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Definition and Theory in Social Innovation
The theory of social innovation and international approaches

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Abstract

Social innovation is a term used globally to describe and identify quite different activities. While it is a term that everyone likes to use, precisely what it refers to is not always clear. This paper explores different definitional approaches or intentions –legitimating, theoretical, action-reflection, broad and distinctive– and considers why a definition of social innovation is important and what the crucial ingredients, informed more by practice than theory, might be. Following lessons learnt from postmodernity and critical theory, social marketing, democracy, governance and social entrepreneurship, we arrive at a definition that is value-laden, distinctive and focused -from inception to impact -on equality, justice and empowerment.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Although social innovation has become a widely known term, little is known about the requirements an innovation has to fulfill in order to be a social innovation and distinguish itself from other types of innovation. One of the most important and recent collective efforts to pursue the expansion and definition of the term is contained in the Vienna Declaration, the main achievement of the 2011 Challenge Social Innovation Conference. The Vienna Declaration promotes social innovation as an urgent alternative to technology-oriented innovations that fail to solve the problems that arose moving from an industrial to a knowledge and service based society. According to the declaration, "such fundamental societal changes require the inclusion of social innovations in a paradigm shift of the innovation system" (Vienna Declaration, 2011).

The Vienna Declaration addresses the major societal challenges identified by the Europe 2020 strategy, which requires social innovation in the fields of unemployment, climate change, education, poverty and social exclusion. This paper proposes a definition of social innovation focused on the social as opposed to the technological and elaborates on the distinctive elements that an innovation has to fulfill in order to be considered social or qualify for the definition of social innovation.

The research questions that guide this paper are: What is social innovation? Why do we need to distinguish between social and other forms of innovation? What are the components of the definition that will allow us to distinguish social innovation from other types of innovation? What can we learn from other areas that deal with social issues or from concepts that are also very broad? How do we come to a definition? Does practice inform theory or does theory inform practice? Finally what do we (as a working group) understand when we talk about social innovation?

The need for an answer to these questions arose as a result of discussion between participants enrolled in the Master of Arts in Social Innovation (Danube University Krems) of which three are the authors of this paper. We believe that it is our obligation or at least our concern, as the first cohort of this program, to come to an agreement on a clear definition or idea of what social innovation is and is not. We will consider current definitions of social innovation and also of other fields including social marketing, social entrepreneurship, democracy and governance. It should be noted that we present a working definition, which means it is still in progress, evolving, dynamic and open to refinement.

Despite the fact that our social and national contexts are very different from each other (the authors of this paper are Mexican and Australian), the common fact that we work with vulnerable groups in our countries, set the path for a more 'socially' oriented and distinctive definition. The result is a definition that is focused on compelling social problems and equally compelling social values. The urgency of addressing these compelling social problems calls for new and decisive solutions (innovations) that have both the intent and effect of equality, justice and empowerment.

Chapter 2 - Current Conversations Regarding Social Innovation

While definitions of social innovation abound: "we have to admit that social innovation currently is a term that everyone likes, but a precise and broadly accepted definition is still missing" (Franz, Hochgerner & Howaldt, 2012, p.383). The multitude and variety of definitions and theories of social

innovation is confirmed by numerous academics. For example – "there is lack of a universally accepted definition of social innovation and ambiguity surrounds the term" (de Bruin 2012, p.373); "there is no single, exhaustive, or accepted definition of social innovation. Moreover the recent success of the notion and its mainstreaming in policy discourse has paradoxically emptied it of its innovative dimension, exposing it to the concrete danger of becoming hollow – or, worse, instrumental – rhetoric" (Martinelli, 2012, p.171); "social innovation is a term that is used prolifically and, increasingly, with no particular meaning attached to it" (Harrisson, 2012, p.73); and "despite the growing popularity of the topic, there is still widespread uncertainty regarding what social innovations are, how they come into being, and what can be expected of them" (Hochgerner, 2012, p.91). The apparent fact that nobody is quite sure what social innovation means has not inhibited numerous definitions being put forward.

For the purpose of this analysis we propose several different (yet overlapping) ways to categorize in broad terms current definitions of social innovation. We propose three broad categories: purpose, focus, and nature.

2.1 Categorizing Definitions by Purpose

While it would be risky to attempt to categorize all definitions currently in use by identifying their purpose and possibly offend many in the process, some categorization can be made when considering the purpose definitions have, whether implicit or explicit, as follows:

2.1.1 Legitimating Definitions

Legitimating definitions seek to legitimate what is being defined for a particular audience and purpose. This may be within the political, academic, policy or financial sectors for a variety of reasons, more often than not to obtain approval from those in power and invariably in order to attract support and funds. In this approach the 'new' is legitimated by identifying its embeddedness within or relationship to an accepted existing 'legitimate' definition or paradigm.

2.1.2 Theoretical Definitions

Theoretical definitions are those developed by academics for academics. They attempt to derive a definition form theoretical premises and a consistent or logical set of arguments. They generate volumes of articles, encourage debate, but remain primarily a discourse among academics. Theoretical definitions are understood by those involved in the discourse, as having intrinsic value in themselves and it is of little concern whether or not they have any material value or produce anything more than discourse. Theoretical definitions may have some intersection with society in general but that is not their intention.

2.1.3 Action-Reflection Definitions

Action-reflection definitions are derived from observation on practice in the first place and then refined in an ongoing manner when further reflection of practice takes place (Schön, 1983). As such these types of definitions may be more dynamic and mirror the Hegelian dialectic: 'thesis – antithesis – synthesis' (see for example McTaggart & McTaggart, 2011), refining the definition as more knowledge is acquired through observation and reflection. The purpose of these definitions is

to identify and describe what is in practice, and how it is evolving in practice, rather than to provide a static definition that legitimates or is more purely theoretical.

2.1.4 Narrow Definitions

Narrow definitions attempt to clarify what is not within the ambit of the definition and what is. These definitions identify the distinct factors or aspects of what is being defined in order to clearly mark out its differences to other similar or competing definitions. Narrow definitions clearly identify what the definition does not include and what it does include. For example the discussion in the 2010 *Empowering People Driving Change* paper on definitions of social innovation draws the distinction between 'narrow' and 'broad' definitions as it considers various definitional approaches (Hubert et al, 2010, pp.31-52).

While there are overlapping aspects across these definitional approaches it can be argued that definitions generally locate themselves within one of these particular approaches.

2.2 Categorizing Definitions by Focus

Additionally we propose that definitions can be categorized by their particular focus under the following broad approaches:

- Definitions that focus on the noun 'innovation' and frame their definitions within the theoretical framework of innovation or innovation systems;
- Definitions that focus on the adjective 'social' and frame their definitions within the theoretical framework of the social sciences;
- Definitions that focus on both adjective and noun 'social innovation' and frame their definitions within the framework of practice, intention, and outcomes focused on addressing social challenges for the benefit of society.

2.2.1 Noun 'Innovation'

These definitions focus on the noun 'innovation' and frame their definitions within the theoretical framework of innovation or innovation systems.

The focus of this approach in defining social innovation argues for a "paradigm shift of the innovation system", corresponding to and driven by the transition from an industrial to a knowledge and services based society. This approach argues that there is "less necessity to justify social innovation *in addition to* innovation than to change the general concept of innovation to become more inclusive and comprehensive" (Hochgerner, 2012, p.92). This approach broadly utilizes the theoretical framework developed by Schumpeter in his theory of economic development (Schumpeter, 1976).

This approach appears to be reflected in the work of Degelsegger and Kesselring (2012) who "propose to conceptualize social innovation as a new paradigm of innovation management, research and assessment rather than being considered a distinct form of innovation in itself". This proposition is based on the thesis that:

'Social' is not a criterion that would allow to differentiate social innovation from economic or technological innovation. All innovations are social processes of interaction and communication [...] Furthermore, all innovation outputs - from the washing machine to the mobile phone – potentially have social outcomes and impacts (Degelsegger & Kesselring, 2012, p.70).

This approach proposes more broadly that all innovations have social effects, and accordingly innovation theory needs a new paradigm to reflect this, rather than attempting to find a distinctive definition for social innovation.

2.2.2 Adjective 'Social'

These definitions focus on the adjective 'social' and frame their definitions within the theoretical framework of the social sciences.

The major focus in defining social innovation within the theoretical framework of the social sciences appears to be focused on distinguishing social innovation from other forms of innovation – in particular 'economic' and 'technological' innovations – arguing that social innovation is more than a "mere requirement, side effect and result of technical innovation" (Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010, p.8).

