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What is the best way of implementing social innovation?
A practical investigation

Autor/a: Jane Alice Sánchez-Cruzado Ryan

Director/a: Andrés Araujo De La Mata

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Abstract

Social innovation is currently one of the leading drivers for social change. It is well established that the success of social innovation is an essential part of pushing our society forward into greater resilience. This study aims to determine the best way of implementing social innovation. Specifically, it investigates whether the established theory up to this point and a proposed hypothesis based on that theory can be backed up by the experience of working social innovation projects. In this context, social innovation projects are defined by being projects that implement social innovation in any of the forms that it can take.

To test the various theories and hypotheses and see what factors should be taken into consideration for the implementation, a series of predetermined questions were asked to social innovation projects. Candidates were given the opportunity of answering through a face-to-face interview or via an online questionnaire. Responses were analysed by dividing the answers into their 5 different categories based on the theoretical framework. However, the results obtained differed from what was expected, and it could therefore be seen that a part of the theory and the hypothesis did not align with reality.

These results suggest that establishing a concrete methodology on implementing social innovation is not only difficult but counterintuitive. Nevertheless, there are key factors and steps that will ensure projects are moving in the right direction. Based on this, social innovation projects should ideally take into account the key factors and steps mentioned in this paper and tailor each to suit their own implementation.

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1. Introduction

A strong interest has developed around social innovation as it seems to be taking on the role of solving world problems. Up to now it has proven to be a strong contender because the fact that, in Europe alone, 1 out of 4 newly set-up enterprises are considered to be social enterprises (European Commission, n.d.) is pushing social innovation forward. However, many of these social innovation projects fail, so how can one make sure they will work when having a good idea and social motivation is clearly not enough? Getting a deeper understating of how social innovation can best be implemented is a crucial part of answering this question.

1.1. Defining Social Innovation

Improvements or significant contributions made to existing products, processes, or services which we are constantly surrounded by can be defined as innovation (OECD and Eurostat, 2005), but when the new improvements and changes are linked to social challenges we are more distinctly looking at social innovation.

The term social innovation can be defined in many different ways, such as "*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, 2010)

A paper on "The Definition and Theory in Social Innovation" (Anderson, Curtis, & Wittig, 2014) best sums it up as "new solutions to social challenges that have the intent and effect of equality, justice and empowerment". This definition implies that for an innovation to be social it must firstly be new, as in an improvement or significant contribution that is stated in the definition of innovation. It must also address social challenges and finally have the intent and cause of equality, justice, and empowerment. This can be further explained by adding that social innovation addresses the core social values in our society such as welfare, quality of life, social inclusion, solidarity, citizen participation, environmental quality, healthcare, public services, or the level of education (Echeverría, 2008). Therefore, even if one social innovation does not directly address a matter of equality, justice, and empowerment all at once, the overall objective of social innovation is to benefit our society individually or jointly with these intentions. Consequently, social challenges must be considered as wide concepts which can include different scale problems related to many different topics, such as climate change, poverty, social conflicts, or any challenge that will have a positive impact on society when it is solved.

1.2. Historical background

The popularity of the term social innovation has led many to think that it is a relatively recent concept, but throughout history there have seen many examples of individuals making improvements or changes to try to improve circumstances or make a social impact. Examples include early modern tradesmen in the Dutch modern age or a woman's clinic warning against sexually transmitted diseases during the First Word War (Westley, McGowan, & Tjörnbo, 2017).

Geoff Mulan (2006) dates the rise of social innovation to the first industrial revolution, characterized by social enterprises and innovation. However, he centres the term on urbanism and industrialization.

The term will be formally discussed later on through the writings of figures such as Peter Drucker and Michael Young in the 1960s (Gavron, Dench, & Young, 1995) and French writers in the 1970s, such as Pierre Rosanvallon, Jacques Fournier, and Jacques Attali (Chambon, David, & Devevey, 1982).

During the last decades of the 20th century and the first of the 21st, the term has been mostly linked to the technological field, but as times have progressed and social matters have gathered strength, the term has taken on a wider meaning.

At this point in time, social innovation can be considered to be at its peak, due to the rise of social concern, institutional support, and corporate social responsibility, which are now a key feature of many corporations.

1.3. Role and importance of social innovation

Therefore, social innovation has now taken on an increasingly important role of contributing to greater social resilience, as it is considered the central driver for social change.

As humans have always been inventive, through social innovation we can benefit from our natural tendencies for exploration and innovation and put them to use in a way that will benefit our society and help to solve the challenges we are facing.

These innovations are not just a single solution to a problem but a stone on the path that will be able to shift an entire system, which will ultimately contribute to greater social resilience.

Even though numerous social challenges have changed over time and social innovations have been abandoned or displaced, many of these can still be considered to be embedded in the core of our society.

Social innovation is now turning into a global phenomenon, which not only NGOs and social enterprises are giving importance to.

1.4. Objectives

Having understood what social innovation is, what background it has and the importance of it, what can be done for its best implementation? This paper addresses the research question, "What is the best way of implementing social innovation?", with the objective of seeing whether the theory on social innovation aligns with reality, and if not what changes can be proposed.

Therefore, as social innovation is a broad concept, to achieve an answer to the research question it has been subdivided into 5 different objectives, which together will attain the overall objective of this paper.

The first objective is understanding the motivation behind social innovation projects. How and why do these projects start? What context and background do they have? By going into depth on how the theory and real word experience answer

these questions, the beginning of implementing social innovation can be addressed by identifying starting points and purposes.

Secondly, by addressing how these projects are implemented and what steps are taken, the commonest shape of the process of implementing social innovation can be determined.

Thirdly, the objective is to point out who and what projects rely on, to establish what essential agents and resources social innovation project depend on. Therefore, the strategy that is mainly used can be revealed, which is essential as these projects do not take a for-profit form and might not be based on the same principals as strategies for for-profit projects.

The fourth goal is to target the kind of objectives that are mainly used. Are these objectives clearly defined or taking on a general form? By addressing the objectives there will only be a deeper understanding of what they are usually like, and also whether these objectives are linked to their motivations.

Finally, the fifth objective is to get an insight into the type of information and knowledge social innovation projects rely on. Through this objective the approach of the information can be identified, making it possible to see whether projects maintain their information and knowledge constant or if they frequently have to update it.

Therefore, by achieving these five objectives and combining the results from the theory and reality, this paper addresses whether they align and if there need to be adjustments to ensure the best possible way of implementing social innovation.

