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Sol Price School of Public Policy Sol Price Center for Social Innovation

Is the "firm" a meaningful unit of analysis for social innovation?

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Defining Social Innovation

- "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, Deiglmeier & Miller, SSIR, 2008)
- "The process of inventing, securing support for, and implementing novel solutions to social needs and problems." (Editor's Note, SSIR, 2003)

Social innovation paradigms

- □ Technocratic Paradigm Amenable to firm as unit of analysis
 - Expert Knowledge in entrepreneurs
 - Market and competition focused
 - Focus on more efficient public services and scaling up
 - Aligned with neoliberalism
 - Citizens as consumers
- Democratic Paradigm Not as amenable to the firm as unit of analysis
 - Knowledge from community engagement
 - Politics and mobilization focused
 - Social justice to accomplish a re-distribution of power
 - Continuous Community engagement

(Montgomery, 2016)

Who are the alternative actors to the firm?

Individuals

- Organizational actors
- Grass-roots organizing
- Other Organizations
 - Non-profits
 - New organizational forms
- Governments
- Communities
- Ecosystems

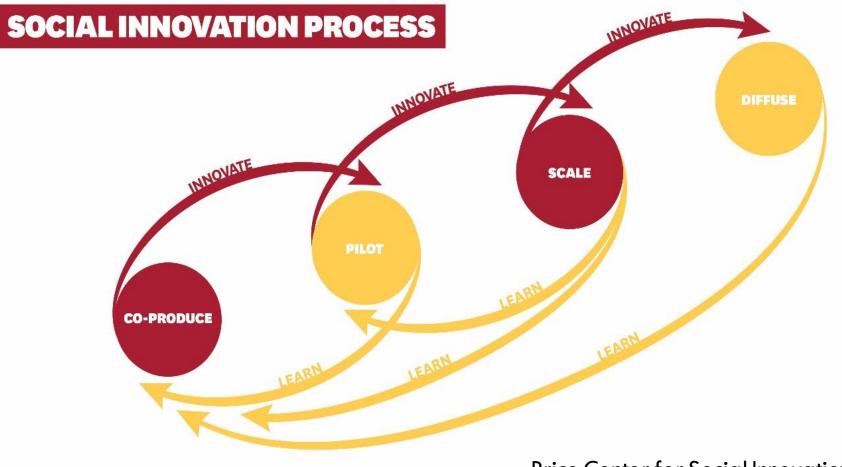
Research Questions

- When does (and how) social innovation re-distribute power and achieve more equitable solutions?
- What is the impact beyond the firm? What are other outcomes to consider (well-being; systems-level)?
- What are the processes, systems and institutional contexts for social innovation?
- When to bring normative models to assess accounts of subjects?
- Research Design: In and Over Time

Social Innovation as a Process

Social innovation as an iterative, inclusive process using innovation frameworks to achieve more effective and just solutions to address complex social problems (USC Center for Social Innovation)

Social innovation refers to innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social" (Mulgan, 2006)



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