As Howaldt and Kopp argue: "social innovations understood as innovations of social practices, are [...] an elementary part of sociology, and therefore – in contrast to technological innovations – can be not only analyzed, but also engendered and

(co-)shaped: they are oriented towards social practice and require reflection on the social relationship structure" (Howaldt & Kopp, 2012, p.48). This approach identifies the difference between social and technological innovations referring to the former at the level of social practice and the latter as technical artifacts. The conclusion is that:

a social innovation is a new combination and/or new configuration of social practices in certain areas of action or social contexts prompted by certain actors or constellations of actors in an intentional targeted manner with the goal of better satisfying or answering needs and problems than is possible on the basis of established practices (Howaldt & Kopp, 2012, p.47).

2.2.3 Adjective and Noun 'Social Innovation'

These definitions focus on both adjective and noun 'social innovation' and frame their definitions within the framework of practice, intention, and outcomes focused on addressing social challenges for the benefit of society.

A definition focused on practice, intention, and outcomes addressing social challenges, was originally developed by Robin Murray, Julie Caulier-Grice, and Geoff Mulgan in *The Handbook of Social Innovation* (Murray et.al., 2010, p.3). This definition was slightly refined by Agnes Hubert et.al. within the European context as follows: "specifically, we define social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than

alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society's capacity to act" (Hubert et.al., 2010, p.9).

In a different context Pol and Ville, following an analysis of several different approaches to defining the term social innovation, note that overall, existing definitions overwhelmingly revolve around new ideas "conducive to human welfare enhancement", and utilizing this as a defining characteristic suggest the following definition: "an innovation is termed a social innovation if the implied new idea has the potential to improve either the quality or the quantity of life" (Pol and Ville, 2009, p.881).

A more direct focus on social outcomes defined by the practice, intention, and outcomes of social justice is apparent in the definition proposed by Flavia Martinelli:

[...] 'social innovation' as opposed to other narrower notions of innovation, is characterized by the following features:

- It contributes to *satisfy human needs* that would otherwise be ignored;
- It contributes to *empower individuals and groups*;
- It contributes to *change social relations* (Martinelli 2012, p.172) [Italics hers].

Thus, and differently from the 'economic' focus of Schumpeterian innovation, where innovations are geared to gain competitiveness and market reach, the distinctive aim of social innovation defined above is *social justice* or *social cohesion*, through innovation in processes (intention) as much as content (Martinelli, 2012, p.171).

The Stanford Social Innovation Review developed a further example of a definition focused on intention and outcome. This defined social innovation as "a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals" (Phills et al. cited in Hubert et. Al., 2010, p.34-35).

In similar vein Hochgerner suggests "social innovations are new concepts and measures that are accepted by impacted social groups and are applied to overcome social challenges" (Hochgerner cited in Howaldt & Swarz, 2010, p.23).

Other definitions are more explicit with regard to the distinctive focus of social innovation achieving an outcome for the benefit of society – for example: social innovations are components of social change that are "explicitly oriented towards socially esteemed goals" (Gillwald cited in Howaldt & Swarz, 2010, p.25) and "only when an idea for resolving a social problem (in the sense of regulating social affairs) is practiced and recognized can one speak of social innovation" (Kesselring/Leitner cited in Howaldt & Swarz, 2010, p.25-26).

2.3 Categorizing Definitions by Nature

Finally definitions within each of the approaches identified above can also be categorized by their nature as either broad or distinctive.

2.3.1 Broad Definitions

Broad definitions expand the notion of social innovation to include activity across a range of sectors and varying levels of society. For example an innovation typology developed by Harvey Brooks includes market innovations (such as leasing), management innovations (such as new working hour arrangements), political innovations (such as summit meetings) and institutional innovations (such as self-help groups) all under the definitional label of 'social innovations' (Brookes cited in Howaldt & Swarz, 2010, p.22).

Other examples of broad definitions include:

- "Social innovation may be considered any activity that expands the capability to act (of parts or the whole of society), and enables or leads to concrete action" (Hochgerner, 2012, p.91);
- "The new innovation paradigm is essentially characterized by the opening of the innovation process to society. Alongside companies, universities and research institutes, citizens and customers become relevant actors of innovation processes [...] innovation becomes a general social phenomenon and increasingly influences all walks of life" (Franz, Hochgerner & Howaldt 2012, p.380);
- "Social innovation is a complex process of introducing new products, processes or programs that profoundly change the basic routines, resource and authority flows, or beliefs of the social system in which the innovation occurs. Such successful social innovations have durability and broad impact" (Westley & Antadze, 2012, p.2);
- "Society develops and breeds social innovations in forms of new practices, institutions, 'rites, techniques, customs, manners and mores', plus technology and technological innovations. Any of these varied innovations is socially relevant, and all are created and produced by societal actors from many walks of life, not only in science and business – even though these areas of human activity are most crucial for innovation on the one hand, yet also eminently dependent on innovation on the other hand" (Hochgerner, 'Preface' in Howaldt & Swarz 2010, p.4).

2.3.2 Distinctive Definitions

Distinctive definitions of social innovation focus more sharply on innovations that address social needs and focus on social justice outcomes. In these focused definitions social justice or emancipatory outcomes – the improvement of human wellbeing - are not implicit but explicit within the process of differentiating social innovation from other types of innovations. For example Flavia Martinelli's approach noted above has a clear focus on 'aim' or 'intention' and 'effect' – social justice and social cohesion. This approach is mirrored – although in a more muted manner - in the BEPA and Young Foundation's definitions identified above where the good of society is a fundamental outcome or effect of a social innovation. This suggests implicitly (but not explicitly) that social innovations that are bad for society are not social innovations within the focus of these definitions.

Other examples include:

- "Social innovation is new responses to pressing social demands, which affect the process of social interactions. It is aimed at improving human wellbeing" (Stiglitz cited in Hubert et.al., 2010 p.33);
- "Social innovation is innovation inspired by the desire to meet social needs which can be neglected by traditional forms of private market provision and which have often been poorly served or unresolved by services organized by the state" (NESTA cited in Hubert et.al., 2010 p.37).

Some definitions of social innovation have specifically identified a certain social issue that they want to address within a specific context. An example is the definition provided by the Center for Social Innovation of the National Agency to Overcome Extreme Poverty (ANSPE) in Colombia. They define social innovation as solutions (products, services, practices or management models) that are sustainable in the long run and that, when implemented, prove to be more efficient and have a greater impact on the existent solutions to improve the quality of life of people living in extreme poverty (ANSPE). This definition is highly distinctive and focuses only on one social issue given the nature of its promoter; however, it demonstrates how the term can be adjusted to the specific objectives or goals of the definer.

Another definition that targets the specific issue of poverty is provided by Maria Clara Couto Soares of the University of Rio de Janeiro, who explains that social innovation is "a process of societal change that does not only improve the living conditions, but also promotes new ways of social organization. It establishes a path for the uprising of new social actors and does not treat the fight against poverty and inequality as a residual fact but as a priority" (Couto, 2012). In this sense, both definitions do not only make use of innovation to target a specific problem, rather they also turn this problem into the core notion of what 'social' means. Although the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) does not define social innovation *per se*, it does recognize that there are social innovations going on within the region that transform social practices on areas such as health, education, income and vulnerable groups. This could mean that – regardless of the lack of a specific definition - it also identifies certain problems as those that concern social innovation.

Finally, the project *Ciudadanía 2.0* (Citizenship 2.0) created by the Ibero-American General Secretary (SEGIB) employs the term 'citizen innovation' which they understand as the "active participation of citizens in innovative initiatives that seek to transform social reality through the use of digital technologies, with the purpose of achieving a greater social inclusion" (Ciudadanía 2.0, 2013, p.2). This definition is specifically focused on the use of digital technologies because the project is designed to promote social innovation through the use of these technologies; however, regardless of this specification, it also includes the issue of social inclusion.

These definitions have a distinctive contextual embodiment. They focus on a specific social challenge and shape their definition of social innovation accordingly. There appear to be a plethora of definitions informing different theoretical and practical approaches to social innovation. Analysis of the various definitions suggests they can be categorized in a number of ways reflecting a variety of starting assumptions, contexts and theoretical disciplines. Given such a variety of definitions exist we consider whether in fact we need a definition of social innovation at all.

Chapter 3 - Do we Need a Definition of Social Innovation?

As discussed definitions of social innovation abound, a precise and agreed definition of the term does not exist. While we favor action over analysis and want to avoid 'death by definition' and getting caught up in complex conversations regarding terminology, there are a number of reasons why it is important to agree on a definition of social innovation.