1.5. Overview

Chapter 1 offers an introduction to the problem that has been presented, which is further discussed through the relevant literature in chapter 2. Having established an introduction and theoretical framework, chapter 3 explains the research methodology that will be used. Chapter 4 focuses on the results achieved from the research and chapter 5 discusses and addresses these results. Finally, chapter 6 presents and highlights the conclusions.

2. Theoretical Framework
2.1. State of the art

As mentioned earlier, social challenges can come in all shapes and sizes, which makes social innovation a very wide concept which, whether it is as a product, process, or programme, can be interpreted and implemented in many different ways. For the simplification of this study we will be referring to the implementation of social innovation as a project that can have the objective of establishing a social innovation in any of the shapes mentioned above.

Due to the diversity of social innovations, there is an inconsistency between the social challenges, each being unique and difficult to standardize as a theory. This

makes social innovation a complex term that does not follow a continuous linear pattern, therefore making it difficult to establish a concrete methodology and meaning there is no defined school of thought (Nicholls, Simon, & Gabriel, 2015). On the contrary, is it a term that on many occasions is interpreted by social innovators to meet their needs, hence leading to the improvisation of its implementation by taking other examples or parts of different studies.

Pue, Vandergeest, & Breznitz, (2015) presents a framework for the process of social innovation in general terms. This process starts with a social entrepreneur or social enterprise that forms a social strategy, which is when an individual forms a new approach based on creativity, knowledge, and experience to try and reconfigure a social problem.

Thereafter, the strategy will be formed by putting together the social innovators' creativity. This must be done by researching the information about the social challenge; based on social environments and social structures, to have as much knowledge as possible. Also, it can be achieved by taking examples from their own and others' experience, which will be put together and used to decide what approach will be taken to try to reconfigure and solve the problem. The strategy will also be a key moment at which the project's objectives are planned and instituted.

From there on, the project will be ready to emerge and be presented to the public by a way of introduction, allowing the public to see and understand the bases of the project before it is actually put into action. Therefore, it is a way of gathering initial support and a strategic attempt of convincing the public to embrace the strategy that will take place.

Once introduced, the project is ready to go live or be adopted into the market where the strategy will play out and social innovators will try to accomplish all the established objectives. This stage will involve the revision of all that is being put into practice, what has been learnt, and if there is any new relevant information.

Finally the project will come to an end by achieving its outcomes and goals. These should also be evaluated, since meeting the goals does not mean that there has been a successful contribution to the social challenge. This can be the case because on the one hand, the ideas of what causes the social problem might have been mistaken and on the other hand, negative externalities might arise. With regard to the outcomes, it is also important to mention that social innovation is not just about solving a problem but can also mean a partial contribution to a final solution. It is a term that must be understood in the wider frame as a part of a grand scheme to further improve our society, so every contribution counts.

Brown & Wyatt (2010) explain a new approach to creating solutions called design thinking. It is based on the notions that customers insights are essential for addressing the needs customers have.

Therefore, the process of creating these new solutions starts by finding an inspiration, which is an opportunity that motivates people to find solutions. This first stage of motivation then creates a brief, which is a way of constraining the

project to the budget, technology available, and the market segment that will help establish objectives and measure the progress. However, it is indispensable that the brief and the motivation is created having experienced the reality of the problem first-hand.

Having spent time in the field studying and observing the problem, it is possible to move on to the design of the solutions and opportunities. In this stage of the process, the ideas formed at the design stage are turned into concrete, fully conceivable action plans. The best course of action for this stage is not to restrict the ideas that come up, but to boost new ideas by putting together teams with diverse types of people and then brainstorming ideas, so as not to fall into the conservative, restrictive tendencies that organization tend to have.

These action plans are later taken to the final stage of implementation where prototypes are created, the ideas are turned into actual products, testing is done and the products are reinforced if needed. Therefore, this stage presents the solutions for the problem and sees if it has been successful or if changes need to be made.

Nevertheless, none of these stages can be carried out without having not only creativity and problem-solving embedded in the core of the project, but also willingness to work with the problem hands-on.

2.2. Factors of Social Innovation

As we have clearly been able to see, the process of implementing social innovation is not that different from any implementation of innovation alone. However, other studies have shown that there are several factors that apply to the term (Mulgan, The Theoretical Foundations, 2012) and therefore must be taken into consideration when executing a social innovation project.

Firstly, most social challenges are based on contradictions, tensions and/or the public's dissatisfaction, which sometimes makes the social challenge even harder to innovate on as there might be different takes on what the real problem actually is. A good example is the ocean plastic waste crisis, with the different sources of the problem and approaches for its solution. Also, something to take into consideration is that the more history the social challenge is linked to, the more impact and public following it is going to have, such as inequality and labour challenges (Fuller & Myers, 1941). Nevertheless, that also means it is probably a harder problem to solve and there are more tensions related to it.

Also, social challenges are dependent on a wide array of actors that can be divided into three categories: the developers, or as we have called them before the social innovators, who initiate and operate the solutions; promoters, who work as partners and whose job it is to be able to provide the connections, infrastructure and funding needed; and supporters, who are going to defuse and expand the knowledge of the social innovation (Butzin & Terstriep, 2018). Some examples of social innovation actors are NPOs/NGOs, Public Bodies, Private Companies, Research & Education, Foundations, Individuals & Networks, Social Enterprises, Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and others.

Social recognition is also essential for social innovation because it is necessary to obtain supporters in the first place. Without social recognition, supporters and even promoters will not be able to identify the project as viable and therefore will not believe in it.

As important as understanding the actors associated to our project, we must also know that each project has a set of vital resources, without which the project cannot be completed, especially with social innovation, as we are dealing with complex social challenges and each project is going to be very specific. However, by vital resources we do not just refer to physical necessities, but also a specific function or action that must be embedded before the social innovation can be developed.

Another factor is that social innovation thrives on trial and error because mostly we are working with the implementation of something new; even if just an improvement, it firstly needs to be tested, which usually leads to errors before it actually works. Due to the complexity of most systems it is unlikely that the company will get it right first time round and will need different alternatives before reaching the objectives.

Furthermore, by formalizing the project, not only will it be officially considered social innovation but it will also be a key way of attracting the necessary promoters for the project. This is important because without that recognition, promoters might not be able to provide what is necessary for the expected outcomes. In addition, by formalizing the project it will be correctly recorded for future use.

