner and at a scale that has greater potential in tackling complex development problems that stand in the way of achieving the SDGs, using integrated solutions that cut across sectors, geographic regions, borders, types of intervention (e.g. policy, regulation, institutional development) and time periods. The rationale for looking into this new governance model (based on a platform approach) is to enable the UNDP to contribute towards better outcomes faster, more sustainably and also more efficiently.

Coming to grips with complex development problems

Addressing "wicked" or complex problems in the context of the 2030 Agenda requires a different way of working, paying explicit attention to three aspects:

1

First, **integration**; i.e. achieving a greater degree of connectedness in terms of focus, design, collaboration and operations to improve sustainable development outcomes while also reaching those left behind. Successful integration can raise current development pathways, or recovery from crises, from "business-as-usual" to a higher trajectory (as shown in the chart below).[2]

2

Second, **acceleration**; i.e. faster progress across a broad front. To achieve this, "accelerators" need to be identified: context-dependent factors central to the complex systems that shape development outcomes.[3] These factors have both the potential to tackle important interconnections with and across the SDGs as well as address related trade-offs. This can enable investment, institutions and policies to target impact across the widest range of Goals as quickly and sustainably as possible in order to boost sustainable development and reach those left behind (as shown in the chart below).[4]

3

Third, **collective action on a broad scale**. Complex problems cannot be solved through the efforts of any single actor or group of actors in the development community but require the combined social energy, capital and capacities of government *and* society, supported by global and regional networks of solidarity and partnership.[5]

**These implications point to the need for a network methodology,
enabling a wide range of partners to connect, collaborate and act in order to integrate
and accelerate solutions to complex and multi-dimensional development challenges.[6]
This is what country support platforms are designed to do.**
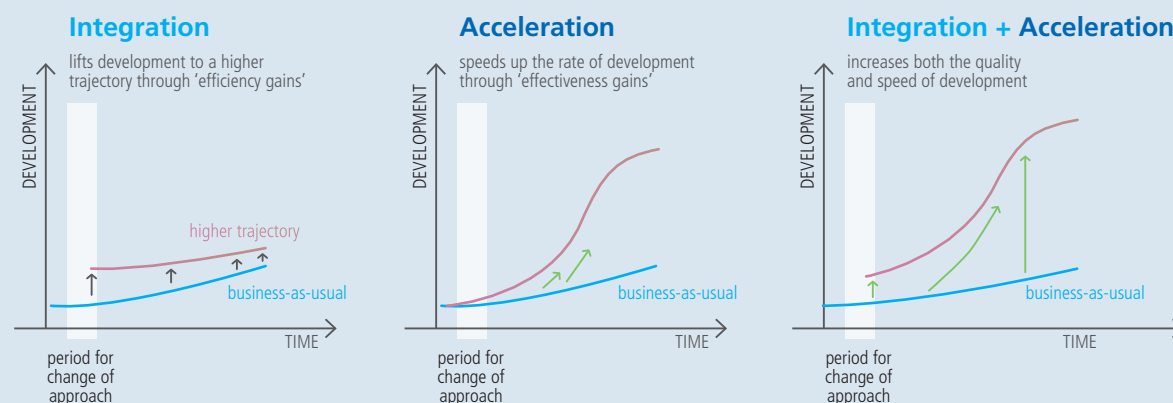
Source: UNDP, Country Support Platforms, Part I: Rationale and Concepts, 2019.

2. Integration can be said to capture the "efficiency gains" stemming from improved management and utilisation of an existing stock of investment. These gains are realised through greater recognition of externalities across different areas of work, improved consistency between macro and micro-level actions and stronger linkages between policy and regulatory changes and project-level interventions.

3. This approach derives from the concept of "centrality": looking at the significance and influence of a factor in terms of its impact on a social network or complex system.

4. Acceleration can be said to capture the "effectiveness gains" arising from both higher quantity and quality of investment. In the former, this entails higher levels of financing for sustainable development. In the latter, it may refer to improved targeting that yields significant positive distributional impacts (e.g. Leaving No One Behind) and investments that minimize negative trade-offs and maximize positive multiplier effects on inclusive growth and development, sustainability and resilience across the economy and society.

5. This point refers to the importance of recognizing and addressing the collective action problem, as well as the development benefits that come from success in this respect.

6. This methodology taps into "network effects"; i.e. the benefits accruing to each member of a network and to the overall network when it reaches a critical mass of participants or members.

Platform principles and their practical application in the UNDP

In 2018, the UNDP began exploring and experimenting with a distinctive platform approach tailored to its mission and institutional set-up. The experimenting teams drew upon existing literature and practices looking for a big picture response to the "why" and "how" of the transition to a platform approach, breaking this process down into a set of component parts with potential implications for the work of the UNDP. Based on this, the UNDP came up with an approach

that translates principles into a set of hypotheses regarding where the organization wanted to go, coupled with various methodologies to help it get there. The model below shows how the SDGs and overall policy mission are translated into principles and then finally into guiding hypotheses regarding the types of changes the UNDP would need to transition towards a platform approach. The practicalities of this approach were then codified in a Guidance Note that looked at the rationale and concepts, suggestions for how to get started and emerging examples of platform-like initiatives and lessons learned.

Backdrop:

PRINCIPLES					
Being fast at spotting emerging trends and contextualizing them for governments and others.		**Reducing transaction barriers** to collaborating with various partners, creating alignment around missions	**Spotting non-traditional partners** to identify hugher quality development solutions	**Facilitating engagement** digitally and physically, creating new interactions	**Harnessing distributed intelligence**, adapting from the signals obtained from the groung
BY FOSTERING EXPERIMENTATION		BY PUTTING OUTCOMES FIRST	BY ACTIVATING NETWORKS	BY BUILDING TANGIBLE PLATFORMS	BY ENABLING LEARNING

HYPOTHESES					
SCALING PROJECTS → SCALING PROCESS		TRANSACTIONAL → RELATIONAL	ACKNOWLEDGING A STATED NEED → UNCOVERING UNEXPRESSED DEMAND	DEFAULT: DEFINING PROBLEMS → DEFAULT: MAPPING SOLUTIONS	PREMIUM ON EXECUTING → PREMIUM ON LEARNING AND ADAPTING

METHODOLOGY					
·Policy experimentation R&D ·Horizon scanning (carefully observing the present), ·Foresight (visualizing alternative futures) ·Co-creation		·System change ·Innovation in business and governance model ·Ethnography	·Reshaping incentives ·User-driven ·Mapping value systems ·Solution mapping ·Positive deviance ·Challenge prizes ·Outcome buying	·Prototyping ·Community building ·Digital design ·Convening facilitation	·Systems thinking and analysis ·New real-time data for new insights ·Peer-to-peer sessions ·Big and small data ·Communities of practice

Platform principles applied in the UNDP

1. Platforms enable organizations to quickly identify non-traditional partners and, by working with other types of resources, develop higher quality development solutions by activating networks.

Examples from the UNDP context:
In **Ukraine**, the UNDP is working on the development and start-up of a platform that will function as a transparent, easily accessible market for services and resources available to homeowners and homeowner associations to boost energy efficiency in residential buildings. In order to set up this platform, the UNDP is mobilising the expertise of non-traditional actors such as construction firms, suppliers of energy efficient solutions, homeowner associations and residents (individuals). By activating these networks, the UNDP, working together with partners, can help identify better development solutions that reflect the genuine needs of stakeholders and begin to bridge investment gaps.

To achieve the SDGs, **Indonesia** needs to unlock significant untapped financing. The UNDP is providing a platform that connects and scales initiatives across investors, entrepreneurs, businesses, government, Islamic finance institutions, philanthropists, civil society and young people, designing and testing innovative financing instruments as well as development solutions designed for financing. This approach is unlocking significant new financing for the SDGs. For example, it has enabled Indonesia to become the first country to issue a USD-denominated green Islamic bond (Sukuk). This USD 1.25 billion bond was 300% over-subscribed.

2. Organizations create new types of engagement, both digital and physical, that can generate new interactions through platforms.

Examples from the UNDP context:
In **Rwanda**, where over 70% of the young people are underemployed, the

YouthConnekt platform, supported by the UNDP, provides an integrated physical and virtual platform to enable young people to create employment opportunities and engage in their community, supported by a partnership between the government, banks, the private sector, youth groups, international organizations and NGOs. The platform has already helped to create 8,000 new jobs, enabled 1 million young people to engage in voluntary community service, and involved over 4 million young people in activities to promote positive values and attitudes, nurturing a new generation of leaders. YouthConnekt has expanded to Cape Verde, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia.

In **Serbia**, the UNDP is developing a platform for sourcing climate-smart, innovative ideas to improve public services which local communities can deliver to their citizens. To this end, physical and digital approaches through platforms will engage different types of partners, such as solar/wind energy producers, innovation start-ups, the research community, IT community and farmers, to trigger new types of interactions among them (e.g. research community with farmers, individuals with innovation start-ups) and generate new and better development solutions.

3. Platforms harness collective intelligence by adopting signals from the ground and incorporating them into new products, as well as by enabling continuous learning.