3.1 Facilitating Effective Practice

Social innovation is an activity – a practice. Without being clear about what exactly we are seeking to practice, it becomes very difficult to practice it! A clear definition allows for analysis and understanding of the methods that are most effective in generating results, and an understanding of exactly what the expected results should be. When there is lack of reliable knowledge about common success factors and inhibitors, it becomes harder for social innovators to be effective, and it becomes impossible to measure whether a particular activity is a social innovation or something else.

Without a clear definition, the concept becomes vulnerable to misuse. This introduces ethics into the process of defining social innovation (to which we will return in our discussion below). For example, under a broad and all-inclusive definition of social innovation, MacDonald's could be considered a social innovation given it altered social practices and has had massive social effects, despite the fact that it contributes to the poor health of millions of people around the world. This contradicts many of the definitions that focus on enhanced wellbeing as a result or effect of social innovation (examples of which are noted above). Clarity assists in determining what fits within a defined activity and what does not – thereby enabling effective practice.

3.2 Facilitating Effective Training

A definition sets the parameters for training and education. Without a clear understanding of what the parameters of a field of study are, educational content will differ between institutions and potentially become confusing and diluted. For example, the definition of social innovation proposed by Westley and Antadze suggests that for a social innovation to qualify as a social innovation, the resulting change must be systemic (Westley & Antadze, 2010, p.2), whereas Hubert et.al., propose that social innovations resulting in systemic change are only one of three types of social innovation (the other two being grassroots social innovations and societal innovations) (Hubert et.al., 2011, p.9). Teaching how to design and implement social innovations using the framework proposed by Westley and Antadze rather than Hubert et.al., would omit broader based options and focus more narrowly on innovations that result in systemic change. Progress depends on comprehension (Luck, 1974, p.70), and comprehension can only be achieved when practitioners and academics alike understand what sits within and outside the definition of social innovation.

3.3 Attracting and Inspiring New Social Innovators

Progress in any field depends largely on the motivation of people to engage with it (Luck, 1974, p.70). A clear understanding of what social innovation involves (as opposed to a term that everyone likes, but no one really understands) will allow for effective promotion of the discipline. Social innovation needs an 'elevator pitch' to inspire others to become involved and facilitate dialogue

between sectors. It's difficult to feel passionate about a particular career path or opportunity for collaboration when you're not entirely sure what's involved or what it is. For example, Nussbaumer and Moulaert define social innovation as both macro and micro, structural and local with a focus on introducing an entrepreneurial organizational structure (Nussbaumer & Moulaert, 2007, p.31 cited in Hubert et.al. 2010). In contrast, the definition proposed by Kahle and Ernst suggests that social innovations can only occur in low-income economies and must generate value to both society and the initiating organization (Kahle and Ernst, 2011, p.9). This ambiguity suggests that at best, those interested in social innovation and its development will be entering it with different expectations of what it will involve and will be working towards different outcomes (further fragmenting the field), and at worst, the lack of clarity will deter people from becoming involved as they will disengage.

3.4 Directing Resources Effectively

As Geoff Mulgan (Mulgan, 2006 p.7) argues, lack of knowledge of what social innovation is and is not, impedes many institutions, individual philanthropists, foundations and governments with an interest in social innovation, the outcome of which is reliance on anecdotes and hunches. Without an understanding of what is, and what is not, social innovation, it becomes difficult for interested parties to know where and how to best to direct resources to effectively grow the social innovation field. For example, those interested in funding social innovation would benefit from a clear definition that guides appropriate investment.

3.5 Enabling Useful Academic Research

It is impossible to effectively research a field of study without knowing what sits within that field and what sits outside it. Without a common understanding of what constitutes social innovation, researchers may find themselves conducting research into entirely different versions of social innovation, resulting in findings that cannot be compared or combined. Indeed the very debate as to whether social innovation is distinct from the field of social sciences or innovation more broadly can only be concluded when social innovation is clearly defined.

There are numerous definitions informing different theoretical and practical approaches to social innovation. This creates confusion, dilutes the term and renders the field of social innovation both as an academic discussion and a practice open to misuse and misappropriation. Hence we conclude that a definition of social innovation is required and that a definition will provide clarity to what is currently a diverse and somewhat confusing plethora of approaches. Given this conclusion we will now consider the crucial ingredients in a definition of social innovation.

Chapter 4 - What are the Crucial Ingredients in a Definition of Social Innovation?

We propose that definitions of social innovation need to be distinctive and developed through the lens of practice within society, lest they become a 'catch-all' that dissolves their meaning and reduces them to empty rhetoric. Adopting an action-reflection approach that leads to a distinctive definition of social innovation provides the platform from which we can determine the crucial ingredients of the term social innovation. This approach does not seek to legitimate the activity of social innovation (for some it will always be identified as a threat), or to develop a theoretical definition within traditional scholarship for academics alone. It is grounded in the 'social' – that is society and its organization.

Grounding the definition in society and how society organizes itself takes one immediately into the realm of values. The social dimension is the lived dimension – what takes place between people, communities, and nations, not just what takes place between those who read academic journals. This in turn has immediate implications for the legitimating and theoretical approaches discussed above. As Terry Eagleton points out "with some honorable exceptions, traditional scholarship has for centuries ignored the everyday life of the common people. Indeed, it was life itself it used to ignore" (Eagleton, 2003, p.4). This he argues raises serious ethical issues for western research when "half the world's population lacks adequate sanitation and survives on less than two dollars a day" (Eagleton, 2003, p.6).

4.1 Lessons from Postmodernity and Critical Theory

The crucial ingredients of any definition will inevitably be identified, consciously or unconsciously, by the interests of the definer, the purpose of the definition, and the audience for whom the definition is being developed.

It is now well recognized in the sciences, the social sciences and the humanities that value-neutral objective 'scientific' theorizing, leading to value-neutral definitions or truth claims is a myth (see for example Berger & Luckman, 1966; Rorty, 1989; Cosgrove, 2004; Eagleton, 2003). Critical theory[1] has unmasked value-neutrality and provided us with a set of critical tools that assist in identifying values and assumptions at the core of definitions and truth claims. Definitions are developed with a purpose and an audience in mind. Definitions are value-laden and serve a purpose identified by the definer or the community of definers. The tricky business of exploring definitions as value-laden artifacts is that those who are the definers often do not assume or state their value-laden assumptions up front, and many still assume some type of scientific objectivity in arriving at their definitions.

Acknowledging that the crucial ingredients of any definition will inevitably be identified, consciously or unconsciously, by the interests of the definer, the purpose of the definition, and the audience for whom the definition is being developed, the social embodiment of 'social' innovation takes us inevitably into the realm of ethics and values. We do not live value-neutral lives, and ethically need to foreground our interests lest we assume we are the proponents of scientific value-neutral verified facts.

A consideration of the ethics and values of social innovation necessarily requires a robust consideration of 'good' and 'bad' – or if one prefers 'good' and 'not-good'. Postmodern theorizing, or theorizing in the era of 'second modernity' (Harrison, 2012, p.74) has overwhelmingly rejected anything 'normative', calling into question categories of 'good' and meta-narratives that traditionally have been the source of values (Eagleton, 2003, p.15). This has directly influenced many scholars who reject normative statements or claims. The term normative is used generally as it is applied in philosophy, the social sciences and ethics. All three disciplines generally agree that *normative* statements make claims about how things should or ought to be, how to value them, which things

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[1] Critical theory has its historical foundations in the Frankfurt School and is generally recognized in its first phase through the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, and its second phase through the works of Jürgen Habermas (for a broad analysis of the wider application of critical theory across a range of disciplines see Tyson 2006)

are good or bad, and which actions are right or wrong. Normative statements are usually contrasted to descriptive statements that attempt an empirical investigation of people's moral beliefs. For example descriptive ethics would be concerned with determining what proportion of people believe that killing is always wrong, while normative ethics is concerned with whether it is correct to hold such a belief or take such an action. Normative statements are generally now contested in postmodern theory, given the plurality and deconstruction of worldviews and the assumption that values are irreducibly contextual and therefore valueless (for example Rorty 1989).