This leads us to the next factor, which states that thanks to one social innovation many others can be developed, because it is a matter of looking at the big picture and not just one social challenge. By achieving one social innovation another can come forward and so forth until the social challenge is solved.

However, the final factor is that the knowledge created from social innovation, due to the fast pace of society and the system's complexity, is liable to decay. Even if embedded in our society, most of the information is historically contextual, which means it will lose its value and no longer be as useful as once thought.

2.3. Hypothetical system of implementing social innovation.

As a result of putting together and sharing the theoretical information up to this point, a hypothetical system for the implementation of social innovation can be constructed (Figure 2.3-1). This system will take on a form similar to that proposed by Pue, Vandergeest and Breznitz (2015), but with small adjustments, and simpler, which is useful for analysing and understanding complex models but does not over simplify (Rose, 2007), and a more engaging approach as Brown and Wyatt (2010) suggest. It will also take into consideration all factors brought up above.

As mentioned earlier, the model constructed by the Innovation Policy Lab starts with a social entrepreneur or social enterprise. However, social challenges are normally the reason why the project has started in the first place, which in some instances can come from a social enterprise or a social entrepreneur in search of a

social challenge. Whether projects by social enterprises or social entrepreneurs can be considered social innovation is up for debate because a social entrepreneur is merely an entrepreneur with a social interest (Westley & Antadze, 2010). Also, a social enterprise, even though it might respond to social challenges, is a profit-orientated project that can simply be considered a hybrid (Canadian Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, 2001) unlike social innovation, which has the objective of making a change at a systemic level that can transcend many different sectors (Phills Jr, Deiglmeier, & Miller, 2008). However, it can be argued that social entrepreneurship and social enterprises are a part of social innovation and even if not its purest form they can promote it. For this reason we will be considering them a valid starting point as they address a social challenge that may lead to social innovation later on.

This will inevitably mean that no matter who it is for or where the idea for the project is produced, the process will start at the same point, by establishing a social challenge that needs to be addressed. Therefore, we will consider the strategy to be developed after the social challenge has been established.

Once the strategy has been determined, the project is ready to be presented to the public, which will not only provide the project with the necessary actors, but also, as the article on design thinking by Brown and Wyatt (2010) suggests, will be a key moment for getting insight on the developed ideas from the intended receiving end. Therefore, this will allow the social innovators to make any necessary changes to the strategy before it is adopted.

Once introduced and all the necessary changes are made, the project is ready to be adopted into the market where the strategy will play out and the projects objectives will try to be accomplished. These objectives must be followed and analysed, not only at the end as outcomes, but during the playing out of the project (Beale, 2006), which will ensure that the project is following the right path and make sure it can adapt to the social changes it will foresee.

Finally the project will come to an end by reaching its outcomes. These should also be evaluated for future projects or for the renovation of the present project by measuring the contribution made to the social challenge. The renovation of the present project can appear when the proposed social innovation is very complex and can only be accomplished by the division of projects. For this reason, it is important to highlight, as mentioned in the state of the arts, that social innovation is not just about solving a problem because it can also be a contribution.

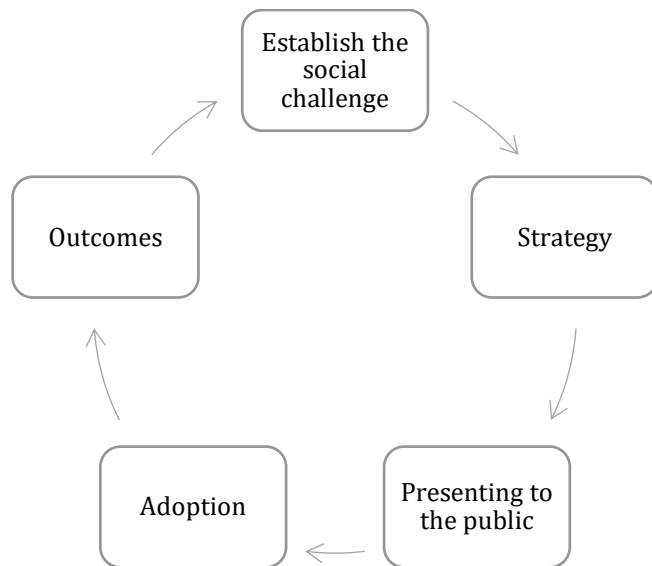Consequently, we achieve a process that takes the following shape:

Figure 2.3-1. Hypothetical system of the implementation of social innovation

Furthermore, all the factors mentioned earlier are presented individually with the intention of taking them into consideration in the wider picture, but for the purposes of understanding what the theory suggests about the process of implementing social innovation, we have applied the factors to the system.

In the first stage of defining the social challenge, we must understand what the problem actually is and where the public stands on it. It is best that we take a step back from the accumulated tensions and look at the facts and true insights. In doing so, not only will we be able to innovate without bias but also understand the big picture and what action the challenge truly needs. This will also result in a clear definition of the social challenge being formed. However, we cannot forget that the larger the historical background is on the issue, the harder it is going to be to define and solve it without steering too far from the actual challenge.

Once the social challenge is established, we can move on to the second stage, which is the strategy. When deciding on what strategy will work best we must have a clear picture of who the actors are and what they can offer the project or what we might need to offer them, which by doing so will create a clear understanding of what the needs and objectives of the project are.

As part of the project's needs we must establish what the vital resources are. The risk of not getting this done during the stage of the strategy can be that the developers might not have realized that they cannot get the resources necessary for such innovation and therefore will not be able to follow through.

It will also be essential that one aspect of presenting to the public should be focused on getting the social recognition needed, as it will subsequently ensure that the social innovation will not only survive the duration of the project but last longer in our society. Whether it has been included in the strategy to obtain recognition whilst presenting the project to the public or not can later on affect the emergence of the project, as by doing so it will obtain more support.

When adopting the social innovation and making it go live, as stated as a factor earlier, most social innovation goes through trial and error before reaching success. For this reason, it is important to consider the great probability that the first drafts of the project will fail, but as this is normal, it should not discourage innovators from pushing forward.

Once the project reaches the outcome stage, it is crucial to get the project's outcomes formalized, as it is not only important to get the plans for the project validated at the beginning through a formalized strategy, but the end result must also be correctly recorded for future use. These outcomes, whether achieving small objectives which bring us close to solving the challenge or which have solved the challenge by themselves, will have an impact on our society. Therefore, if the project has not achieved the outcomes expected and has only been able to contribute limited objectives it is still an important contribution, which must be recorded.