Example from the UNDP context:
In **Brazil**, growing urban populations and inequality are increasing demand for better public services such as sanitation, lighting, public safety, education, transport and health. The UNDP is working together with sub-national authorities, civil society, businesses, media outlets and universities to

create SDG Commissions, Dialogue Groups and online platforms to map, track and improve local services. For example, the "Oeste Paran**á** 2030" platform, supported jointly by Itaipu Binacional and the UNDP, targets 54 cities in Paran**á** State using over 67 SDG indicators for analysis, one of the largest such databases at a municipal level. These platforms will source and manage local data using AI algorithms to track the progress of development indicators and public service targets, informing local planning and monitoring implementation. The platforms are designed to help integrate services and make them more efficient and effective at reaching those left furthest behind, boosting healthy lives and promoting well-being for all, at all stages of life.

4. Platforms enable the rapid detection of emerging trends and continued experimentation.

Example from the UNDP context:
In 2016-17, **Somalia** narrowly avoided a drought-related famine, raising a record USD 1.3 billion in humanitarian assistance. But this type of intervention is unsustainable. In response, the government established a Recovery and Resilience Framework (RRF) (in other words a platform) with the UNDP, the World Bank and the EU as well as the private sector, investors and humanitarian organizations. This platform has helped the government adapt to changing events, improved how different streams of resources are combined and managed to enhance investment, as well as enhancing the availability, analysis and use of data. As a result, it is building confidence, attracting investment from new sources and making the local economy more resilient. The aim is to ensure that a drought never turns into a famine again.

5. A platform approach entails a massive reduction in transaction costs, lowering barriers to collaboration among a large group of partners. It can speed up learning and helps to align missions by putting outcomes first.

Example from the UNDP context:

UNDP **Moldova** is setting up a data sharing platform to improve the lives of people in urban settlements using new types of evidence (open data, big data, user-generated data) and appealing to collective intelligence. The platform (both digital and physical) will enable private companies (currently a mobile telecom operator and electricity supplier), urban residents and the Council to share data to address development issues. By working in this way, the platform is expected to reduce transaction costs and allow traditional and non-traditional players to engage actively in identifying solutions to urban issues.

Describing country support platforms in the UNDP
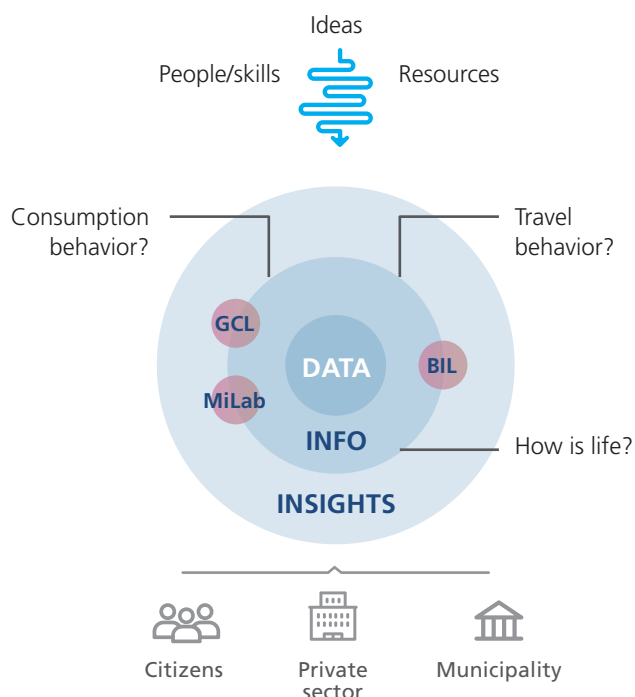
A first wave of operational challenges?

A shift in operational gears will be required to successfully launch the UNDP's first generation of country support platforms. Development agencies have been grappling with certain trends in management models for over two decades, for instance, around the application of results-based management and its advantages and disadvantages, one major issue in the latter case being a relative bias towards quantitative measures that tend to detract from assessments of changes in institutions, behaviours and broader systems. This experience has raised some fundamental questions regarding the management of development agencies and programmes in this sustainable development era, for which platform approaches offer some intriguing yet largely hypothetical answers.

One key factor in successfully setting up country support platforms will be their ability to provide convincing, tangible answers to several questions, including but not limited to how we might:

- Design operational systems that simultaneously provide reassurance and dependability to managers and evaluators while also encouraging creativity and adaptability of teams.

- Create the institutional space for smart risk-taking – and potentially a higher "failure" rate than with conventional projects – without "upsetting the apple cart".

- Design "regulatory sandboxes" that begin to explore and pioneer new ways of doing business.

- Build continuity into new knowledge and learning processes so as to capture and build on existing experience.

- Set specific strategic priorities that enable innovation and improvisation.

- Empower staff to articulate their progress and achievements and see the wider value of work recognized.

- Design development targets that are meaningful and adaptive, while also comparable and compatible between contexts and over time.

- Adapt management systems, or internal "governance", to minimize control, emphasize culture and leadership and enhance meaningful stakeholder consultation.

- Establish systems and a culture of deep accountability throughout the chain of delivery.

- Adapt development programming, build ODA and budget administration models, to have macro-economic and financial policy and instruments successfully incorporated into its strategies.

- Adapt multilateral development agency programming to wider trends of securitization, and implications for navigating the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
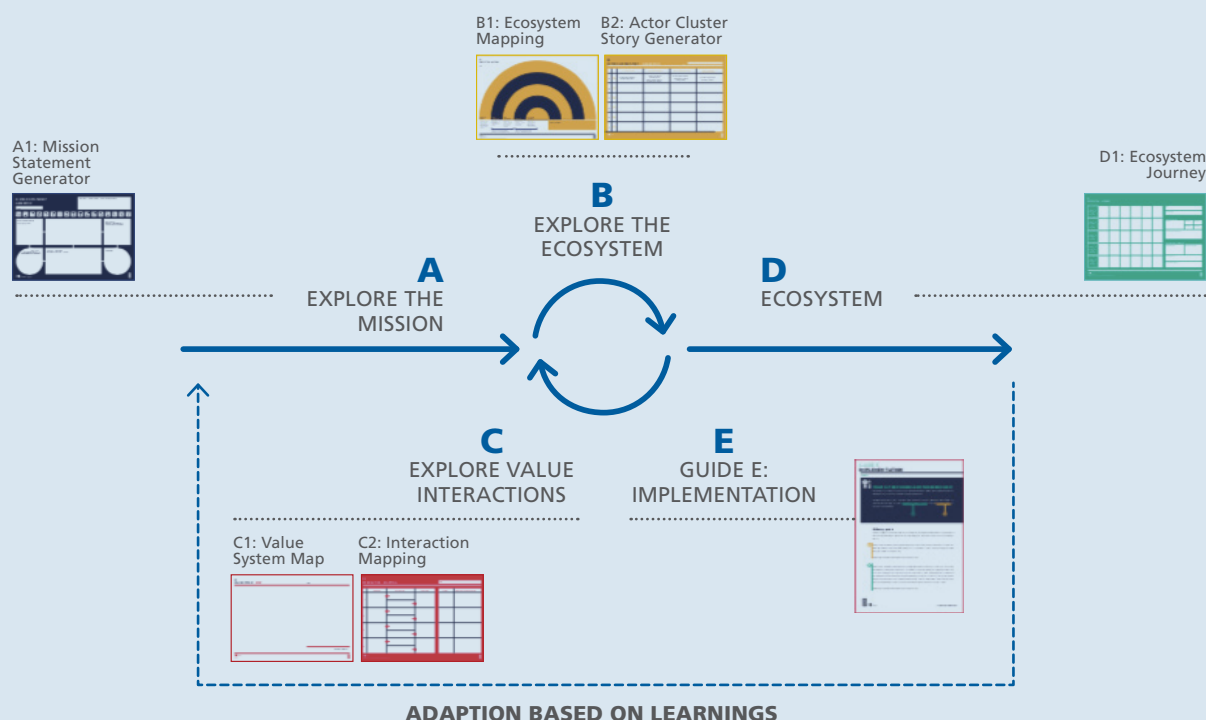
Codifying the undp approach to platforms and its implementation

Based on a review of the literature on platforms and extant experiences in private and public sectors across the world, as well as emerging examples from its country offices, the UNDP has taken a first step to codifying its approach through a 3-part **Guidance Note** that provides a common point of reference for consistent and comparable action on platforms across its global network. The Guidance Note is simply a starting point. It is designed to be dynamic rather than static, updated regularly as the UNDP and its partners learn from implementing the platform approach in a wide variety of contexts and for a broad spectrum of complex development problems across the developing world.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Country Support Platforms'

Part III: Emerging Examples and Lessons Learned

2019

The Guidance Note is underpinned by a **learning package** that has been "road tested" in the field across all five regions in which the UNDP works. In some instances, this was carried out in a workshop setting with several country offices participating and applying emerging modules to their specific contexts and work. In other cases, participating country office teams received a package with canvases and tools that formed the basis for homework as well as fieldwork. This hands-on, iterative and design-driven experimentation has helped

to demystify the platform approach by framing policy challenges around citizens' needs and behaviour, co-creating novel ideas and concepts with stakeholders and repeating prototypes of potential new interventions. As a result of this co-design and co-creation process, the UNDP has produced a learning package of practical tools for the hands-on application of the platform methodology within the UNDP and among partners both within and outside the UN Development System and across different development contexts.