Analysis of current definitions of social innovation reveals a resistance to normative statements – especially within the central European approaches. The inclusion of an intended outcome or effect of a social innovation as a crucial or qualifying aspect of its definition is contested by a number of scholars in this tradition. For example Howaldt and Schwarz state: "we believe that attempting to provide a distinct definition of social innovation normatively is problematic" (Howaldt & Schwarz 2010, p.26) concluding "the commonly found normative link between social innovation and socially esteemed values overlooks the fact that different purposes and interests can indeed be pursued with a social innovation depending on the related utility and prevailing rationale. These accordingly have to be regarded as 'good' per se in the sense of being socially desirable, depending on interests and social attribution in order to be called social innovation – "there is no inherent goodness in social innovation" (Lindhult 2008, p.44), their utility or effects can also be ambivalent depending on a point of view, just as with technical innovations" (Howaldt & Schwarz 2010, p.27).

This view is further reflected by Hochgerner:

> when analyzing the outcomes of social innovations it is of the utmost importance not to get caught in the trap of normative prejudice [on the basis that] what may appear 'social' (beneficial) to one group, at a given time, in a certain social strata or region, may prove irrelevant or even detrimental to others [and that] analysts as well as promoters of social innovations must not assume social innovations ought to be 'social' in the simplistic sense of 'good' (Hochgerner, 2012, p.100).

Although not stated explicitly, one could assume that social innovations stripped of any normative 'goodness' can be and are possibly bad for society and the common good. This does not appear to be a stated conclusion, as generally the consensus of this approach is that it is 'desirable' for the effect or outcomes of a social innovation to be for the good of society and the common good.

Critical theories, significantly critical social theories, provide a platform to critically analyze social innovations (both in theory and in practice) that are contingent and open-ended in terms of their *effect* on society.

Critical theory is oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding or explaining it. Critical social theory as a form of self-reflective knowledge involves analysis of the social dimension in order to expose systems of domination or entrapment in systems of dependence with a declared emancipatory interest.

According to Max Horkheimer (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1969) a critical theory is adequate only if it meets three criteria: it must be explanatory, practical, and normative, all at the same time. That is, it must explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation.

A further distinction in literary studies introduced by Jürgen Habermas foregrounds hermeneutics – the science of interpretation (Habermas, 1971). The act of interpretation is value-laden and the role of the interpreter is active not passive. This applies to literary studies and all the major social sciences, including geography, economics, sociology, history, political science, anthropology, and psychology.

In simple terms critical theory attempts to interpret the world (why are things the way they are and whose interest does it serve?) for a purpose. That purpose is emancipatory. It is value-laden rather than relativistic – it seeks to transform society on the principals of justice, fairness, the righting of wrongs and the meeting of needs – rather than simply understanding society as an end in itself. As such critical social theory reflects Marx's 11th Thesis on Feuerbach: Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it (Marx, 1938). Critical theory proposes the transformation of society for the common good –a society where injustice and inequity, domination and dependency does not exist. As such it is value-laden and normative.

Geoff Mulgan, without any reference to critical theory, compares the approach of the Austrian school of philosophy and economics to defining social innovation with what Albert Hirschman calls the 'rhetorics of reaction' (Mulgan, 2012, p.33). Hirschman describes the theories and arguments aligned with the rhetorics of reaction as:

> all attempts at conscious social progress as liable to futility (they simply won't work), jeopardy (if they have any affect at all it will be to destroy something we value) and perversity (the claim that if any attempts at improvement had effects these would not be the ones intended, so that, for example, wars on poverty leave behind a dependent underclass) (Mulgan, 2012, p.33).

In contrast to the rhetorics of reaction, social innovation Mulgan suggests tends to ally itself with the mirror rhetorics of progress (Mulgan, 2009) that include the:

- rhetorics of justice – the arguments for righting wrongs and meeting needs, whether these are for pensions or for affordable housing, which draw on fundamental moral senses of fairness;
- rhetorics of progress – the idea that change is cumulative and dynamic: new reforms are needed to reinforce old ones, or to prevent backsliding – for example new rights to maternity leave are essential to make a reality of past laws outlawing gender discrimination; and the
- rhetorics of tractability – the claims that social action works, and that whether the problem is unemployment or climate change, the right mix of actions can solve it.

These optimistic views Mulgan suggests,

> are highly political stances that are largely inconceivable outside the contexts of active democracy and civil society. They connect social innovation to a deep democratic belief in the virtue of empowering society to shape society; a view that the more broadly power is spread, the greater the capacity for good to prevail; and

an enlightenment belief in the possibility of cumulative growth of knowledge and insight (Mulgan, 2012, p.33).

In addition to being highly political stances (although quiet acquiescence to the *status quo* and relativism are equally political stances), Mulgan notes the rhetorics of progress offend conservatives, are value-laden and replace relativism with a clearly defined set of values – justice, fairness, the righting of wrongs and the meeting of needs. Such values are anchored in a view that the 'social' – society and its organization - requires ongoing reform in favor of those who are in need – who are being wronged by the way society is organized for those who are the 'haves' and not for those who are the 'have-nots'.

The difficulty with a broad and contingent definition of social innovation, where the effect does not necessarily have to, or might not universally be good for society, is that the term can be appropriated by any interest group, including conceivably those who may intentionally want a 'bad' outcome for society. The term can be appropriated by any government, corporation or individual who has a novel idea the social effects of which may increase injustice, be unfair and create more need. Activities, policies and practices generated by neo-liberal governments driven by market ideology that have social effects and as such qualify for the term social innovation could include massive reduction in state expenditure assisting those who are the most vulnerable in society. This practice as history has repeatedly demonstrated (despite short-term fiscal gains for government) is detrimental to and 'bad' for the common good, as those excluded and alienated into multi-generational poverty turn to crime and anti-social behavior - costing the government millions to control.

We can conclude at this point that postmodern theorizing has confirmed value neutrality as a myth, while concurrently rejecting normative statements (metanarratives). The former requires that we acknowledge our value-laden worldviews, while the latter can often provide the basis for reductionist contingent conclusions. Critical theory is one approach that positively identifies that in the realm of the social – society and its organization - there are distinct values that provide for emancipation, as opposed to distinct values that provide for oppression. The ethical dimension of defining social innovation requires the identification of values – values that will be explicit in purpose and intention. Such values will be distinctive and for the authors of this paper will include justice, fairness, the righting of wrongs and the meeting of needs. Yet further lessons can be learnt from other fields of activity and it is to those that we now turn.

4.2 Lessons from Social Marketing

Kotler and Zaltman first used the term social marketing in 1971 to refer to the application of marketing to the solution of social and health problems (MacFadyen et. al., 1999). It emerged as a discipline in the 1970s, and following a period of growth in the 1980s the field has rapidly expanded around the world to include disaster preparedness and response, environmental issues, volunteerism, government corruption, improving the quality of health care, sustainable consumption, transportation demand management and youth gambling problems among other social needs (Lefebvre, 2013).

As a field of research and practice that emerged some 20 years before the (formal) field of social innovation, and one which has many similarities to the field of social innovation (in fact social marketing is currently being explored as a tool for delivering social innovation (Lefebvre, 2013)),

lessons in defining social marketing can be applied to the challenges inherent in defining social innovation. Some of the challenges faced in defining social marketing that are shared with the social innovation field are:

- The definition of social marketing has been debated by academics and practitioners alike for over 30 years (University of Stirling, 2013);
- Social marketing was born from within a broader discipline, raising questions as to whether it was a discipline in its own right, or a subset of the broader marketing discipline;
- Social marketing can be seen as having two "parents": social sciences and marketing theory (Aiden et. al. 2010, p.20);
- The use of the word "social" in the definition is problematic as it leads to confusion between social marketing and *societal* marketing (Andreasen, 1994, p.109);
- There was early confusion as to whether social marketing could only be practiced by not-for-profit or public organizations as enhancing the common good was unlikely to be the *primary* purpose of private sector organizations engaging in social marketing (Andreasen, 1994, p.109); and
- There appears to be a reluctance amongst commentators to acknowledge or debate the ethical and ideological elements of some aspects of social marketing (Spotswood et. al. 2012, p.164).

In one of the earliest definitions of social marketing, Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman saw social marketing as seeking to influence social behaviors not to benefit the marketer, but to benefit the target audience and the general society (Weinreich, 2011). They argued that a distinguishing feature of social marketing (as opposed to other areas of marketing) is the objectives, intention and purpose of the marketer or their organization. Following further debate regarding social marketing definitions, in October 2013 a definition was agreed by the European, Australian and international social marketing associations: 'social marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. Social marketing practice is guided by ethical principles. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented social change programs that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable' (International Social Marketing Association et. al. 2013).