It is important to add that throughout all these stages it is essential that the main factor to consider is having as much insight into the problem as possible. By dealing with the social challenge hand-on not only will it provide a better understanding of the issues but will also give insight on essential details that could have been missed out (Brown & Wyatt, 2010).
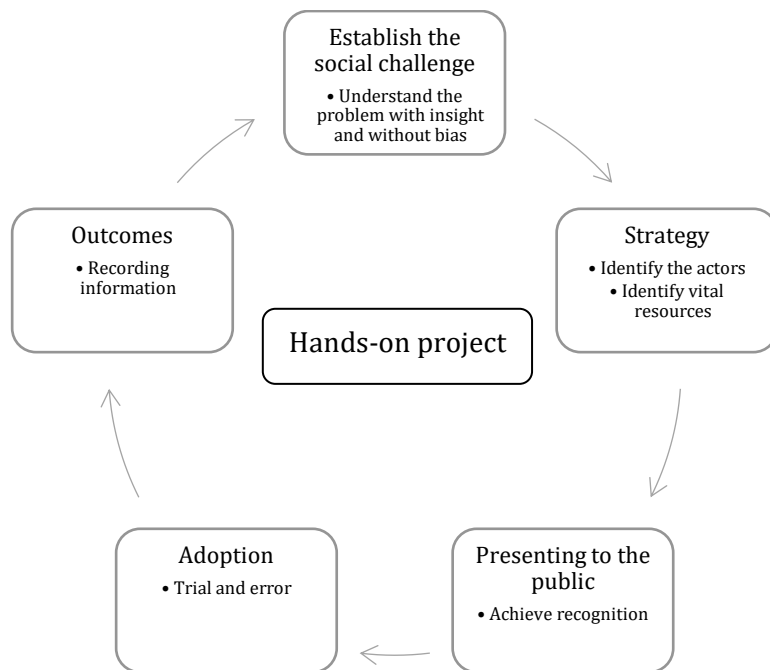

Figure 2.3-2. Hypothetical system of the implementation of social innovation with factors

3. Research methodologies

3.1. Methodological approach

As this paper has the main objective of addressing the question "*What is the best way of implementing social innovation?*", our aim is to achieve a greater in-depth understanding on the topic. Therefore, by putting together theoretical secondary

data[1] on social innovation and how it works, and a primary data[2] collection on what social innovation projects are doing in reality, we are able to contrast and see if the theory and reality align on the implementation of social innovation.

Also, by putting together the theoretical secondary data, we have been able to form a hypothetical model of the process of implementing social innovation, which will also be contrasted with reality to see if it aligns and would work.

Hence, as this paper works on achieving a more in-depth understanding by contrasting social innovation theories with real world projects, most of the data is qualitative, i.e. based on ideas and meanings, with the exception of some quantitative primary data that has been collected, which provides numerical figures (Gibson & Brown, 2009).

3.2. Methods of data collection

Firstly, as much theoretical data as possible was collected from books, academic journals and papers related to social innovation from local and university libraries and Google Academic. The focus was on finding as much relevant theoretical information as possible on the way social innovation is implemented and the factors that surround it.

Afterwards, interviews and surveys were conducted that consisted of 18 questions with a mix of 7 open-end and 11 closed-end answers. The aim was to conduct as many interviews and surveys as possible between the 1st of March and the 30th of April 2021 with projects that work on social innovation.

The participant was defined as a worker on a project of social innovation that has a job related to the process and implementation of the social innovation they work on. Participants were given the choice of doing the interview or survey as both are asking the same questions, and participants were also given the chance to further add any information they felt they could provide. In the case of the surveys, participants remain anonymous, but their projects are identified, while for the interviews, as participants were asked to be filmed; for referencing purposes, they did not remain anonymous.

The projects chosen for participation needed to meet the one condition of working with social innovation and were found through web searches and by word of mouth. Of the 15 projects contacted through email or their contact site on their web pages, 1 accepted the interview, 3 the survey, 1 declined to help and 10 gave no response. The projects were provided with a brief explanation on what the study is about, why they have been chosen, if they would like to participate through an interview or survey and a way of identifying the veracity of who the study is carried out by using LinkedIn.

On the one hand, the interview was conducted through Zoom and on the other the surveys through Google Forms, always with the possibility of it being in Spanish or

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[1] Secondary data: data that has already been collected (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).
[2] Primary data: new data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

English as the interviews and surveys were done on an international level. Furthermore, the questions that were asked to participants were subdivided into 5 categories related to the objectives.

3.3. Practical framework

As has clearly been stated, it is difficult to pinpoint a school of thought for social innovation due to its abstractness and ambiguity. Throughout the theoretical part of this paper, different thoughts on how the process should be implemented and some defining factors were identified. These were also linked together leading to a construction of a hypothetical model for the process of implementing social innovation.

Nevertheless, as was mentioned earlier, to truly see whether such theories can be applied to the real world, a study was conducted to ask several social innovation projects a series of questions. Therefore, these questions will now be addressed and explained in depth.

3.3.1. Case study questions

This study was comprised of 18 questions all chosen with the objectives in mind, with the exception of the first question, which serves as a way of identifying who is giving the answers and as a method of introduction. It also serves to situate the candidates as it focuses their attention on the social innovation project they work on.

Furthermore, to help guide the attention of the candidates and have them answer the questions in a way that will be useful for the study, it was divided into five categories:

- Introduction
- Process
- Essential agents
- Objectives
- Information and knowledge

By doing so, the answers given could be analysed in five different segments that would help identify with greater-ease which theories align with reality and which do not. Each of these categories have a brief introduction so that the candidates know and understand what the objective is when asking the questions. It can also help by making answering easier as they might not have a background in these theories.

The following questions and introductions marked in cursive and grey in the following order are the ones which were used for this study. Furthermore, the formatting of the answer is marked in blue, and each section is explained in further detail maintaining the same format as the rest of the paper.

Introduction

These two first questions are a brief introduction to your project and its background.

1. *Give a brief description of your project.*
   (Open end)
2. *What motivated you to carry it out?*
   (Open end)

Regarding their motivation, the objective is to learn how their social innovation started and see where these projects stand regarding whether ideas and motivations for the projects are come upon or if they are searched for by social innovators.

Process

The theory has suggested that this should be the process a social innovation project must undertake. I would like to see whether that reflects how projects are actually implementing their social innovation.