B1: Ecosystem Mapping   B2: Actor Cluster Story Generator

A1: Mission Statement Generator

D1: Ecosystem Journey

B
EXPLORE THE ECOSYSTEM

A
EXPLORE THE MISSION

D
ECOSYSTEM

C
EXPLORE VALUE INTERACTIONS

E
GUIDE E: IMPLEMENTATION

C1: Value System Map   C2: Interaction Mapping

ADAPTION BASED ON LEARNINGS

2

Social Innovation Platforms for International Development

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There has always been a wealth of innovation in the way non-governmental organizations, philanthropy, public authorities, global institutions and corporations have conducted international development initiatives, yet these methodologies and practices have not necessarily been connected to social innovation practices. This report aims to enhance the knowledge and collaboration between both disciplines. Over the past decade, social innovation has become established as a distinctive field of knowledge and practice which should actively contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite the complex and interconnected nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, most global development initiatives today are still designed as projects to address specific issues with a linear approach. The way in which these projects are currently managed, funded and evaluated limits the ability of organizations to invest more resources in achieving a better understanding of community perceptions, in prototyping new interconnected solutions, making mistakes and being able to adapt work plans in real time should alternative solutions emerge during the implementation process.

Alternatively, social innovation platforms seek to interconnect organizations and actions on the basis of shared objectives, methodologies and evaluation systems, in order to bring about systemic impact. Although a platform approach requires greater effort in the design phase and new tools for building a collective vision, it will ultimately help to align disconnected initiatives and enhance their impact, cohesion and visibility.

Methodologically speaking, these platforms must carry out preliminary work to map and select local partners (public authorities, business and NGOs), intermediary organizations (specialists in specific areas) and international institutions that enable an exchange of knowledge. This set of organizations will thereby form a network of actors linked to the platform who can jointly promote community listening and collective interpretation processes. Innovation platforms are always open to incorporating other public and

private agents that wish to share the same approach throughout the whole process, maximizing existing resources, reducing investment risk and generating a medium and long-term exit strategy.

Social Innovation Platforms should incorporate new movement building approaches to promote initiatives with a greater scope and variety of partners (scaling up), increase the number of beneficiaries (scaling out) and bring about deeper behavioural changes (scaling deep). To achieve this aim, it is essential to improve understanding of the cultural dimension of the innovation process (software) and connect this with specific actions (hardware). The Work-4Progress programme of the "la Caixa" Foundation is a practical example of social innovation platform.

When the social, institutional and business agents involved in successful development initiatives are questioned about the key elements to understanding the capacity to produce extraordinary responses to highly nega-

tive circumstance, they always stress the importance of the local culture. While current innovation models are built on an instrumental rationale, the most successful experiences demonstrate that large-scale strategic projects need to be interconnected by cultural "software" that is written with local values and a deeper aspirational goal. The key factor seems to be associated with the cultural dimension of a long-term strategy rather than the more visible 'hardware' that can be identified in specific initiatives.

The software or cultural component of the innovation process can therefore be interpreted as the set of values and beliefs shared by a particular community, city or territory and the way these are expressed in collective narratives and behaviours, ultimately affecting strategic decisions and their implementation. A systemic approach to the great challenges that sustainable development sets out to tackle requires a strong connection between both, operating in a similar way to social movements instead

Work4Progress

Work4Progress is a programme promoted by the "la Caixa" Foundation the objective of which is the creation of employment opportunities for women and young people in India, Peru and Mozambique. Work4Progress involves four main structural elements:

1. Analysis and listening platform

2. Laboratory of co-creation and prototyping

3. Project accelerator, and

4. Developmental evaluation system.
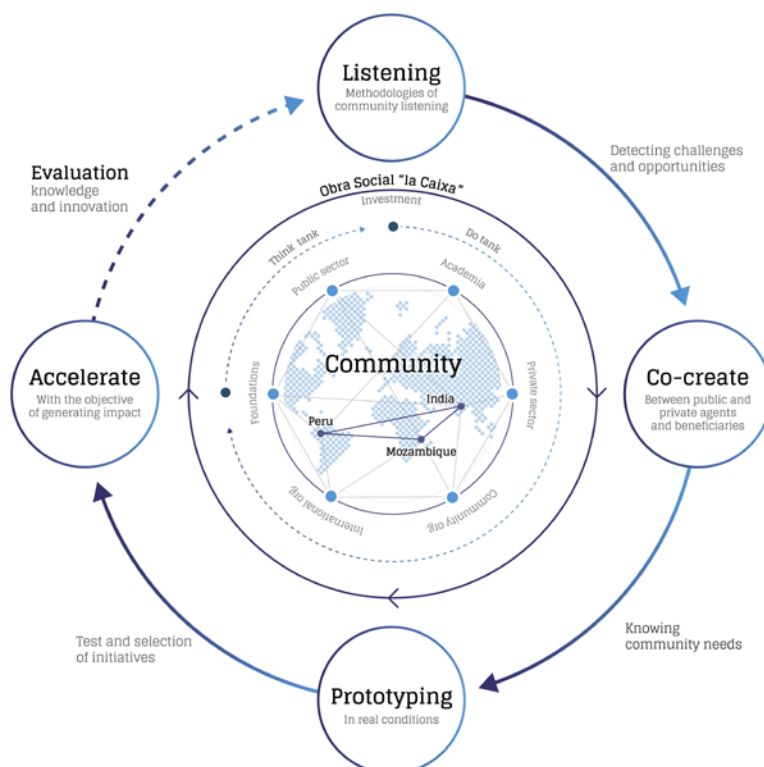
of continuing to apply the traditional top-down project management approach. The narratives we tell ourselves about what is possible and what isn't need to be better understood and incorporated into the core strategy when the aim is to transform communities, cities or territories.

Collective narratives are used to express local values as a mechanism of self-definition, informing attitudes, behaviours and, ultimately, taking counter-cyclical strategic decisions. Identity building is a human process that non-objectively combines local culture and values with historical facts. Local communities and territories identify themselves using a certain set of values that can be found in such historical facts, but many other values and facts that could also be interpreted as part of their local identity are set aside. Identity building is therefore a social construction and an evolving process that can be positively or negatively channelled through cooperative action.

More effort needs to be made in order to understand why certain strategic decisions are taken and why different territories have responded in very different ways to the same challenges. Those that have been able to associate themselves with transformative values such as equality, solidarity, self-responsibility, radical democracy and resilience are able to foster sustainable development. On the other hand, those that have allowed a negative narrative about themselves to emerge face much more serious problems in dealing with the current global challenges.

The Global South demands practical solutions to their growing, complex needs but, if given the opportunity, joining a transformation movement allows local communities, NGOs, business and public authorities to become part of a much more ambitious and mindful enterprise. These new transformational movements can only be co-created by generating a new narrative of transformation capable of connecting the identity of the territory with a "collective decision" to build a sus-

tainable ecosystem which its citizens are proud to be associated with and proud to be living in. We define this process as a platform approach.

Consequently, successful transformations need to be understood as movements rather than the outcome of linear projects. Leadership is always shared and spread out as a platform and no single person,

> We need to identify the narratives we are telling about ourselves. Are they limiting or amplifying the existing opportunities for and challenges to transforming the territory? And, most importantly, what is the transformational narrative that can connect us?

institution or organization controls the whole process. Many apparently disconnected initiatives are structurally linked in terms of the principles, values and vision of a common transformative goal. Operating as a platform allows a variety of organizations, businesses and institutions to work together without setting up rigid or complex legal structures. Platforms generate a wide range of projects that share a collective narrative of transformation; in other words, an extensive spectrum of individuals and organizations creating alternative narratives about their community and the possibility for change.