From the beginnings of the definitional debate to the present day, the focus on greater social good in the social marketing field is taken as a given - most social marketing definitions specify that what differentiates social marketing from other marketing is that it is for the benefit of society (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971; Kotler et al., 2002; French et al., 2011, MacFadyen et. al., 1999). This in turn raises the issue for the social marketer of what constitutes social good. In Andreasen's review of social marketing definitions (Andreasen, 1994, p.113), he raises the issue that social marketing has the potential to be used by anyone who claims (or believes) that it is being used for "social good", and could include anyone from the Nazi Party to the Klu Klux Klan. If these groups think what they are doing is socially beneficial, then who decides what social good actually is?

Andreasen suggests that this can be overcome by ensuring that 'social good' is defined as that which "a broad consensus of society agrees is its own social good" (Andreasen, 1994, p.113). Similarly others suggest that social marketers must be able to demonstrate that their definition of social good

has been "derived from an understanding about what the majority of the population believe and support (rather than have been persuaded) constitutes social good" (Spotswood et. al., 2011, p.170). The National Centre for Social Marketing the in UK acknowledges that the term 'social benefit' used in their definition of social marketing is value-laden, and suggests that the 'benefit' of a social marketing intervention should be defined by the people who are targeted by that intervention rather than the group that designed the intervention, or others that may be affected by it. For example, the outcome of a social marketing intervention encouraging people to make healthier food choices could be either 'good' or 'bad' depending on the perspective of different stakeholder groups affected. Individual consumers for example would be likely to report increased health and wellness, whereas fast food companies would be likely to report declining profit margins. Social marketers suggest that it is the perspective of the former group (the end users of the intervention) that should be used to determine whether a social marketing intervention is 'good' or otherwise.

Spotswood (Spotswood et. al. 2012, p.170) argues that a set of ethical principles is required to guide the determination of 'benefit to society', starting with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, including the following criteria:

- The risk is severe;
- Political and civic mandate for action exists;
- There is an acceptable trade-off between risks and freedoms confirmed by the target group and society;
- Effective intervention/s exist and can be delivered;
- Cost effectiveness of intervention/s can be demonstrated; hence, a clear demonstrable benefit to society, capable of measurement, is identifiable;
- Known negative side effects are acceptable to the target group and civic society; and
- Interventions will not increase inequality: they will improve everyone's health or wellbeing.

Utilizing the 'action reflection' approach discussed earlier in this paper, social marketing is defined through the lens of practice within society (the first major publication on the subject was published in 1975 by a social marketing *practitioner*, Richard Manoff, and it was six years later that a book on the topic was published by an academic). It is research and evaluation together that form the cornerstone of the social marketing process (Weinreich, 2011). This view is supported by French and Blair-Stevens who argue that an open and reflexive approach to the use of theory should be applied that avoids the application of any set theory or model – theories and models should be used as starting points for understanding, not as end points (French & Blair-Stevens, 2006). As suggested by Fiona Spotswood (Spotswood et. al., 2012), it is important that any definitional debate takes into account the ongoing diversity of thinking about the nature and purpose of social marketing.

After 30 years of debate regarding the definition of social marketing, consensus has been reached around some broad core principles. Firstly, social marketing definitions foreground common good or benefit as an essential intent and outcome of social marketing activity, as defined by the recipients of that particular activity. It is agreed that the ethical responsibility of social marketers cannot be ignored or negated. Secondly, it is accepted that while the term includes the word 'social', this does not mean that any marketing that has a social effect (which would encompass all effective marketing activity) should be considered social marketing. The term 'social' is used as a descriptor, and is not intended to be applied literally to any activity that occurs in the social realm or has a social effect.

4.3 Lessons from Democracy

Democracy has been one of the most debated topics and terms of recent times, especially following what Samuel Huntingon describes as 'the third wave of democratization'. This wave refers to "perhaps the most important global political development of the late twentieth century: the transition of some thirty countries from non-democratic to democratic political systems […] between 1974 and 1990" (Huntington 1993, p.xiii). In this sense, democracy has become an 'ideal' and in many cases a reality, however the definition of democracy often remains too broad and open and is at risk of being attributed to certain political systems that are not completely democratic.

Larry Diamond asserts "few conceptual issues in political science have been subjected to closer or more prolific scrutiny in recent decades than this problem of 'what democracy is […] and is not' and which regimes are 'democracies' and which not" (Diamond 2002, p.21). He points out that many insist on a "fairly robust […] definition of democracy" (Diamond 2012, p.21), which would include Robert Dahl's definition of `polyarchy`. Diamond explains that by following Dahl's definition, democracy "requires not only free, fair, and competitive elections, but also the freedoms that make them truly meaningful (such as freedom of organization and freedom of expression), alternative sources of information, and institutions to ensure that government policies depend on the votes and preferences of citizens" (Diamond 2002, p.21).

In this sense, when accepting this definition, we would be accepting what many other scholars and studies on the quality of democracy have already pointed out: that democracy is much more than elections but it cannot be less than that. This means that elections are the most basic requirement for a political system to be considered democratic. Although some basic conditions like universal, free and secret balloting, free, competitive and periodic elections, an open political arena and alternative sources of information (Levine & Molina, 2007, p.3) are essential for democracy, they focus only on the electoral aspect of it.

Moving away from a mere procedural definition of democracy, Robert Dahl established six basic institutions of what he calls a "representative democracy": elected officers; free, fair and frequent elections; freedom of speech; alternative sources of information; inclusive citizenship and freedom of association (Dahl, 1999, p.48). Dahl goes further asserting that these institutions must guarantee the effective participation of citizens, political equality, an enlightened understanding, the control of the public agenda by the citizens and the inclusion of all citizens (Dahl, 1998, p.37). Dahl expands the notion of democracy to other spheres of citizens' lives, rather than just focusing on the electoral phases of it. Dahl expects that democracy has an effect on people's lives and their whole environment, effects that reflect distinct values such as equality, inclusiveness, justice and participation.

On the other hand, when sticking to a 'minimalist' definition of democracy like Samuel Huntington's, who describes a system as democratic when "its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes" (quoted in Diamond, 2002, p.22), many gaps are unfilled and questions remain such as "what constitutes 'fair, honest, and free' elections?" (Diamond, 2002, p.22). These two types of definition call for a distinction between types of democracy. When following a minimalist definition, one would be talking about an electoral democracy, as opposed to referring to a liberal democracy which "extends freedom, fairness,

transparency, accountability, and the rule of law from the electoral process into all other major aspects of governance and interest articulation, competition, and representation" (Diamond, 2002, p.35).

What can we learn then from defining democracy that can be applied to defining social innovation? First of all, both terms are used widely but, in most cases, wrongfully attributed. Broad based minimalist definitions of democracy and social innovation are at risk of being applied to something that it is not. For example, Diamond explains that:

> one of the most striking features of the 'late period' of the third wave has been the unprecedented growth in the number of regimes that are neither clearly democratic nor conventionally authoritarian. If we use a very demanding standard of democracy, encompassing not only democratic elections but solid protection of civil liberties under a strong rule of law, then the proportion of intermediate regimes truly swells because so many of the new 'democracies' of the third wave are 'illiberal' (Diamond, 2002, p.25).

In other words, accepting such a broad, yet minimalist definition, we can consider political systems or innovations to be democratic or social, respectively, when they are not. The learning from defining democracy for social innovation is that robust definitions must be more distinctive and comprehensive for an ethical use of the term and to safeguard against its misappropriation. Authentic or liberal democracies require more than just elections and authentic social innovations are more than just an innovation with social effects. Both require consideration of outcomes and the type of effect they have on the lives of those who are exposed to or the subject of it. We cannot rely on procedural or minimal definitions. Our definitions of both democracy and innovation have to be more comprehensive and go beyond the sole act of coming up with an innovation (in the case of social innovation) or simply having elections (in the case of democracy). They both have to do with the outcomes and the impact as well.

4.4 Lessons from Governance

Just like the terms social innovation and democracy, governance has been widely used in different contexts, but most importantly, it has been misused. R.A.W Rhodes defines governance as "self-organizing, interorganizational networks [that] complement markets and hierarchies as governing structures for authoritatively allocating resources and exercising control and co-ordination" (Rhodes, 1996, p.652). While for Jan Kooiman, governance "can be seen as the pattern or structure that emerges in a socio-political system as 'common' result or outcome of the interacting intervention efforts of all involved actors. This pattern cannot be reduced to one actor or group of actors in particular" (Kooiman, 1993, p.258).