3. *Does this process reflect the process followed by your project?*
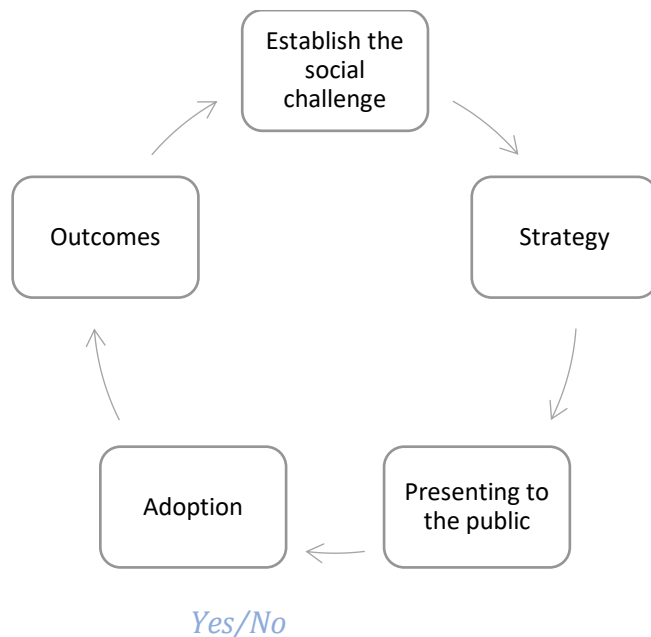
Yes/No

By showing a graphical representation of the hypothetical model constructed of the process the candidates are able to see and compare to their own experience.

4. *Do you consider there to be any missing stages you consider fundamental?*
   Yes/No
5. *If so, what?*
   (Open end)
6. Do you consider there to be any unnecessary stages?
   Yes/No
7. *If so, which one?*
   (Choose one option)
   - *Establish the social challenge*

- *Strategy*
- *Presenting to the public*
- *The social innovation goes live*
- *Outcomes*
- *N/A*

Having given participants the chance to see if the process represented reflects their own, it is important to see how it differs from it. In some instances the candidates might feel there are stages missing or they could feel some are unnecessary.

8. *What stage do you consider most important?*
   (Choose one option)
   - *Establish the social challenge*
   - *Strategy*
   - *Presenting to the public*
   - *The social innovation goes live*
   - *Outcomes*
   - *N/A*
9. *Why?*
   (Open end)
10. *What stage did you consider the hardest to achieve?*
    (Choose one option)
    - *Establish the social challenge*
    - *Strategy*
    - *Presenting to the public*
    - *The social innovation goes live*
    - *Outcomes*
    - *N/A*
11. *Why?*
    (Open end)

Finding out what stage they consider most important and the hardest is essential as it will shed a light on what areas of the process must mainly be focused on. Therefore, by asking "why" we get a better understanding of the reasoning behind their choice.

Essential agents

All projects have essential agents, whether they are actors or specific resources. I would like to know what kind of dependencies your project lies upon.

12. *What actors do you depend on for this social innovation project?*

    (Select those that correspond)

- *NPOs/NGOs*
- *Public Bodies*
- *Private Companies*
- *Research & Education*
- *Foundations*
- *Individuals & Networks*
- *Social Enterprises*
- *Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)*
- *Others*

13. *Without what resources do you consider the project cannot be completed?*
    (Open end)
14. *At what stage of the process would you consider having identified them?*
    (Open end)

By identifying what projects rely on we are able to see not only if the theory is right for the different actors involved, but also what perspective they take on their social innovation. Depending on their necessities they might take a rigorous or flexible approach, which can later on be identified by putting their answers into context.

Objectives

Establishing objectives are a key step in a project, which is why I would like to see what kind of objectives you have.

15. *Did you establish clear objectives to solve the social challenge or considered having a wider objective of contributing to help lessen the problem?*
    (Choose one option)
    - *Clear objetives*
    - *Wider objective*
16. *Have you been able to fulfil your objectives first time round and were they hard to achieve?*
    (Open end)

Due to the nature of social innovation it is not always clear what kind of objectives are being established, some being very generic and others very precise. Depending on the type of objectives which are established, the process of implementing social innovation can take on a completely different form, which is why it is an important question.

Also, it serves as a way of seeing whether the theory of social innovation thriving on trial and error aligns with reality, and if they were able to adapt easily or needed to go through several trials before reaching their objectives.

Information and knowledge on the innovation and/or social challenge you are working on can change as society moves forward or it can stay constantly relevant. I would like to know what kind of information you are working with.

17. *From a scale of 1 to 5, how often do you have to renovate the information related to the innovation you work on?*
    (Choose one option on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being "Information stays relevant, no need to update" and 5 "Information is constantly changing and always needs updating")
    1. *Never*
    2. *Not often*
    3. *Sometimes*
    4. *Frequently*
    5. *Always*
18. *Do you consider that it remains constantly relevant or does it lose its value quickly?*
    (Choose one option)
    - *Remains constant*
    - *Loses its value quickly*

By using a numerical rating scale (NRS) the abstract sense of how much you feel you have to renovate information can be quantified, because studies have shown NRS to be a quick and easy way of validating what one feels (Correll, 2007) Also, addressing whether that information will lose value quickly can justify what the theory suggests.

3.4. Methods of Analysis

Data analysis started by analysing, understanding, and putting together what the theory states, which was later used to achieve the state of the arts. By doing so there could be a deeper understating of what appropriate questions needed to be asked to achieve the objectives. Therefore, once the theoretical analysis had been completed, the practical framework was designed.

Having conducted the interviews and surveys, the data was collected and a content analysis was done by categorizing the answers into the 5 different categories, which afterwards led a discussion of the relevant information. Also, a thematic analysis was done to see whether there were any patterns which could address certain questions. Lastly, a discourse analysis was done to see what could be further understood by contextualizing the answers (Jaspal, 1994).

3.5. Methodology evaluation and justification

The methodology chosen for this paper was based on the idea that the objectives could best be answered with qualitative data due to the theoretical nature of social

innovation. Therefore, a theoretical analysis was inevitable, which by putting together with a study collecting primary data could lead to a deeper understanding on the topic and a provision of new information. This new information not only provides the exact information that is needed for the objectives but might also serve future studies on social innovation.

Other methods could have consisted of achieving the objectives solely through a collection of secondary data based on theories and other studies. However, by doing so no new information is provided and the most that can be offered is a different perspective on the existing knowledge.