Structural elements

This empowerment is associated with the development of new narratives and a series of interconnected actions that constitute a transformation movement.
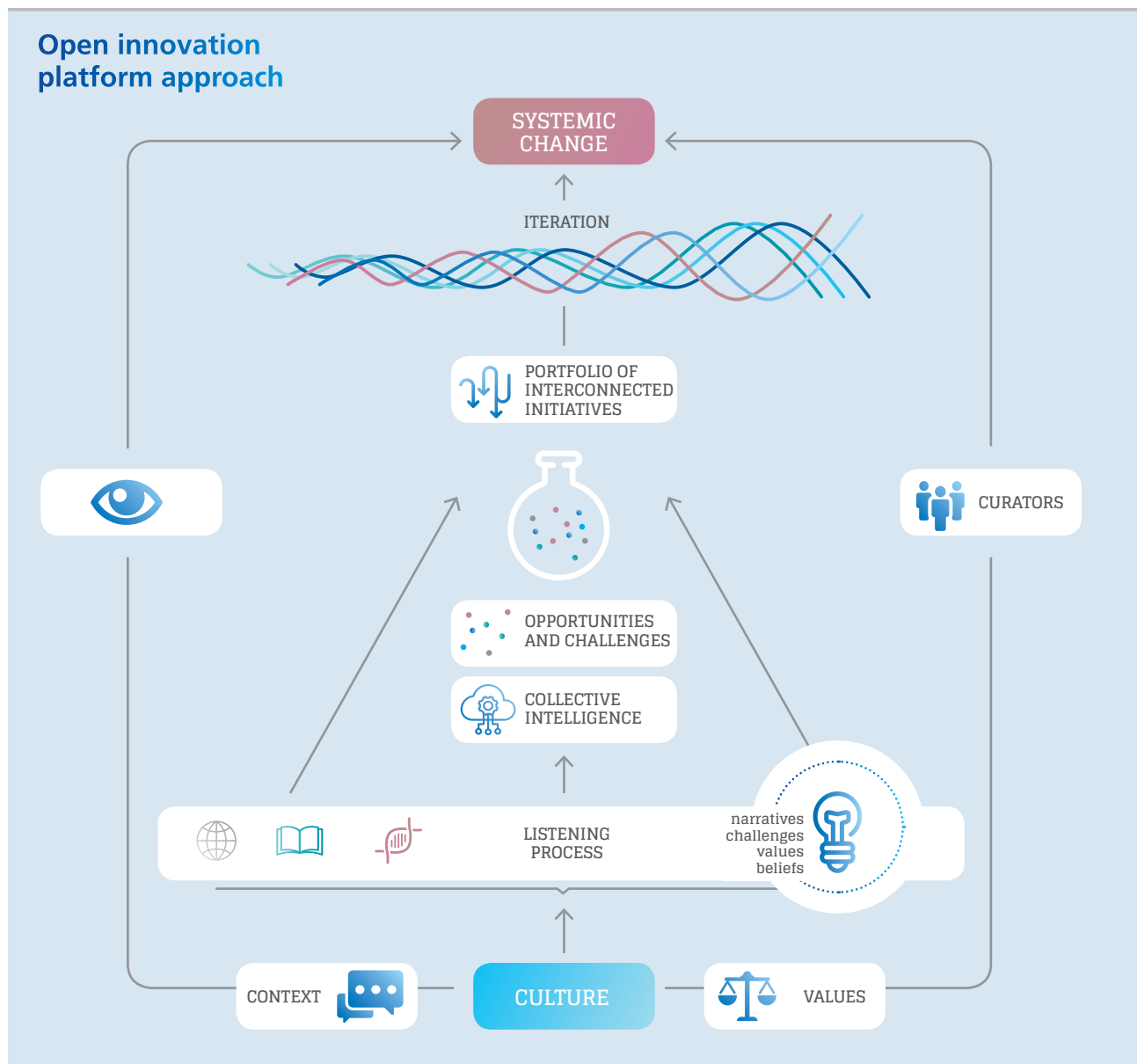
These systems are set up as ecosystems that combine the following structural elements:

1. new instruments for community listening and collective interpretation of the data,
2. laboratories to co-create and prototype new initiatives,
3. project accelerators,
4. new tools for shared governance and funding,
5. and new evaluation and external communication systems.

Platform approaches differ extensively from linear interventions dominated by new forms of demonstrated despotism and theories of change based on a search for individual talent. The traditional approach tends to reinforce individuals and organizations that were already empowered with evidence of large-scale, structural impact. We should invest more resources and effort in understanding how local communities and institutions in the Global South perceive their capacity for innovation and change. The narrative imposed on them highlights negative elements and a perception that change is not possible.

At an individual level, it takes the form of a powerful meta-narrative: "Who am I, to act differently?" and structural change is rarely evident.

Systemic change only comes about when the entire community feels empowered to act differently. Such narratives of collective change can be found in all those places that have undergone highly positive urban transformation. Instead of looking for rare "talent" in exceptional individuals, the most advanced forms of sustainable development set out to empower an entire community through cooperative platforms so that everyone can act innovatively.

Open innovation platform approach

SYSTEMIC CHANGE

ITERATION

PORTFOLIO OF INTERCONNECTED INITIATIVES

CURATORS

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

LISTENING PROCESS

narratives challenges values beliefs

CONTEXT

CULTURE

VALUES

3

Listening for Social Change: Transformative Tools to Unleash Community Innovation

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Multiple large-scale crises are increasingly evident across our world, from climate breakdown to rising inequality and threats to democracy. Many challenges are interlinked: declining journalism, fake news, political polarization and the concentration of power in big tech companies – particularly Facebook, Amazon and Google. Trust in our institutions is in decline and digital platforms and internet technologies that we expected to be democratizing are, in many ways, concentrating power.

People across the globe have become mass producers of data – through smartphones, wearables, smart homes and sensors in private and public spaces, devices are "listening" day and night. But what is being heard and interpreted from those data and how is the information used, managed and stored? What are the societal consequences of this kind of "listening"? And how does it affect people's mental health?

We characterize the situation as a "crisis of listening and legitimacy". One inherent tension is that, while people typically want their voices to be heard in matters they have a stake in, they'd also like to decide who or what listens to them, when, to which bits and for what purpose. And listening unidirec-tionally or without agency is hollow; there needs to be a dialogue to build understanding, and people need to be able to verify they have been correctly interpreted. Although the trends vary and manifest themselves differently from place to place, fundamental to addressing societal crises is the need to build our capacity to listen and create a dialogue, and to build trust with each other in order to co-create effective change. Can we enhance our listening to each other in ways that would build trust, legitimacy and more effective collective action for positive social change? This chapter explores cases in two quite different development contexts of attempts to listen at the level of community in ways that foster local innovation and contribute to social change.

Listening is a key methodology to foster more effective collective action for social change. It can harness the power of collective intelligence to build transformative narratives and co-create innovative action. As participatory researchers and practitioners, we realize that social innovation needs to get beyond a fragmented project approach to one of "innovation platforms" if it is to be able to address systemic challenges and innovation platforms require robust methodologies and transformative tools. This article aims to discuss and demonstrate how collective listening forms a critical part of co-creation by innovation platforms and demonstrate its power to change communities and transform systems.

To understand a system or community we must tap into its needs in ways that reveal the way forward. When investigating systems we often apply a controlled, linear approach to complex contexts and do not achieve the expected results. Holistic approaches involving deep listening are better able to deal with complexity. Listening is instrumental to wise and transformative action.

We have the power to influence systems through the quality of our listening.

Generative listening is deep and open and requires collectively making sense through dialogue. The skills, attitudes and sensibilities of collective listening are fundamental to creating a culture of community innovation.

William Isaac[1] explains how listening together is really about dialogue from a perspective of the whole and not the individual. Collective listening is a shared experience and shared learning space, balancing thinking, analyzing and strategizing with letting go and receiving. Collective listening engenders co-creation. How we listen and make sense collectively of evolving narratives can help to change our views and actions. Something that wasn't there before can reveal itself.

A listening methodology primarily employs qualitative tools which complement quantitative data and research. These listening methods enable researchers, practitioners and community participants to uncover what lies "behind the numbers" – penetrating deeper than statistics to reveal structural problems and opportunities for change, often through storytelling. Listening methods recognize that people have their own community-based local knowledge systems that are often

1. Isaacs, William. *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, Double Day, (1999).

A research participant in front of his home, which was substantially destroyed in the 2010 earthquake.

Monthly community meetings are open to everyone and often engage Open Space Technology methods, such as this one. The session's question was: 'What is the role of education in community development?'

Collective learning

The following five lessons could be learned from both case studies and serve to inform future work, both in the case communities as well as in other contexts.

1. Build a robust model first, then scale.

The cases illustrate that listening and participatory tools and methods connect granular community level innovation to structural transformation. Results show that the community level innovation model must be robust and its evidence convincing at many different levels - local community, region and more broadly. Only then can it be scaled and adapted in ways that fully realize the potential.

2. Methods matter.

Methods are context-dependent and adapted in real time based on learning and many different kinds of feedback. In order to be transformative, employing these tools and methods requires high level skillsets, familiarity with listening methodologies and the ability to adapt based on learning in the field.

3. Create a listening culture, build agency.

Listening methods cannot be thought of as a "first phase" which then results in action. If implemented on an ongoing basis, collective listening and participation becomes fundamental to community culture, helping to build not only an individual sense of agency but, importantly, collective agency, which is needed for effective and transformative collective action (akin to Freire's critical consciousness and praxis).

4. A physical location anchors platforms (as in "hubs").

In both Haiti and Montreal, hubs in the community represent a physical and metaphorical centre that serves as the space to build a participatory culture. In Haiti, the school and grounds anchored the development of an education-centred culture. In Montreal, a meeting room in the community's economic development organization became a collective office, anchoring the connection with the ongoing strategic planning. Location-based, physical hubs help to anchor the building of longer-term relationships in listening processes.

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invisible from the outside. They have the potential to yield more accurate data by drawing out and hearing the voices of those who are excluded and often impoverished, thereby deepening our understanding of development impacts on local people and the power dynamics at play.