In other words, governance refers to the idea of a shared government, in which other actors –society and markets- govern along with the elected officials. This is "processes and interactions through which all kinds of social interests and actors combine to produce the policies, practices and effects that define current pattern of governing" (Bevir, 2011, p.1-2). Certainly the idea of governance has meant a shift from the traditional political arena as the center for "the aggregation of social demands and the main option for political participation" (Canto, 2012, p.333).

The main characteristics of the current model of governance are: that not only the government governs, but also the self-organized networks and the markets; the networks are the privileged space; and the responsibility and accountability is extended to all private and public actors that share the governing function (Canto, 2012, p.335-336). When comparing social innovation to governance, there are clearly many differences that stand out, such as the fact that social innovation is not always the result of a shared responsibility between the public and the private or non-for-profit sectors, but mostly the action of the latter. We could also mention that accountability is not one of the most studied issues in social innovation.

However, governance and social innovation share many characteristics. Just like social innovation, governance is composed by phenomena that are "hybrid and multijurisdictional with plural stakeholders who come together in networks" (Bevir, 2011, p.2). The use of networks is vital for social innovation, given the fact that it aims to achieve as much benefit as possible, replicability and the scaling up of the innovations. But also, they share one common basis, at least in some contexts. Rodolfo Canto explains that:

> A shared characteristic that is appreciated in the literature about governance, perhaps more accentuated among the iberoamerican authors […] is the defense of governance on the basis of a sharp and severe criticism of traditional politics, political parties, politicians and –mostly in Latin America- the ineffective, inefficient and corrupt, spendthrift [and] authoritarian […] governments (Canto, 2012, p.338).

The fact is that governance, at least in the Latin American context, has come up as a new way to produce social capital and wellbeing, in the light of ineffective governments. This aligns with what Geoff Mulgan identifies as one of the main characteristics of social innovation "new ideas that work to meet pressing unmet needs and improve people's lives" (Mulgan, 2006, p.7). Both social innovation and governance have arisen as a way for social actors to take action to solve problems that affect them, and by doing so, they "leave behind compelling new social relationships between previously separate individuals and groups which matter greatly to the people involved" (Mulgan, 2006, p.5).

Although governance has been the focus of many critics who assert that it is destined to become "the first example of governing without a government" (Rhodes, p.1996, p.667), it is a reflection of the importance of social participation in the design and managing of public policies and services. By adopting one of these two approaches, power and voice is given to a sector of society that would have otherwise not had it.

In general, both disciplines have a lot to learn from each other. The fact that governance is mostly pursued or initiated by governments does not imply that a social innovation cannot take place in such a context; on the contrary, it is perhaps one window of opportunity to expand the reach of such an innovation. However, in some contexts for example Latin America as explained above, social innovation might tend to separate itself from anything that has to do with an ineffective or authoritarian government, and just like governance is in these contexts, it might be "presented as the viable alternative […] for rescuing the great decisions over public problems from the dirty rivers of politics to take them into the clean waters of governance" (Canto, 2012, p.338).

4.5 Lessons From Social Entrepreneurship

Lessons can also be applied from the field of social entrepreneurship, which is often a site of social innovation (as distinct from social enterprise, which is a business model). Mulgan identifies social entrepreneurship as one field becoming more interested in social innovation, sharing many characteristics, especially when it comes to the impact and the main focus of both fields. Gregory Dees, Miriam and Peter Haas (1998) identify one central aspect of social entrepreneurship that also constitutes the core of social innovation, "for social entrepreneurs, the social mission is explicit and central" (Dees et.al. 1998, p.3).

These authors also identify the characteristics that turn a social entrepreneur into an agent of social change, a term that could also be used to describe a social innovator. They describe social entrepreneurs as change agents in the social sector as they "make fundamental changes in the way things are done in the social sector. Their visions are bold. They attack the underlying causes of problems, rather than simply treating symptoms. They often reduce needs rather than just meeting them. They seek to create systemic changes and sustainable improvements" (Dees et.al. 1998, p.5).

Social innovators, like social entrepreneurs, are to create social change, change that can address the causes of the issues they are dealing with. Fundamentally the most important factor for defining social entrepreneurs and social innovators is the adoption of a social mission to create and sustain social value – value for society that identifies problems, needs and solutions.

Consideration of the above suggests several factors need to be taken into consideration when deciding what the crucial ingredients for a definition of social innovation are:

- Social innovations are practices that take place in the realm of the social – society and its organization;
- There are no value neutral definitions of social innovation;
- Values and ethics matter in defining social innovation;
- Intentions, effects and outcomes that have integrity in the realm of social innovation will have an emancipatory commitment; they will seek to change/transform society for the better; and
- Broad based relativistic definitions of social innovation are open to misappropriation and can legitimate activities that are bad for society.

On this basis this analysis argues for a distinctive values-laden definition of social innovation that excludes the possibility of the term being appropriated by those whose interests do not include the common good. It risks being normative by declaring it will not accept that we do not know what a good society looks like, alternatively identifying a good society as one based on justice, fairness, the righting of wrongs and the meeting of needs. It further argues that as the meeting of needs and the righting of wrongs takes place, that reflection on the actions taken to achieve these outcomes will continuously identify where further action needs to take place. For example if reflection on the practice of poverty alleviation in society reveals a new challenge –welfare dependency– then a new socially innovative course of action will be required to achieve the goal of poverty reduction. This will not accept that poverty alleviation was not good for society because it had an unexpected outcome. It will celebrate its achievements to date and then take on the new challenge. This ongoing

refinement of achieving that which is good for society and the common good will mirror the Hegelian cyclical view of history; thesis (poverty)– antithesis (poverty alleviation) –synthesis (poverty alleviated/welfare dependency)– new thesis (welfare dependency) –antithesis (provision of opportunities for income generation) –synthesis (poverty alleviated/ dependency removed) and so on. It will do so with an optimistic and pragmatic view.

Having considered what factors provide the basis for the identification of crucial ingredients for a definition of social innovation, we must now consider how in fact we arrive at a definition and what place theory has in this process. Are definitions determined by practice or are they determined by theory? In the same manner does theory inform practice or does practice inform theory?

Chapter 5 - How Do we Arrive at a Definition?

As Geoff Mulgan notes **"**the field of social innovation has grown up primarily as a field of practice, made up of people doing things and then reflecting on what they do. Practice has advanced well ahead of theory or research, mainly as a kind of craft knowledge" (Mulgan, 2012, p.19-20). Mulgan then goes on to propose that theory needs to catch up with practice because "sharper theory will help to clarify what is and what isn't known", and "sharper theory will also guide practice" (Mulgan, 2012, p.20). The link between theory and practice in the realm of the social is clear: "social theories, unlike theories in fields like physics, are inseparable from their purpose and their uses" (Mulgan, 2012, p.20). Mulgan then suggests there are two types of theories in circulation in the filed of social innovation – "some are theories to interpret the world, concerned with description and analysis; others are theories to change the world, more deliberately designed to encourage and advocate" (Mulgan, 2012, p.21).

It is incontestable that there is a place for theory in social innovation. What is contested however is what *role* theory has in defining the practice of social innovation and whether descriptive and analytical theories are sufficiently engaged with practice to be of real use. As noted above some approaches seek to define and develop theories of social innovation within the theoretical framework of either innovation discourse and theory or social scientific discourse and theory. Both these approaches run the risk of being quite removed from the practice of social innovation, where practice appears only at the margins of the theoretical discourse.

It has been established that when definitions are formulated within the discourse of theory, the disciplines that frame the theory appear to become the defining aspects of the end result. That is, when a definition of social innovation is formulated within the discourse of innovation theory, innovation theory becomes the defining aspect of the end result. When a definition of social innovation is formulated within the discourse of the social sciences, social scientific theory becomes the defining aspect of the end result – hence a conclusion is possible for example that "the social sciences have reinterpreted the innovation process" (Howaldt & Kopp 2012, p53). The social sciences it should be noted do provide more opportunities to consider a values-based approach to social innovation than the commercial/technological innovation theoretical discourse.

The nature and power of discourse needs to be identified in all theoretical constructions (Foucault, 1972). Discourse actively forms and constructs people's perceptions of reality (and consequent behavior). Social meanings are produced within social institutions, and the language of each group which shares what it sees as common meanings is a discourse. To put it another way, a discourse is a perspective, a conceptual framework, a way of looking at things, and it has presumed shared

meanings amongst those operating within and from the discourse. Foucault theorizes that a discourse is an active, forming, constructing practice. So Foucault proposes that a discourse actively forms and constructs people's perceptions of reality, and conscious or subconscious constructions that lead to practice or behavior. People construct their reality, and have their reality constructed for them, out of the discourses within which they are operating. The discourse of theory operates in exactly the same way.