As for the methods used for collecting the primary data, the initial idea was to conduct as many structured interviews[3] as possible as on the one hand they would provide longer answers that go further in depth, and on the other maintain a structured analysis and make comparison between answers easier. However, due to the Covid-19 Global Pandemic there was a high chance that many projects would be unavailable for an interview, but the more answers, the more knowledge, better the results would be. Therefore, surveys were also chosen as an alternative so that candidates could choose what method they preferred, which would lead to a higher participation rate. With regards to the method used for the survey, the same investigative questions[4] were used as for the interviews with the same objective of being able to get a better analysis and comparison. These investigative questions were structured and formatted in a way that would make answering them as effortless as possible to not exhaust the candidate causing tired and weak answers. Also, by adapting these to the language the project is in (Spanish or English) a broader audience was reached.

As to the difficulties that were encountered, the first was deciding which projects were apt for the study and which were not, as sometimes projects were encountered that seemed to be social innovation but ended up having a lucrative motivation instead of a social one. Also, due to the Covid-19 Global Pandemic, which in some cases meant candidates did not want to participate, there needed to be a remote approach to the interviews; Zoom was much easier and made international communication a possibility.

The most surprising difficulty was finding projects which had an interest in participating. As seen earlier the participation size for this study is relatively low and most project did not even offer an answer, which is an interesting outcome as they are social projects which do not rely on having lucrative objectives and often benefit from visibility. In the case of The Ocean Clean-Up, they declined to participate due to lack of time and staffing, but Lantegui Batuak, which is a locally

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[3] Structured interviews: Interviews with a standardized structure that ask all candidate the same predetermined questions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

[4] Investigative questions: questions that need to be asked to address the research question and achieve the objectives. In some instances subdivision can help provide better answers (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

based project, gave no answer which was surprising due to this paper being linked to the local university.

Nevertheless, even though the participation size was relatively small, and having more participation would have enhanced the reliability, the study was able to proceed and the objectives were met, which is why this methodology can be considered as having given a successful result.

4. Results

The study carried out for this paper was divided into 5 main subdivisions, which will now be used to present the obtained results from each of the questions asked.

4.1. Introduction

Starting out by the questions related to the introduction, the open-end question 1 asks candidates to present themselves by giving a brief description of their project.

1. Give a brief description of your project.
    (Open end)

Out of the 4 candidates, our first candidate, the project Ampros, described their projects "Depersonas Cocinando con Sentido"[5] and "Depersonas Cultivando tu bienestar"[6] as being a combined activity of promoting healthy diets and jobs for mentally disabled people by hiring them as the project workers. The project aims to offer product traceability from their ecological vegetable plots where they produce high quality foods that will later on be transformed into healthy catering menus, which are provided for school dinners, take aways or to sell at their network of shops, which distribute fresh ecological produce in Cantabria. Therefore, their main objective is to provide an eco-friendly environment with high social value.

The second candidate Venvirotech is a biotechnological start-up that works on transforming organic waste into polyhydroxyalkanoate (PHA) bioplastic. The third candidate Helpsy described their project as applying social innovation to keep clothes out of the trash.

Lastly, Howard was interviewed on his SolarEar project, which creates low-cost rechargeable hearing aids for people made by a team of Botswanan deaf women. Howard explained that not only does he have experience with social innovation through SolarEar but has also worked on 8 or 9 social businesses for the underrepresented people of society like refugees from Brazil, China and Russia, people with mental disabilities and people with physical disabilities, like in this case the deaf. He explained that the main objective of SolarEar is to be able to provide a good education for children who would not have access to it because of their hearing

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[5] Meaning "People cooking with sense"
[6] Meaning "People cultivating your wellbeing"

impediments, which will inevitably give them a better chance in life and not put them at a disadvantage due to their deafness.

Question 2 is also another open-end question that aims to understand what the motivation behind these projects are.

2. *What motivated you to carry it out?*
   (Open end)

The main motivation behind the Ampros project was to find new job opportunities for people with mental disabilities. In the case of Venvirotech it was pushed by a personal environmental motivation. Helpsy's motivation is based on wanting to reduce the climate impact that clothing products are creating and to be able to offer better paid jobs that provide decent living conditions.

As for SolarEar, Howard told us that the story behind his motivation started 30 years ago when he was running a for-profit plumbing business in Montreal, Canada, which he sold to an American company. Five years into this process his 10-year-old daughter Sarah died of a brain aneurysm, and one week afterwards on the first day back at work he was fired because they did not think he would be able to make a profit for them. After unsuccessful therapy and a new business which he did not enjoy, he thought that with his business experience and knowledge he could go to Africa and help women earn a salary to be able to provide health and education to their children, which he explained was to give meaning to his daughter's death and also to his own life. On his first day at the office in rural Botswana a lady brought in Sarah, a teenage student girl who needed a hearing aid. When talking to Sarah he realized that she wanted to finish school for the deaf but could not aspire to greater things because there were no jobs for people with this disability. Moreover, even though Botswanan deaf people are given hearing aids by charities they cannot always afford or access batteries. Also, he explained that there is a stigma attached to being deaf in Botswana because they believe you could be cursed. Therefore, he produced a business plan out of Sarah's hopes and dreams by creating a business making low-cost rechargeable hearing aids by women who are deaf for people with hearing loss. He brought back money raised from Washington DC, and without himself knowing how to create these hearing aids, the school for the deaf invented their first solar charger that provided the rechargeable elements which were used to start the project by maintaining the same hearing aid components.

Howard also added that from his experience talking to others on social innovation projects they generally have a motivation linked to something in their lives. Therefore, he believes that the motivation generally comes to you from certain aspects of your life instead of being looked for.

4.2.   Process

As for the result obtained for the questions regarding the process, for the closed end question 3, which was used to see if the hypothetical process was reflected in their projects, Table 4.2-1 shows that out of the 4 candidates only Ampros answered that they see their projects process reflected in the one suggested.

In the interview, Howard explained that the reality is much more organic; you learn as you go and mistakes are made, without it being so specifically thought out in the first place. From his experience, not only working with social innovation but talking to people that work on other such projects, he explained that the projects are generally not strategically though out, because people come to you and things happen that make it more organic and individualized.