The two listening cases in Montreal, Canada and Bellevue-La-Montagne, Haiti show that listening is contributing substantially to strengthening processes of community innovation, social entrepreneurship and structural change. There is early evidence of social

change at the community level through collective listening practices, which have revealed shared narratives and are in the early stages of encouraging community innovation. Listening methodologies are different and complementary to quantitative methodologies and are critical to fostering social innovation.

Two of the greatest challenges of our times, the extreme inequality among people and planetary deterioration, are clear and present. They demand new forms of collective action that have the power to encourage innovation among local and global communities to

solve complex problems in new ways. Collective action for social change can come about by activating more effective collective listening as a fundamental platform for innovation. The good news is that there are many existing and emerging technologies that can enable more effective collective listening. Here are several.

1. **Transmedia methods,** which involve telling many different narratives over a range of media. Examples include digital storytelling, video and animation, podcasts, interactive theatre and solutions journalism.

2. **Mobile data collection** for interviews and observation at the level of community and household, including self-reporting by participants which enables new forms of longitudinal study. For example, rather than collecting data every 3-5 years, participants can collect and report their own data much more frequently.

3. **Big data observatories** (and other big data tools) can bring together quantitative and qualitative data and technologies of artificial intelligence and machine learning with human-machine interactions to enable rapid processing, analysis and access to massive amounts of data for potentially deeper learning and more extensive understanding.

4. **Commoning methods**, such as regular and open meetings and radically inclusive access, a participatory culture to foster individual and collective learning and growth, and to provide a sense of agency for collective action.

The combination of existing and rapidly emerging tools, such as those above, opens up new possibilities for harnessing collective intelligence and represents a great opportunity considering the world's exponential and rapid population growth. However,

given the increasing noise of daily life for huge numbers of people, particularly from digital platforms, meaningful listening is a great challenge. This work of listening for social change has huge ambition. As we design and repeat our listening tools for transformation, we constantly come back to the same question: What becomes possible if we innovate how we listen to each other, with the aim of creating structurally equal communities in a world that is regenerative for both people and the planet? Based on our experience and case studies, we believe the potential for community innovation is restricted primarily by our lack of listening. The challenge, and opportunity, lies in innovating our ability to listen collectively to achieve more effective action for social change.

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Towards Co-creative Organisation: From Idea to Scale

CHRISTIAN BASON, Danish Design Center

The past decade has seen a massive rise in the concept of co-creation: designing services and policies together with citizens and other actors and not just for them. However, few organizations have yet to fully embrace co-creation as a mode of innovation to scale. Recent experiences from the Danish Design Centre have revealed some ways towards new and more scalable systems of co-creation.

Perhaps the idea is not new but its application is becoming much more widespread: the notion that, in order to develop the best possible approaches to a given problem, it is important to explicitly involve a wide range of stakeholders – including end-users such as citizens or customers. A decade ago, there were a few organizations employing such co-creative approaches; today, co-creation is beginning to be mainstream.

The methodologies of co-creation (also sometimes called co-design) tend to revolve around three dimensions. First, exploring problems from a human perspective by using ethnographically inspired approaches, such as open-ended interviews, field research and shadowing. Second, creating new ideas with others via a range of workshop formats, sometimes digitally enabled. Third, building and testing new concepts through the use of prototypes: tangible suggestions for how a new product or service might look and function, which can be shown to potential users to obtain feedback. The focus of co-creation can vary greatly: from exploring relevant services for vulnerable young people to designing more hygienic products for hospitals and crafting new digital experiences for banking customers.

A model for going from the idea to scale

The model essentially encompasses four key principles: horizon scanning, co-design, co-production, and impact measurement.

A model for a co-creative organization
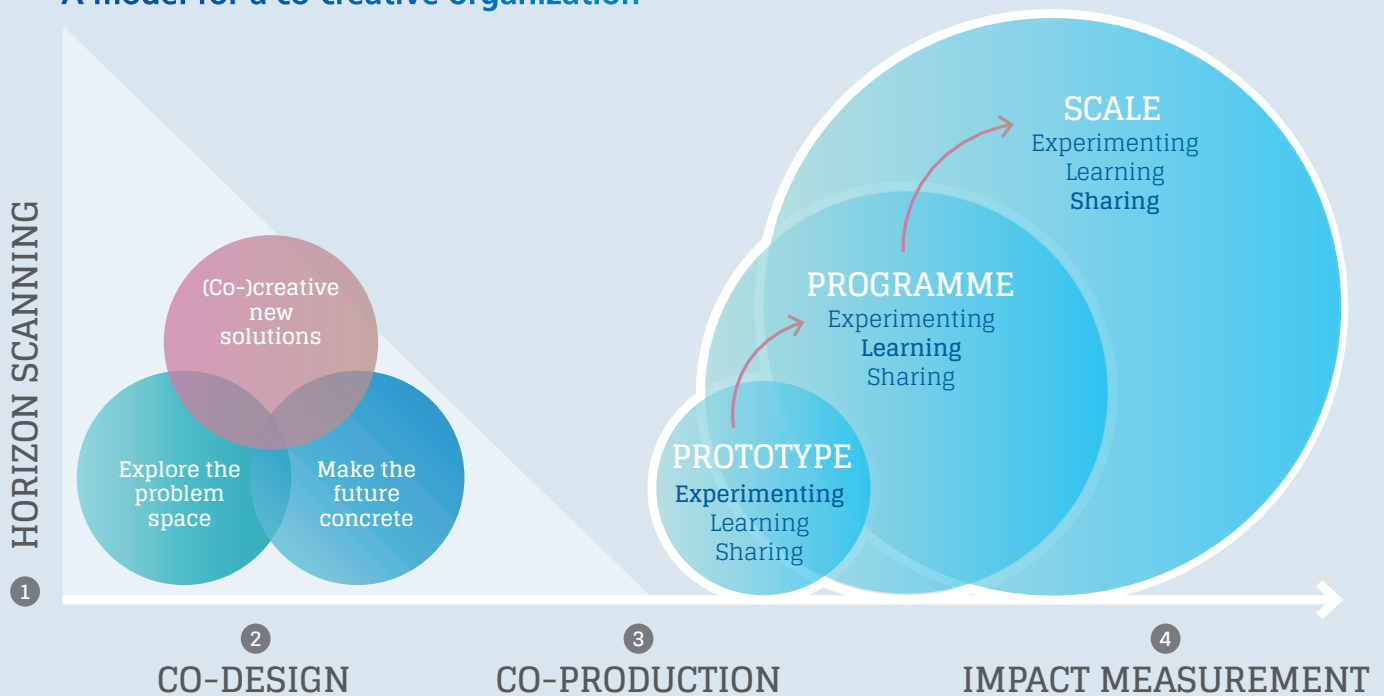
Source: Danish Design Center.

1 **Horizon scanning** is where co-creation is first stimulated and involves identifying upcoming trends and developments with potential policy or organizational consequences: establishing insight, foresight and scenarios to visualize plausible futures. Here the function in the organization (in our case led by a Head of Futures and Digital) is to raise awareness of significant context factors for the organization; to build preparedness and resilience regarding possible disruptions; and to establish a basis for policy planning and action. Some of the key questions in horizon scanning are as follows:

- Which political, economic, environmental, societal and technological factors should we care about?
- How could these driving forces influence us in the future?
- What should we do *now* to shape our future in the way we want it?

2 **Co-design**, as already mentioned, involves exploring problems from an end user perspective, co-creating new ideas with users and stakeholders and prototyping and testing initial ideas. The goal is to establish an early assessment of fit and function for a policy idea and to create a basis for redesign and, ultimately, decision-making. Key questions include:

- Who are the end users?
- How might this policy intervention work for them?
- Which other aspects do we need to take into account?

These kinds of questions lie at the heart of our work at MindLab and, in fact, are often applied in innovation labs the world over. At the Danish Design Centre we are currently in the early stages of co-designing a programme together with a major philanthropic organization to address the circular economy in the

future of the construction industry. Here the aim is to establish an innovation challenge addressing the question of how to build with zero waste. Establishing such a programme requires deep and comprehensive stakeholder and user involvement in the scoping phase.

③ **Co-production.** This term is sometimes confused with co-creation but is fundamentally different. Here the focus is not on new ideas but on putting objectives into practice. Co-production is by no means a new term; it was originally coined in the 1970s by the US Nobel laureate Eleanor Ostrom. Her insight was that any (public) service is essentially not "delivered" or "implemented" but co-produced between the public organization's intervention and the citizens engaging with it. In practice, this entails organizing and implementing policy through collaborative networks and leveraging *all* relevant resources in an organization's environment to produce policy outcomes. When carried out properly, this also entails establishing hypotheses of change to experiment with policy by co-production, as well as ensuring the rigorous collection of qualitative and quantitative data to document the extent to which outcomes are likely to be achieved.

Establishing such "hypotheses of change" is important since it helps to make staff in the organization be explicit about which actions and factors are expected to create the intended change. It also raises awareness of critical success factors and helps the project team to know what to measure in order to track the changes, including unintended consequences. Key questions in co-production include:

- ⌐ Based on our co-design process, which hypothesis are we testing now?
- ⌐ What inputs, activities and outputs do we expect to achieve?
- ⌐ What will the outcomes look like, if we are successful?