Alternatively theory can be informed, developed and refined through an action reflection approach that continually develops both definition and theory in a dynamic way that shapes resulting definitions and theories of social innovation by reflection on practice. In this action-reflection approach then, what is the role of 'theory'?

Critical theory can once again provide a way forward. It provides an opportunity for theories to be scrutinized from outside the discourse within which they are embedded. This alternative role for theory in social innovation is one of critical reflection based on the practice of social innovation within lived human experience, where 'theory' sits outside or on the margins of the theoretical discourses normally determined by the descriptive and analytical approaches. Theory takes up a reflective approach on the practice of social innovation in the realm of the social –that is society and its organization. Once in the realm of the social, theory cannot credibly locate itself in some open-ended value neutral location outside of the social realm. We are forced once again into human interaction– society and its organization and the discourse of values and ethics.

In the realm of values and ethics, theory must have a stomach. Theory located in the social –society and its organization- must be located in human experience, an experience where there are many men, women and children whose stomachs are empty while other stomachs are bloated with the excess of free market ideology. In this regard the role of theory is crucial and it cannot and should not be dissolved into practice. Its place is on the boundaries between practice and critical observation, knee-deep in practice and knee-deep in theoretical reflection, not simply to promote theory in itself but to enhance the practice. As Eagelton suggests: "to be inside and outside a position at the same time – to occupy a territory while loitering skeptically on the boundary – is often where the most intensely creative ideas stem from. It is a resourceful place to be, if not always a painless one" (Eagleton 2003, p.40). This role is not dissimilar to the role of the 'organic intellectual' developed by Antonio Gramsic in his *Letters from Prison*, referred to by de Bruin as a particular contribution researchers can make in the social sciences, mindful of their responsibilities as "critic and conscience of society" (a statutory obligation for universities in her New Zealand context)(de Bruin, 2012, p.374-375).

This role for theory as critical reflection that makes value judgments for the common good sits at odds with the Schumpeterian economic approach to innovation that appears as 'valueless', in the sense it treats economic value as an unproblematic concept (Mulgan, 2012, p.27). As Mulgan correctly notes: "social innovation as a field seems inseparable from its underlying ethic, which is one of collaboration, acting with rather than to or for; a belief in rough equality; a cultural commitment to the idea of equality of communication (theorised in more depth by Jürgen Habermas) and perhaps an implicit idea that through collaboration we can discover our full humanity" (Mulgan, 2012, p.211). Such an ethic must ensure that social innovations are for the *good* of society and as such create a distinctive attribute for any theory and resultant definition of social innovation – that is if an innovation wants to qualify for the term 'social innovation' it must be good, both intentionally and effectively for society.

There are many innovations that have 'social effects' and impact on society. However that does not *ipso facto* qualify them to be social innovations, given the intention of the innovation may have been for purposes quite oblivious to the social effect the innovation generates. And not all innovations are for the good of society as has been repeatedly pointed out by those grappling with the theory and definition of social innovation. Adopting a values-based approach to the theory and definition of innovation however argues that to qualify for the description of social innovation, an innovation <u>*must*</u> be both intentionally and effectually for the 'good of society'.

The argument that we are lost in a sea of ambiguity when it comes to identifying what is for the 'good of society' requires one to take a stand and make a value judgment. The argument that social innovations will not please everyone in society, even when they have a positive impact for the majority good again requires one to make a value judgment. What sector of society does the social innovation intend to please? Those with bloated stomachs, or those whose stomachs are empty? This is a question of ethics –where values matter. To avoid engaging with the ethical responsibility of social innovation and to avoid engaging with values it can be argued (as indeed it is in many other academic disciplines) a dereliction of duty.

Two simple (yet insightful) questions from the critical theory tool kit are useful when considering ethics and effect in the social realm. When an innovation claims the definition 'social innovation', we need to enquire: why are things the way they are and whose interests do they serve? Both at the level of intention and the level of effect (outcome or impact) these two questions will clearly assist in determining if the innovation serves a particular interest.

This approach aligns with the theoretical approaches to 'purpose and ends' discussed by Mulgan, in particular the work of Antonio Damasio who argues that for the wellness of any society the fundamental concept of 'biological value' is prior to either economic or social value. Damasio identifies this as the value of survival and flourishing. Survival he suggests depends on homeostasis, preserving the conditions of our bodies to live, with the right temperature, food and water and physical safety. Flourishing depends on wellness and wellbeing across a society, not just for a minority but equally for all. As Mulgan notes this approach brings "the field of social innovation into the controversial debates about the relationship between wellbeing, economic growth, democracy and different forms of capitalism" (Mulgan, 2012, p.39).

5.1 Does the Context Matter?

From reviewing the many definitions of social innovation, it is clear that the context in which they were created matters to a great extent. The most known definitions have arose from European contexts; and even when the basis (the 2020 Europe strategy) of the most important convention on the subject, namely the Vienna Declaration, deals with universal problems such as poverty and unemployment, many of the definitions reviewed here seem to be distanced from such social problems. On the other hand, we have already revised very specific definitions, like the Latin American ones, especially the one provided by ANSPE in Colombia, which by definition sets poverty as the target of social innovation.

The main problem is then the definition of 'social' and 'social issues', which of course, vary according to the realities or contexts that we live in. Perhaps the best example of the relativity of terms is the

one concerning poverty. As Martin Ravallion explains "people coming from different backgrounds define 'poverty' differently even when in each individual's eyes it is unmistakable in reality" (Ravallion, 2010, p.2). Naturally, poverty does not mean the same in Africa as it means in Latin America, and even less so in Europe. For example, according to the World Bank, in 2013 the minimum wage per month was $2.28 USD in Uganda, $128.08 USD in Mexico and $4,400.06 USD in Norway (World Bank, 2014). And for the Gross Development Product per capita in 2012, it was $547 USD in Uganda, $9,749 USD in Mexico and $99,558 USD in Norway (World Bank, 2014). In this sense and by taking a look at this data, it is completely understandable why people perceive poverty very differently according to the context that surrounds them.

As David Betson asserts, "there does not exist a 'natural law' for poverty thresholds. Science can not determine which set of thresholds is appropriate for a society [...] Ultimately, poverty thresholds will be viewed as reasonable or not based upon the nation's collective common sense or its political judgment" (Ravallion, 2010, p, p.1). In this sense, there are certain parameters that have been established to define poverty; for example, the World Bank identifies extreme poverty in the line of 1.25 USD a day in 2005 prices (World Bank 2014), but certainly the understanding of poverty goes beyond an economic parameter. It's measurement, as well as the very nature of poverty, is multi-dimensional.

In the same way that poverty needs universal parameters, so should social issues. The universal definitions of such issues would allow us to set priorities, and therefore, to set the targets of social innovation. Although we are not proposing a very narrow definition of social innovation that focuses on one specific problem, we do believe that there are certain universal problems that have to be the focus and objective of social innovation; that there are certain universally desirable values and goals that must be set as priorities, regardless of the context of the social innovator.

To sum up, it is obvious that the context does matter and has an impact on the way people perceive the world, and this will also have an impact on what they consider a social problem. But we must not lose focus on what the real social problems are, the priorities that must be met and the issues that social innovation should target. For example in the case of poverty, the understanding and definitions of social problems will naturally depend on one's context; however, to avoid social innovation becoming a 'catch-all' term, we must define universally shared priorities.

As argued above we do need a definition of social innovation. We also need a clear role for theory in the ongoing development and refinement of social innovation. This analysis argues that the place for theory is one of critical reflection on the practice of social innovations in the social realm –lived human experience. This social realm once again demands an ethic or values based approach to defining and theorizing about social innovations and also provide a frame through which a distinctive definition of social innovation can be identified.

Chapter 6 - Proposed Definition of Social Innovation

Based on the discussion above we propose a definition of social innovation as follows:

New solutions to social challenges that have the intent and effect of equality, justice and empowerment.

This definition suggests that for an activity to qualify as a social innovation, it must meet four criteria:

- It must 'new' within the context in which it takes place.
- It must address a social challenge.
- The intent must be to create equality, justice and empowerment.
- The effect or end result must be equality, justice and empowerment.

We arrive at this definition from the perspective of our practice and contexts –reflection on practice within specific cultures and contexts– and assume that this will continue to be an evolving definition that will be refined and remodeled through future reflection and practice.