3.   Does this process reflect the process followed by your project?
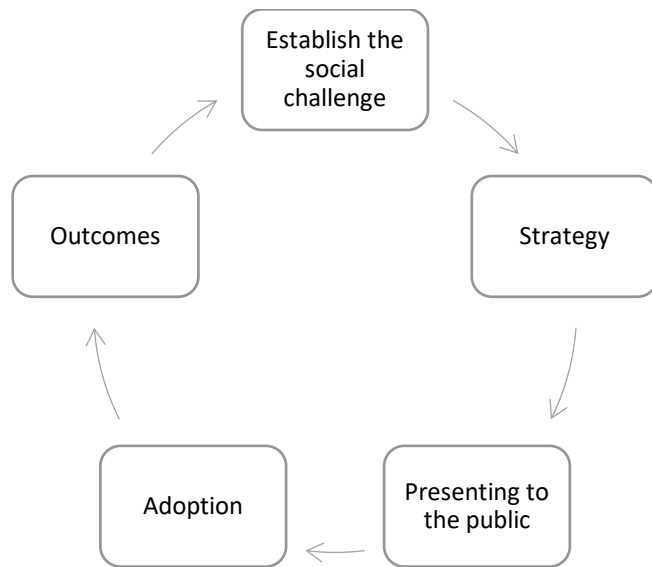
Table 4.2-1 Reflection of the process for the projects

Companies / Reflected process	Yes	No	Total
Ampros	1		1
Venvirotech		1	1
Helpsy		1	1
SolarEar		1	1
Total general	**1**	**3**	**4**

For question 4, it is a closed end question to see what stages could be missing.

Table 4.2-2 shows that all projects considered that there are stages missing from the presented process.

4.   Do you consider there to be any missing stages you consider fundamental?
        Yes/No

Companies / Missing stages	Yes	No	Total
Ampros	1		1
Venvirotech	1		1
Helpsy	1		1
SolarEar	1		1
Total general	**4**	**0**	**4**

Question 5 is a follow-up on question 4.

5. *If so, what?*
   (Open end)

For Ampros, it all depends on the model or methodology used to generate the business idea (for example CANVAS)[7], together with the business plan or where they can develop each of the steps further; for example, marketing plans could be missing.

As for Venvirotech, they believe that establishing the social problem should already be linked to the clients, and Helpsy stated that most of the work is identifying markets/demand and optimizing implementation.

As for SolarEar, in the interview, Howard explained that a good social business, as distinct from a lucrative business which has the objective of selling and getting a profit, works as a three-dimensional model, which he represented as a three-dimensional game of Tic-Tac-Toe, where at the bottom level you are running a sustainable business with all the different departments needed, such as marketing departments, sales department, customer services and so forth where you are making a profit. The second level is the social mission of the organization; and the centre square of every social mission he has worked on is providing education in one form or another to be able to make a change in society. Finally, the third level is the empowerment of your workers by working on communication skills or other relevant skills. Therefore, this three-dimensional frame has to be present globally at all times. At SolarEar they managed to do this by involving the people with the social problem in the solution, in order to be able to keep their social mission in mind as much as possible and get a better understanding, therefore ensuring that the stakeholders are listened to. It also helps to take a step back from the values and beliefs you personally might bring to the problem when in reality that is not what the people you are trying to help need. Consequently, this model, instead of a less organic and more traditional model, ensures not only that the main objective is always embedded in the business, but that a profit is also in mind.

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[7] CANVAS business model is a tool used to explore sustainability orientated innovation businesses. (Joyce & Paquin, 2016)

Regarding question 6, which pinpoints the unnecessary stages from the process shown above, as we can see in Table 4.2-3, all candidates except for SolarEar stated that they see no need to remove any of the stages that were included.

6. Do you consider there to be any unnecessary stages?

Table 4.2-3 Companies that confirmed/denied unnecessary stages

Companies / Unnecessary stages	Yes	No	Total
Ampros		1	1
Venvirotech		1	1
Helpsy		1	1
SolarEar	1		1
Total general	**3**	**1**	**4**

Question 7 is a follow-up on question 6 from which only SolarEar's answer is relevant. Howard explains that there is no one stage that is specifically unnecessary but the process as a whole. He believes that it should be organic through listening better, not bringing different ideologies to a problem that does not regard them as useful, and that it should all be a learning process that leads you on to the next steps. Therefore, no specific stages were identified as unnecessary as we can see represented in Figure 4.2-1.
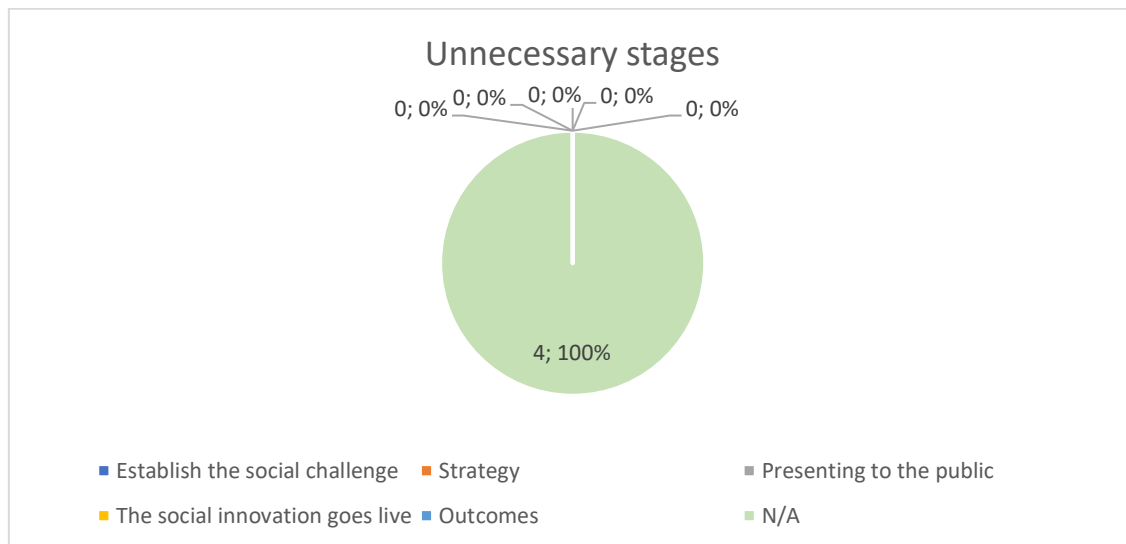
7. If so, which one?

