Chapter 17
Understanding the Context of Design for Social Innovations: A Methodological Case Study

Juan Carlos Ortiz Nicolás
Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

Thomas Harrison
Imperial College London, UK

ABSTRACT
The chapter describes the applicability of designers to the space of finding solutions to social issues through the generation of social innovations. Based on a literature review, it was evident that design requires new methods to apply to the resolution of social issues, and as such, this chapter presents a new method that supports designers in the development of solutions within the design for social innovation (DfSI) framework. The proposed method consists of six stages: (1) identifying the challenge, (2) analyzing the system in which the challenge co-exists, (3) understanding the system using user-centered design techniques, (4) defining the design brief, (5) generating proposals, and (6) evaluating and concluding. The chapter also introduces a design case study that describes in detail the implementation of the design method. The results indicated that the method supports designers to structure their process when aiming to design for social innovation and in particular to define the potential solution, which is reflected in a design brief.

INTRODUCTION
Social innovation is significant to the addressing of local and global challenges that seek the common good and this may explain its current interest in academia and practice. Research has identified that there are differences between social and economic innovation, showing that social Innovations aims are often harder to measure and require thinking up-front to compare them. In the field of design, the influence of social innovation is acknowledged as Design for Social Innovation. At present, it is unclear how the differences between Social and Economic Innovation impact on the design process.

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This manuscript describes Social Innovation as the management of a social mess, a type of wicked problem associated with social mechanisms that are typically difficult to define and also difficult to resolve, however, the aim is particular, to create a common wealth and enhance society’s capacity to act (Murray, Cualier-Grice & Mulgan, 2010). To address the latter challenges, up-front homework is undertaken in order to fully understand the social mess, including the contextual complexities that are discovered during the important Fuzzy Front End. Designing as a part of Economic Innovation, and designing as a part of Social Innovation are not identical, they require different methods to manage the different types of fuzziness and developing an open brief that cuts through the complexity in order to develop a clear context within which the designing can occur. The fact that each type of innovation requires particular approaches does not mean that there aren’t overlaps exist in the undertake of specific design tasks, e.g. ideation, or that designers that focus on developing Economic Innovation cannot work on Social Innovation solutions and vice versa.

The aim of this chapter is to introduce a design method to support designers in the development of Social Innovation. The method focuses on supporting designers in defining the design brief when addressing a social challenge. Thus, the method focuses on the Fuzzy Front End of Innovation. The method is explained in detail and a case study is introduced to report its implementation.

To define the overall context of this research it is important to discuss basic concepts that help to frame this particular project. For instance, this manuscript addresses the following issues: wicked problems, the fuzzy front end of innovation, the development of an open brief, and theoretical issues in design methods.

**BACKGROUND**

This section demands conceptual and contextual clarity, especially in the definitions and characteristics of much researched Economic Innovation and its comparable peer, Social Innovation. The understanding of their differences will be achieved through a cross-comparison of the two concepts, starting with the more familiar Economic Innovation.

**Differences Between Economic and Social Innovation**

Generally, Innovation is seen as the successful exploitation of new ideas (Cox, 2005), and can also be defined as any departure from existing practice (Schumpeter, 1934). This is largely considered in terms of trends, such as consumer, organizational, or financial. This innovation process that takes a creative concept and makes it somehow concrete and pragmatic goes beyond simple creativity because innovation is relatively valueless if the idea remains in its abstract creative form. It is unusable, therefore has no applicable user.

The nature of the change or break in trend is typically what defines the type of the innovation, and these various types, include but are not exclusively Economic Innovation and Social Innovation (see Franz, Hochgerner, & Howaldt, 2012 for a thorough discussion). Economic Innovation seeks changes in consumer or organizational behavior within an economic system or network that may eventually lead to a financial reward. In comparison, Social Innovation seeks changes in Social Behaviour within a social system or network. This is introduced by the works of Schumpeter who suggests five methods by which innovation can occur with the outcomes being consumer market disruptions (Schumpeter, 1934); these are measured by financial changes experienced by the organization to characteristics such as profit and