6.1 Unpacking 'Social Challenges'

When we refer to social challenges, broadly speaking we are referring to the 'grand challenges' currently faced by the global community. These include challenges ranging from climate change to ageing societies, financialization, poverty, social exclusion, migration and social conflicts (Hochgerner, 2012, p.91). These challenges can manifest themselves on a global scale, or on a smaller scale within local communities.

6.2 Unpacking 'Intention'

Our hypothesis is that social innovation must be intentional. We have included 'intent' in our definition very deliberately for a number of reasons. Firstly, it ensures that social innovation is never accidental. For example, if a corporation was aware that many of their female workforce were struggling to return to work after having a child because of the need for more flexible working arrangements, and so created online portals allowing women to work from home in their own hours, that would be a social innovation as the intent (and effect) was equality and empowerment for working mothers. If however the corporation created online portals to increase workers' efficiency and thus increase profit margins, this would not be a social innovation as the intent was not to create equality, justice or empowerment. If the corporation introduced online portals with the intent of increasing profit, and the portals by chance made it possible for working mothers to return to work sooner, while the effect would be the same, it could not be classified as social innovation, as the effect of empowerment and equality was accidental – more a side effect than a planned outcome.

This is not to say that the intent and effect must always be the same. For example, a café that employs older workers on the pension who would otherwise not have access to work could have the intent of equality of access to employment. If the end-result or effect is twofold (for example access to employment as well as inter-generational understanding and reduced ageism), it should still be considered a social innovation as both intent and effect are justice, empowerment and equality.

Secondly, intent allows for the building of a shared vision, crucial for building coalitions and networks and gaining the momentum required to bring a social innovation to life. Collaboration, co-creation and co-design are all important parts of the 'process' element of social innovation, and will be more effective if the intent is clear.

Thirdly, a clear and inspiring intent encourages teams and individuals to remain motivated. The road to seeing the final effect of a social innovation can be long and challenging. It's important to reward good intentions and effort to achieve those intentions, as well as the final output. If it's only the effect of a social innovation that's measured, it's increasingly likely that teams working on the social innovation will burn out in the process of achieving the desired effect.

Fourthly, the fact that social innovators have a clear intent of creating some form of social good cannot be avoided. "[...] Social innovation is intentional, meant to change something in what people do alone or together to the better, at least as they perceive it" (Franz, Hochgerner & Howaldt, 2012, p. 3).

6.3 Unpacking 'Effect'

As observed by Hochgerner, all social innovations move through a '4i' process consisting of an idea, an intervention, implementation and finally impact (Hochgerner, 2012, p.95). A social innovation cannot be considered as such until it has reached the final stage -impact. Until a social innovation has some form of effect, it is merely an idea (or a 'social invention'). The definition proposed in this paper supports the hypothesis that a social innovation must have an impact to be considered a social innovation, and goes one step further by explicitly stating that this impact must be 'good' for society as defined by three criteria - justice, empowerment and equality.

Our proposed definition deliberately does not stipulate the reach of the social innovation, or any requirement for scalability or systems change. Social innovation according to our definition could be systemic with far reaching effects, or could remain confined to one local community. This is not to say that the ideal effect of a social innovation would not be systemic change, but rather to state that a local grassroots activity with the intent and effect of justice, equality and empowerment should still be considered a social innovation. From our point of view, the fact that a social innovation does not achieve the ideal systemic change does not prevent it from being a social innovation; in other words, any social innovation that fulfills the requirements presented above, no matter its range or scope, should be considered a social innovation.

6.4 Unpacking 'Justice, Empowerment and Equality'

As discussed, even those scholars who reject normative definitions agree that social innovation should be good for society on some level (even if they aren't willing to include this in their proposed definitions). If 'good' is a necessary criteria for social innovation (as we believe it must be), this leaves the question of what constitutes 'good'. In our working definition we have proposed three elements that we believe encapsulate and specify the most important elements of the notion of what is 'good' for society - justice, empowerment and equality.

We have not sought to complicate these terms, and have taken them at their most basic meaning as defined in the Oxford Dictionary of English:

Justice: just behavior or treatment; a concern for justice, peace and genuine respect for people; the quality of being fair and reasonable;

Empowerment: to make someone stronger and more confident, especially in controlling their life and claiming their rights; and

Equality: the state of being equal, especially in status, rights and opportunities.

Utilizing the insights from postmodern theorizing and critical theory, we believe that intentions cannot be value-neutral but will always be value-laden. This requires one to make a choice or judgment regarding the type of effect or end result social innovations need to have. Both globally and locally as identified in numerous documents the world faces several major challenges both in society and the environment. Critical reflection on practice demands historical embeddedness (why are things the way they are now) and intrinsic to its line of inquiry (whose interests are being served) requires an ethical choice either for or against equality, justice and empowerment. This in turn requires normative ethics –what is the 'wrong' in society that inhibits equality, justice and empowerment and what is the 'right' that will lead to equality, justice and empowerment. The role of theory in social innovation will directly focus on effects and be concerned with transformation of society for the better rather than understanding theory as a descriptive analytic end in itself or in some way dislocated from the day to day lived human experience. Consequently our proposed definition makes a value judgment in favor of equality, justice and empowerment as distinctive effects of genuine social innovations.

We acknowledge that the intention of justice, equality and empowerment will not always result in a neat and perfect effect of justice, equality or empowerment for all unexpected side-effects can and will occur. Change-makers must always bear the risk of negative or unexpected consequences. The achievement of equality, justice and empowerment will not be a positive outcome for those who promote inequality, act unjustly or seek to enslave others in society. Freedom from oppression will not please those who oppress. Achieving a more equitable, just and empowered society does not fit easily with neoliberal free market ideology, political regimes either from the left or the right, or those who benefit from the organization of society in a manner that benefits the minority and disadvantages the majority. We have chosen the words 'equality', 'justice' and 'empowerment' carefully, rather than broader terms such as 'social good' or 'common benefit', precisely because the achievement of equality, justice and empowerment may not benefit everyone in society.

6.5 Final Observations

Some further observations need to be made with regard to this proposed definition. While we refer to co-creation and collaboration, we have not focused on process in this paper when arriving at our definition of social innovation. We note that in some situations, co-creation of solutions to challenges may not be possible. For example, the Sanctuary project in Australia provides housing, food, medical care and legal advice to asylum seekers with no right to work. These asylum seekers were so marginalized that it would not have been possible for them to 'co-create' a solution to their situation. What we have done is used the word 'empowerment' in our definition, which by its very nature implies some level of consultation and/or co-creation.

Other definitions and approaches have considered user groups in their definition by suggesting that for a social innovation to be classified as such, it must be adopted by the social groups concerned. We have taken this as a given rather than a criteria that should be explicitly referenced -it would be impossible to have a social innovation with the effect of empowerment if it was not adopted by the social groups concerned.

Discussion continues with regard as to who can be the initiators of social innovation. Our proposed definition does not exclude any sector from the opportunity to create a social innovation provided

that the group or individual creating the social innovation meets the suggested criteria (their solution is new within their context, it meets a social challenge, the intent is justice, equality and empowerment and the effect is justice, equality and empowerment). The question remains as to whether social innovation is likely to occur not only in the third sector/civil society, but also in the Government sector or for-profit sector. Social innovation is naturally more likely to occur outside the for-profit sector, as the intent of corporations would in most cases be increased profit, with justice, equality and empowerment as a secondary objective.

Finally the issue of measurement requires consideration. Against what criteria would one measure the outcomes of a social innovation that had both the intention and effect of equality, justice and empowerment. We suggest measurement tools already exist. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Millennium Goals both provide clear measures of equality, justice and empowerment.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

The definition of social innovation proposed is a working definition, subject to refinements and recommendations.

We have considered different categories and approaches to the development of definitions and considered other fields of social activity (social marketing, democracy, social entrepreneurship and governance) to look for insight as to how we can proceed with a definition of social innovation. We have applied insights from postmodern theorizing and critical theory that have convinced us that the realm of the social –society and its organization– is not a realm where values and ethics can be relativized or considered irreducibly contextual. We have also considered the role of theory in the ongoing development and analysis of social innovations as critical reflection on practice –where theoretical insights reflect and learn from practice and then in turn provide new insights that inform the practice of social innovation. We have concluded that a definition of social innovation needs to be distinctive and focused, and we have made the value judgment that both intentionally and effectively social innovations are *New solutions to social challenges that have the intent and effect of equality, justice and empowerment.*

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