

# Social Innovation and Role of Academy

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# What is Social Innovation?

- Recently, Social Innovation has become a household name as a mean to transform our society more sustainable and inclusive.
- Some examples:
  - Phills et al. (2008) “Rediscovering Social Innovation” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*: “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.”

# Definitions (continued)

- Some more definitions:
  - OECD: “Social innovation can concern conceptual, process or product change, organisational change and changes in financing, and can deal with new relationships with stakeholders and territories.”
  - European Commission: “Social innovations are new ideas that meet social needs, create social relationship and form new collaborations.”
  - US Government: “Conventional innovation is focused on the creation of better or more effective products, processes or services. In contrast, social innovation is focused on finding new ways to solve old problems and doing so in the public interest.”

# Tentative Working Definition

- Although it seems like there is no single definition...
- in a nutshell, the definition of Social Innovation can contain the following elements ....
  - Creation of transformative and solution-oriented ideas rather than mere scientific discovery,
  - which meets social or public needs,
  - focusing on processes of involving relevant stakeholders.
- Slightly different meanings for different stakeholders, such as private business sector
  - E.g. World Economic Forum

# Social Innovation: Some Examples

- The following examples are for your reference, some of which are cited from existing literature.
  - Open universities and charter schools
  - Microfinance
  - Socially Responsible investment
  - Fair trade
  - Emission trading
  - Open source software
  - Participatory city planning and management
  - Future Earth
- I hope this helps ...

# Backdrops: Why we need social innovation?

- Dynamic trends in society
  - Increasing complexity/interconnectedness in problems
  - Less impact of traditional R&D on economy: e.g. “secular stagnation”
  - Two conflicting trends: globalisation vs localization
  - Change in people’s preference of happiness over economic quantity
- Change in policy landscape
  - Acute social needs (inequality, environmental problems, health concerns, and new issues relating progresses of S&T (see below))
  - More focus on commons and ownership
  - Adoption of UN SDGs
- Advance of S&T
  - Emerging new technologies, such as prevalence of mobile devices, progress in artificial intelligence, breakthrough in biotechnology, among others

# Scientific Contributions to Social Innovation

- Academies can play an important role in social innovation, because we have:
  - Collective voice of scientists,
  - Various and balanced views from diverse science community,
  - Scientific knowledge and wisdoms,
  - Evidence-based methodologies, and
  - Strong international collaboration among academies.
- Possible fields of applications
  - Sustainable development
  - Tackling environment problems at global and regional levels
  - Disaster Risk Reductions
  - Urban well-being
  - Education, training, and employment(?)

# Proposed Issues for Discussions

1. Should/can academies take more roles in social innovation making science more solution-oriented? If yes, in which fields and how?
2. How can we mobilise our underutilised scientific knowledge for social innovation? E.g. open science.
3. Are there any scientific insights in constructing solid frameworks of social innovation?
4. How can we best facilitate interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary scientific activities?
5. Any concrete examples of successes and failures?
6. Any caveats?