The Danish Design Centre model aims to view all policy interventions as essentially experimental. This means we need to start small-scale and try things out quickly. If somewhat successful, we can then go on to a larger scale (and if not successful, try another small-scale experiment or cancel the action entirely). As illustrated in the figure, we work to achieve co-production at three different scales, allowing for a high degree of risk management. First, when possible, we start at the prototype level. Here we particularly focus on *experimenting*. We ask: How does the intervention work? Who does it work for (who benefits)? Second, at a programme level, we shift the emphasis more towards *learning* and ask: How can we learn from this, now that the design is being created? Third, we scale up successful

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programmes, shifting the emphasis to sharing. Here we ask: How can we share our insights and tools? Which actors can implement activities in order to scale up? How can we reach more people/businesses?

An example of co-production in practice is our PLUS programme, which first involved six businesses in testing a model for matching them with design studios and providing monetary grants for them to work on a relevant business challenge. Based on successful experiences with this prototype, we scaled up the programme to reach another 12 businesses, conducted in-depth case studies and quantitatively measured the impact. Finally, this year we are building the essence of what we have learned into a nationwide effort to facilitate new digital business models in 100 firms.

4 **Outcome measurement.** This ultimately concerns the "so what?" of co-creation: Does all the effort ultimately generate value? Here the task is to establish a systematic set of methodologies to document the inputs, activities, outputs and both short and long-term outcomes of interventions. Additionally, to suggest key performance indicators, proposing the best indicators of what success might look like and then, of course, how to collect data systematically. The goal here is to

use data to ensure the accountability and transparency of the co-creation and co-production activities, to drive continuous learning and increase organizational performance; and most of all, to produce stronger outcomes. Some of the questions we ask are:

- Do our hypotheses hold up?
- Are we achieving the positive change and outcomes we intended?
- What are the unintended consequences - what should we adjust?

An organizational model such as this is, of course, just one way of embedding co-creation into an institutional fabric. In our experience, one of the hardest parts is to get the roles and base organization right. Which reporting structures and responsibilities underpin the processes? What competencies are needed? How can experimentation, learning and sharing be balanced? At the Centre we have addressed these issues by establishing a matrix organization that combines strategic platforms focusing on health, cities, SMEs, startups and design firms with practice areas across themes such as executive training, transformation programmes and branding activities. This structure is quite new and so only time will tell if it is appropriate and effective.

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Building Community-Led Innovation Eco-Systems

ROGER WARNOCK, Social Nybble

In the 21st century the world is facing social, environmental and financial challenges of unprecedented size and complexity. Globally governments and society are struggling to deal with these "wicked" problems and are increasingly looking at new methods of identifying solutions to these huge challenges. However, the world is brimming with creative and committed "Social Mavens1" or "Community Vanguards" who want to find innovative solutions to tackle inequality within their communities by developing a new perspective of social innovation and coming together through the power of co-creation and collective impact.

A key ingredient to the success of any entrepreneurial and social innovation is a supportive community eco-system. By community eco-system we don't just mean the usual support structures that are available to social entrepreneurs and innovators but also the overarching support that is available through the community where those people live and have chosen to set up their businesses or new organizations driving positive purpose and change. This article provides a high level starting point and background research that can be used by builders of new community eco-systems to provide new dynamic and innovative approaches to create meaningful social impact and increased community cohesion, or to become the new 'social glue' within their communities.

As will be highlighted throughout this article, by means of ethnographic and participatory research, movement building, design thinking and entrepreneurship it is possible to enable the creation and scaling of new interventions, movements and institutions that empower people to work together to address inequality and lead happier and more meaningful lives. By applying a bespoke range of methods, it is possible for communities to create new micro-movements to develop new support systems that break down the barriers which hold back aspiring social innovators and entrepreneurs – the next wave of social mavens and community vanguards.

Starting with a Conversation

The core principle for developing any community-led innovation programme and for engaging with individuals and organizations in those communities is to "tread lightly and listen deeply". It is imperative that, as designers of community-led innovation programmes, we do not offer the solution to an issue as this can lead to bias and stifle community-led innovation.

Designing meaningful and innovative solutions for new innovators and social entrepreneurs within their communities begins with understanding their needs, hopes and aspirations for the future.

It is essential to tread lightly and listen deeply – you must believe that people from all walks of life are able to tell their story and put forward their ideas for change.

By starting these 'conversations' you can begin to focus on three core aspects:

1. connecting a diverse movement of people who are passionate about creating a fairer place to live;

2. amplifying the evolving narratives of a place; and

3. supporting people and communities who have ideas for positive social action (i.e. social entrepreneurship or activism).

> Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.

Motivations: "An Overarching Theory"

Community-led innovation is underpinned by the formation of movements and this primary vehicle can deliver genuinely transformational social change. This 'overarching theory' or alternatively 'socially sustainable places model'[1] brings together the key mechanisms that need to be present in communities and wider society for micro-movements to form and connect into larger regional movements.

This model proposes that deep-rooted social transformations, such as the movements for sanitation in early industrial cities, desegregation in America, peace in Northern Ireland and the rights of workers, women, LGBT and disabled people around the world are founded on five elements[2] within this overarching theory:

1. **Recognition of a collective problem:** inequality is corrosive because it has an adverse impact on people's individual lives, on their communities and on society in general. Often this recognition pre-exists in a place and forms the basis for initial discussions there.

2. **An understanding of the scale of the challenge:** inequality is highly complex, multi-factorial and manifests itself in many ways. This complexity means it cannot be resolved by simple solutions or single sector approaches.

3. **A belief that change is possible:** Inequality is not inevitable and persists partly due to a dominant narrative which sustains the myth that it is inevitable and entrenched and, as a result, cannot be challenged. This leads to piecemeal approaches which only seek to mitigate the worst effects rather than disrupt and eradicate the causes. Inequality is neither inevitable nor acceptable.

1. Maven: Yiddish for "Accumulator of Knowledge" and Gladwell, M (2000) – "*The Tipping Point*"

2. *Making Waves: Amplifying the Potential of Cities and Regions Through Movement-Based Social Innovation*, Young Foundation, London (2016).

4. **Collective action:** momentum for change must be people-led. Communities and places that have seen positive transformation demonstrate that all parts of a place can come together around the values they share if they have the core conviction that a different and fairer future is possible. Real change can only be achieved with this belief.

5. **A connection between recognition and action:** new ideas must connect to a shared narrative of transformation. To have an impact, these new ideas and approaches must connect to values shared between and across communities and which buy in to a collective narrative regarding a positive future. Without this connection, innovations are likely to fail due to a lack of support, contribution and advocacy on the part of their supporters, beneficiaries and funders. For social innovation to have a lasting impact, there must be deep integration and interconnection between initiatives to form a movement of transformation.

The Community-Led Innovation Pathway – Six Steps

The role of community-led innovation is to bring people together, to help them understand what is happening in their community, to determine shared values, hopes and aspirations around which they can act, to enable them to build the skills required to access the support needed to maximise their impact. At every step on the community-led innovation pathway, the aim is to build capacity in the community, to build movements of people working together and to build overarching narratives of transformation that enjoy broad community ownership and traction. The examples highlighted in this report show a clear process of how this should be done, following six fundamental steps:

1. **Open dialogue with partners:** at its simplest, this means starting a conversation to gain the trust of the residents in the local community. There is normally always a degree of suspicion within communities at the start of any community-led innovation process and this can only be overcome by building trust and empathy within these communities. Whilst the methodology for this step is straightforward – meeting with people and talking with them in open dialogue – this step is too often kept in check. By prioritising such discussions, it is possible to build strong partnerships and working relationships with a wide range of actors within communities.

2. **Research:** intensive research follows on from the initial conversations within communities. This approach combines two complementary strands: **(1) ethnographic research** undertaken by the team facilitating the overall process and **(2) participatory research** undertaken by the community with support from the facilitation team. This approach makes it possible to harness the benefits of both "insider" and "outsider" perspectives. Again, a range and variety of methods **(e.g. Building Blocks Approach)** are used to achieve a holistic understanding of people, place and inequality.

3. **Storytelling:** This is a key element of community-led innovation that connects listening and research to action. Stories are fundamental to how we all understand the world and our place in it. Through this process, it is possible to reframe and change stories to create new possibilities of positive transformations that can be achieved. Such stories can inspire people and lead to effective partnerships and collaboration.

Fundamental steps

1 | OPEN DIALOGUE WITH PARTNERS

2 | RESEARCH

3 | STORYTELLING

4 | CO-CREATION

5 | ACCELERATOR

6 | KEEPING THE MOVEMENT CONNECTED

4. **Co-Creation:** this is the 'crux'[3] of community-led innovation, as already highlighted in this article. Communities are best placed to understand, shape and identify those innovations that are likely to deliver the transformation they aspire to. Co-creation allows people in communities to direct the development of new processes, services and products, enabling people from across communities to build a deeper understanding of local needs and collectively identify new responses.

5. **Accelerator:** the innovations with the most potential need to be accelerated, providing the people leading these new innovations with ongoing support to develop and sustain them. These accelerators should concentrate on several areas, as already noted, identified as the "missing middle" of expertise in terms of supporting social entrepreneurs and innovators in their ventures. Accelerators also need to be designed from the ground up to engage a much broader audience, bringing to the fore those innovators who would otherwise be excluded. A typical accelerator would normally be delivered over a 4 to 6-month period and may consist of the following five components:

- A formal taught curriculum through several workshops over the period of the accelerator;

- Provision of coaches from the team facilitating the community-led innovation programme to work with entrepreneurs, innovators and teams and help them refine their idea;

- Provision of mentors with relevant experience of successful ventures matched to each entrepreneur, innovator or team;

- Regular opportunities to "pitch" for support from the local community as this will support longer-term sustainable community cohesion; and

- Showcase days where entrepreneurs, innovators and teams can present their ideas to a wide range of funders and investors.

4. Espiau, G. – Agirre Lehendakaria Centre & McGill University

5. *Making Waves: Amplifying the Potential of Cities and Regions Through Movement-Based Social Innovation*, Young Foundation, London (2016).

6. **Keeping the movement connected:** it is vital to establish a movement of people and organisations that can work together to further actions related to the identified narratives of transformation. Movement building is integral to every aspect of community-led innovation.

Communities are unique and multi-faceted with many complex and varied social issues. This article has stressed the importance of engaging with individuals and organizations in communities by treading lightly, listening deeply, co-creating with them and supporting community-led innovation through a flexible building blocks approach.

However, community-led innovation is not just a one-time process but a continuous repetitive cycle of transformative waves[4] that combine to create a sustainable platform for social change, as well as larger scale movement building through interconnected micro-movements. If successful community-led innovation occurs and these larger social movements gain momentum and traction, then communities will be able to combat social issues and the underlying structural inequalities to deliver the following outcomes as identified by the Young Foundation[5]:

- **Things change for everyone:** the new insights, opportunities and networks generated by the movement are not simply located within one part, sector or community but extend across a place.

- **Sweeping change is delivered:** there are real changes in how decisions about resources are taken and new voices are involved in such decision-making. Funds are controlled by local people and new voices are recognized and represented in decisions about how to distribute these resources.

- **The movement sustains itself:** while the location and nature of the movement may change within a place, the cause on which it is built does not. The movement sustains itself because, for its associates, the cause and not the form of the movement is the main priority.

- **The movement generates action:** the word movement means to create action, to go from one place to another. A movement must result in a pipeline of new ideas and innovations. Sustaining a movement means sustaining action.

Additional to these outcomes are also other benefits to communities that design and co-create effective social innovation through community-led initiatives, such as:

- Increased levels of entrepreneurship within communities and embedded community support for these entrepreneurs and their enterprises.

- Increased levels of social innovation and knowledge retained and embedded in communities through new and existing social mavens and community vanguards.

- Increased awareness among businesses of social issues and structural inequalities within their external communities, leading to more collaboration, partnerships and community-led innovation.

- Increased social and impact investment through traditional and new crowdfunding platforms, as well as renewed support from government through incentives and support.

The stage is set and the methods now in place to build these new transformative waves through new social movements driven by community-led innovation.

6

Considerations for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in Social Innovation Platforms

JOSHUA FISHER, Columbia University

In recent years there has been a shift in international aid and human development programming away from linear models based on cause and effect toward more integrated approaches that take into account the context-specific social, technical, logistical and political aspects of a target market, value chain or recipient society.

Funders and financers of development initiatives have been influential in driving this shift by changing their funding priorities, the types of projects and implementers that are funded, and their role in end-to-end project engagement. Many funders have moved away from being mere donors to a more embedded model where their involvement ranges from partners in design and co-creation to active participants in implementation, monitoring and evaluation. An interesting trend in this changing focus in the development agenda has been the rapid increase in the creation of social innovation labs in both developing and developed country contexts. This investment in innovation has been spurred by an increasing realization and understanding that today's development

challenges occur in, and are products of, the complexity of the world's social and ecological systems.

In contrast to the more traditional development approach that employs a logical framework to implement activities aimed at responding to concrete, pre-specified development objectives, the new development paradigm outlined above has a very different set of data and information requirements to enable adaptive management across a project's life cycle. Throughout development programming (traditional or within the new paradigm of complexity-oriented approaches), performance monitoring represents the keystone for monitoring, evaluation and learning.

However, the characteristics of complex systems create several "blind spots"[1] for this type of project monitoring which can inhibit the ability of the implementing team and funder to collect the data and information needed to adaptively manage a programme or development action, particularly one requiring co-creation and collective action within a complex development ecosystem.

These blind spots and shortfalls limit the usefulness of a purely performance-based approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning. Consequently, both traditional funders such as foundations and bilateral donors have focused on designing tools and methods to enhance the effectiveness of data collection across a programme's life cycle in order to provide more complete, more accurate and more timely information in order to design more appropriate intervention strategies and more responsive adaptive management as well as improving the assessment of programme effectiveness. In addition to designing complexity-aware monitoring, evaluation and learning tools, there has also been a rise in knowledge regarding good practices in the use of such tools.

Investment in social innovation platforms is increasingly sought as a development strategy by donors, governments and beneficiary communities. Recent studies have established the principals of such platforms[2] and provide compelling arguments as to why social innovation platforms are particularly suited to eliciting and stimulating new approaches to social dilemmas such as poverty, urban planning and social inclusion, women and youth participation in social, economic, and policy spaces, etc. The principals underpinning these innovation platforms include community listening to define problems and potential intervention points, the co-creation of intervention strategies by many

Blindspots

- Unanticipated or unmeasured outcomes
- Attribution dilemmas
- Multiple drivers of change
- Unobservable and non-linear changes

different stakeholders working at multiple scales of the system and leveraging unique information about the system, many concurrent interventions creating waves of transformation that resonate and amplify across a system, and the new role taken on by donors and funders as active stakeholders in the system rather than passive supporters of change. Whereas complex systems are inherently unpredictable and subject to endogenous and exogenous shocks across different levels in the system, social innovation platforms enhance the connectivity of interventions that are both informed by and responsive to such system dynamics.

Because development ecosystems are unpredictable, the challenge for social innovation platforms is to design monitoring, evaluation and learning platforms that can collect and integrate a wide range of data from different sources at different timescales to enable many different interventions to nimbly and deftly respond to changes as these are produced by an intervention or occur exogenously. In their brief on complexity-aware monitoring, USAID[3] describes three sets of good practices that can enable more effective implementation of development programming in complex environments.

The first good practice is intuitive, namely designing monitoring, evaluation and learning strategies to account for the blind spots described above. In other words, a good practice for complexity-aware evaluation includes a variety of methods for data collection and analysis across the project's life cycle. This

starts with a project design informed by multiple types of information about the system and stakeholders and includes a range of strategies for data collection and analysis throughout the implementation and final evaluation. Importantly, such data collection and analysis should seek to triangulate data sources in order to deepen the implementation teams' understanding of the system's dynamics in order to better understand how change happens in a system.

The second good practice involves synchronizing monitoring, evaluation and learning with the rate of change (or rates of change) in the development context. Non-linear dynamics were discussed earlier in terms of how there can be a delay between the action taken during implementation and the subsequent change becoming visible. Such delays can be due to existing and emerging dynamics in the operating context. The rate of change will fluctuate across a programme's life cycle and responsive programmes will adapt their monitoring (performance, context and complementary) to conserve resources and utilize them effectively. It will take time for an implementation team to refine its ability to sense changes in the need for and availability of relevant information, particularly in programmes designed via a social innovation platform. However, this is a critical skill for such programmes to become responsive to exogenous and endogenous dynamics in the ecosystem.

Finally, the third good practice recommended for a complexity-aware intervention is to create monitoring, evaluation and learning strategies that inform programmes regarding the interrelationships between actors and factors in the development ecosystem, that provide deep and transparent insight into each actor's perspective regarding the intervention, the interrelationships and the changes occurring in the system and, finally, that continue to focus on the system's boundaries in order to direct energy and resources towards relevant factors and dynamics. In terms of the interrelationships, it was noted earlier that a system's dynamics are produced by interaction between social, physical, economic, and political actors and factors.

A change in the system will change these relationships and the dynamics they produce. It is therefore critical to understand how these relationships are changing and evolving over time. Importantly, as these relationships change, the actors' views of themselves and others will change at the same time as the visibility, funding, power and prestige evolve among the actors in the ecosystem. Understanding how each actor perceives such changes is essential to prevent marginalization, disenfranchisement and other negative and potentially detrimental impacts. This is critical in order to maintain constructive working relationships and cooperation among stakeholders.

The characteristics of complex systems create several "blind spots" which can inhibit the ability to collect the data and information needed to adaptively manage a programme or development action

Finally, the boundaries of a development ecosystem need to be explicit so that both factors and actors in the system are identifiable. While such boundaries can change and evolve over time, understanding where they are can focus monitoring, evaluation and learning to refine the intervention(s) with relevant information.

For interventions that seek to catalyze social innovation, a complexity-aware approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning is critically important throughout the entire programme's life cycle. Such an approach should seek to collect and analyze information on different scales of change in the development ecosystem, including the following:

- Who are the stakeholders in the system and how do they define the different social development challenges that are relevant to them?

- What interventions are co-created and which of the development challenges identified are they seeking to address?

- What are the baseline conditions in the ecosystem that are relevant to the challenges identified in terms of the individual characteristics of each stakeholder (including implementers and funders) and environmental or economic factors? What are the baseline interrelationships among stakeholders and factors? How does each stakeholder perceive these relationships and what is external to the development ecosystem that could impact or be impacted by such interventions?

- How are relationships and structures changing over time as a result of endogenous and exogenous shocks? What unintended and unobserved changes are occurring?

- At a macro level, what can be learned from changes across interventions/ programmes? Are there meta lessons to be learned regarding how change happens in development ecosystems?

A monitoring, evaluation and learning system that is responsive to these information and analytical requirements will need to include a variety of performance monitoring techniques, complemented by more sophisticated strategies and methods for overcoming the blind spots described earlier. However, with this new conception of the role of monitoring and evaluation as essential for real-time, responsive programme management, and the new conception of the role played by implementers, funders and beneficiaries as stakeholders with access to and responsibility for various types of information, the burden of monitoring and evaluation can shift from a costly responsibility to an essential programme management strategy that also adds value.

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Funding SDG Innovation Platforms

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The 2030 Agenda contains challenges that cannot be addressed exclusively with additional injections of capital, although such capital is essential. It also requires doing things differently, replicating new forms of collaboration that strengthen a true global alliance for sustainable development, as reflected in the SDGs. Because of their collaborative nature, the construction of "SDG Platforms" is a joint creation that can only be achieved through the strategic commitment of organizations and people with the capacity to work in open schemes, to take risks and invest effort in a plan with a long-term collective impact.

However, in our experience this approach requires at least one instigating Funding Organization (FO) whose role is crucial, especially in the early stages. This role involves carrying out one or more of the functions explained below. But before we do that, we should point out that it is difficult for an FO to take on all these functions at the same time, using its own resources and capacities. Sometimes it can be assisted by partner organizations that can take on some functions for which the FO does not have the resources or appropriate expertise, such as universities, research and innovation centres or social innovation organizations.

Selection of the platform members

An "SDG platform" needs to incorporate those organizations with influence on the diagnosis and management of the problem, as well as in the integration of potential solution pathways arising from the platform itself. This is a necessary condition in order to reduce barriers to adopting innovations and thereby achieve subsequent scalability. In particular, when dealing with platforms that address situations of poverty, we must bear in mind that "not leaving anyone behind", as advocated by the 2030 Agenda, requires the platform to

be able to accommodate the participation of the most vulnerable groups, whose ideas and perspectives must be included in the processes of collective interpretation and co-creation.

Convening

But who will do the inviting? Who is suitable? Who does the idea appeal to? Acting on a platform may not be agreeable to a large majority of organizations that are used to operating via the "traditional approach". In fact, the accounts of platforms themselves often give rise to mistrust, as they are a concept which is too open and lacking in rules to clearly equip both the financers and the financed with a strict framework to divide up functions and for arbitration in the case of conflict. Consequently, an "SDG platform" cannot be a network that has been spontaneously or randomly put together; the composition of its members is a crucial aspect of the design and must therefore be carefully carried out by its promoters. In other words, an "SDG platform" will not function as such if it does not secure the involvement of the key actors in the system in which it operates.

FOs operate two types of incentives; financial resources and also their own reputation and credibility, since they perceived as "major players" by the organizations to which they traditionally allocate their financing. It may be necessary to employ both incentives intelligently in order to ensure the platform attracts and incorporates, while it is being set up, those organizations need to ensure the required diversity of actors and voices.

Facilitation

"SDG problems" concern many different actors (people, organizations, public entities), each of which has their own views, interests and values. Any solution pathways to be explored will therefore require their consensus. As a result, the processes of deliberation and justification over the course of initiatives are vital for their success. Conceptually, these situations can be characterized as "cooperative, multi-personal, non-zero-sum games". The facilitating team, be it an organization or a person, plays a crucial role which is recognized by the parties in such situations.

One of the assets to be generated by "SDG platforms" would therefore be to have a set of "facilitating" professionals that can assist the various initiatives of the platform, providing the actors with training and guiding the processes of convergence and consensus.

Financial and institutional risk

"SDG platforms" are multifactor organizational spaces designed to promote innovative transformation processes. As we have seen, they must therefore create the appropriate conditions to assess and reframe "SDG problems", and generate ongoing processes of co-creation, prototyping and demonstration.

On the one hand, the FO can indicate to the platform that it is willing to finance actions from the realm of the "not obvious"; that allow for the exploration and piloting of new possibilities based on the collective intelligence generated by the platform itself. On the other hand, they can develop methods to flexibly assign the financial resources to the changing needs of the platform's projects (which are interconnected) and cross-learning processes. The knowledge thus generated will create new investment opportunities and allow other, initially promising possibilities to be ruled out. This will reduce the gap between the financing process and the evolutionary process of the problem.

FO representatives are often aware of this necessity and, in any case, consider it unfeasible due to a lack of suitable instruments and procedures. This is especially common in public FOs with very rigid procedures for allocating resources. Modifying these procedures can take years and depends on major reforms of public administrations.

Collective impact evaluation

Many projects, such as those promoted by the FOs addressed in this article,

that are reliant on subsidies and grants end up languishing and, although originally based on good ideas, they peter out simply because the financing ends and the FO withdraws. Often, this does not mean that financing has been inadequate; rather the financer only provides administrative and financial support within a limited framework and is not able to provide a genuine integrating and strategic impetus.

This is a recurring problem which has been examined in full. The treatment usually prescribed is to invest more in the evaluation, so that the best projects and best ideas can be identified and selected and their continuity ensured. However, evaluating "project by project" is too expensive and the management response (i.e. the capacity of organisations to incorporate what has been learned) almost always underestimates the internal barriers and resistance to change.

Looking at systems

It could be said that "SDG platforms" are spaces that invite us to look more closely into SDG problems and their complex nature, rather than adopting a solution that may be too simple or too hasty. However, it is important to emphasize that looking more closely into a problem is not merely a discursive or analytical process but often carried out by means of prototypes and experiments that help to discover the different aspects of the problem and how these are interrelated.

Management practices

All of the above means that the FOs need to innovate in their own organisation and management forms. They need to stop being, exclusively, entities that manage resources, in order to become promoters of transformation processes; shifting their position with respect to the financed organisations.

This would mean they would abandon the classic standard of the transactional relationship ("I finance, you provide accountability and show results") and move towards a system of mutual reciprocity and association ("each of us allocates resources and complementary capacities; we take risks and share successes together"). It should be obvious that a change of this nature entails reducing the predominance of the role the FOs have traditionally held in the development programmes in order to, simultaneously, increase the role it plays as a partner and promoter of initiatives.

Collaboration between platforms

The initiatives we have characterised as "SDG platforms" are very recent and are just beginning their journey. Connection and collaboration between such platforms will help to strengthen them. On the one hand, it will encourage the exchange of methods and experiences, helping to systemize and propagate them. On the other hand, platforms can collaborate in order to coordinate their aims and increase the impact at higher system levels, focusing on far-reaching "missions". Lastly, platforms can also collaborate with a view to validating the concept itself. The development community is highly susceptible to the emergence of trends which, every so often, seek to revitalize the international scene with the promise of having found the "missing ingredient". A platform approach for the SDGs does not provide a prescription nor, as stated above, can it be administered as a new methodology. It is an innovative organizational approach that is suitable for addressing "SDG problems" and compatible with other approaches, which invites all actors, and in particular FOs, to embrace the inherent complexity and employ large amounts of collaboration and collective intelligence.

This article has drawn attention to the need for the actors involved in the transformation towards the SDGs to increase, through more genuine and profound collaboration, the probability of bringing about systemic changes. In particular, financing organizations (FOs) play a key role in encouraging new approaches and new relations between actors, promoting and financing more diverse environments of collective interpretation and listening, which are the essential foundations for bringing about innovations with a social impact.

The platform approach increases uncer tainty and risk, necessitates significant cultural changes in FOs and it requires the "art" of ecosystem and network management to be developed

This task is not an easy one but neither is it impossible. Some pioneering FOs have already begun to show that they can shift positions, diluting their traditionally dominant role in order to become facilitators and promoters of ecosystems of change and transformation, which we have here called "SDG Platforms". Today, most FOs do not want to limit themselves to their traditional role of being mere fund managers. Proof of this is the mantra, repeated so often in conversations with top level FO management, albeit sometimes expressed in different words: "we do not want to be considered exclusively as a source of financial resources; we want to be partners and be involved in the projects". We must recognize that the platform approach increases uncertainty and risk, necessitates significant cultural changes in FOs and it requires the "art" of ecosystem and network management to be developed, an art not usually taught to managers of such organizations. However, when this is achieved, all the evidence suggests that "virtuous circles" can be created.

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