Figure 4.2-1 Representation of the missing unnecessary stages chosen

Question 8 looks at what stages could be considered the most important, which in Figure 4.2-2 we see that Ampros considered the strategy, Venvirotech choose the stage of establishing the social challenge and Helpsy also opted for the strategy. As for Howard, he choose the bottom-up three-dimensional approach which was mentioned earlier.
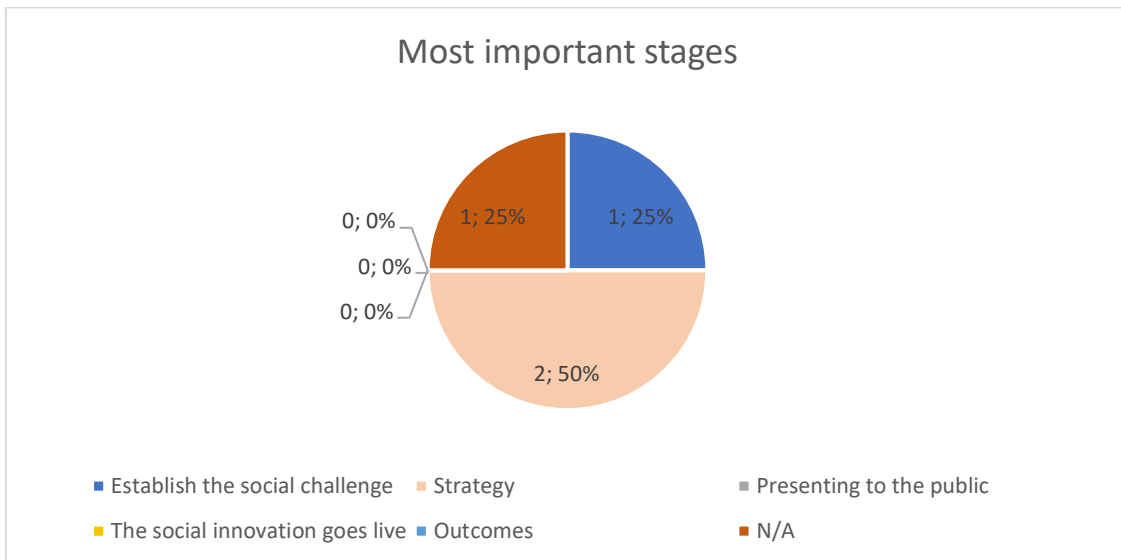
Most important stages

Figure 4.2-2 Representation of the missing most important stages chosen

Question 9 is a follow-up on question 8.

9. *Why?*
   (Open end)

On the one hand, Helpsy explained that they consider the strategy the most important stage because a social enterprise by definition operates with thin profit margins and needs to constantly refine its work to ensure economic sustainability.

On the other hand, Howard considers his bottom-up three-dimensional system the most important, not only stage but system for social innovation projects because it means they are based on the people that actually have the problems. He stated that when working on other social innovation projects, like in Rio de Janeiro, before starting the project he also spoke to the children he intended to help to understand what they really need.

As for question 10, it is a closed-end question to identify the hardest stages of the process. In Figure 4.2-3 we see that Ampros considered adoption, which is the social innovation project going live, as the hardest stage to achieve. For Venvirotech the hardest stage was establishing the social challenge and for Helpsy it is the outcomes of the project.

In his interview, Howard explained that actually putting into practice and working on the social innovation is the hardest part of the project. Therefore, the description that would best fit this is the going live stage of the project.

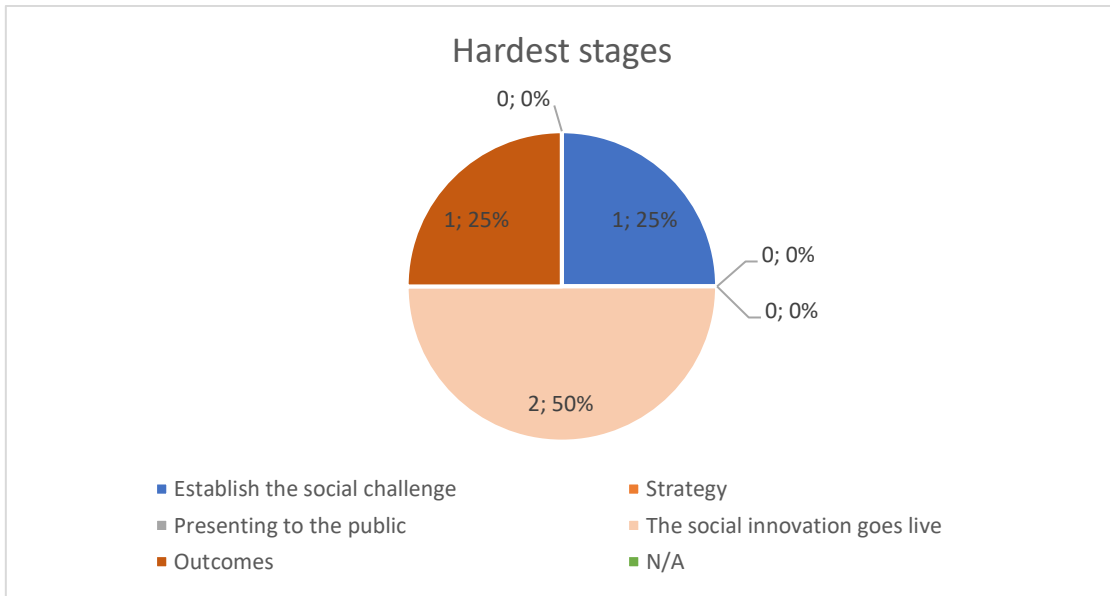10. *What stage did you consider the hardest to achieve?*

Figure 4.2-3 Representation of the missing hardest stages chosen

Question 11 is a follow-up on question 10.

11. Why?
  (Open end)

Helpsy explained that the outcomes of their work are the hardest part of the project due to the difficulty of what they are trying to achieve. As for Howard in SolarEar, he explains that going live and working on the project is the hardest stage because you are constantly making mistakes and having to learn from them.

4.3. Essential agents

Related to the questions on essential social innovation agents, for question 12 a closed-end multiple choice answer was used with different alternatives for who the actors they rely on can be. As Figure 4.3-1 shows, the option 'private companies' was answered the most frequently because all projects answered that they depend on them. In second place we have public bodies which Helpsy and Ampros stated they also rely on, and lastly NPOs/NGOs which only Helpsy relies on.

As for SolarEar, in the interview Howard made no distinction on what agents they depend on because their main dependency is money, so it does not matter who the money comes from as long as they are able to obtain it.

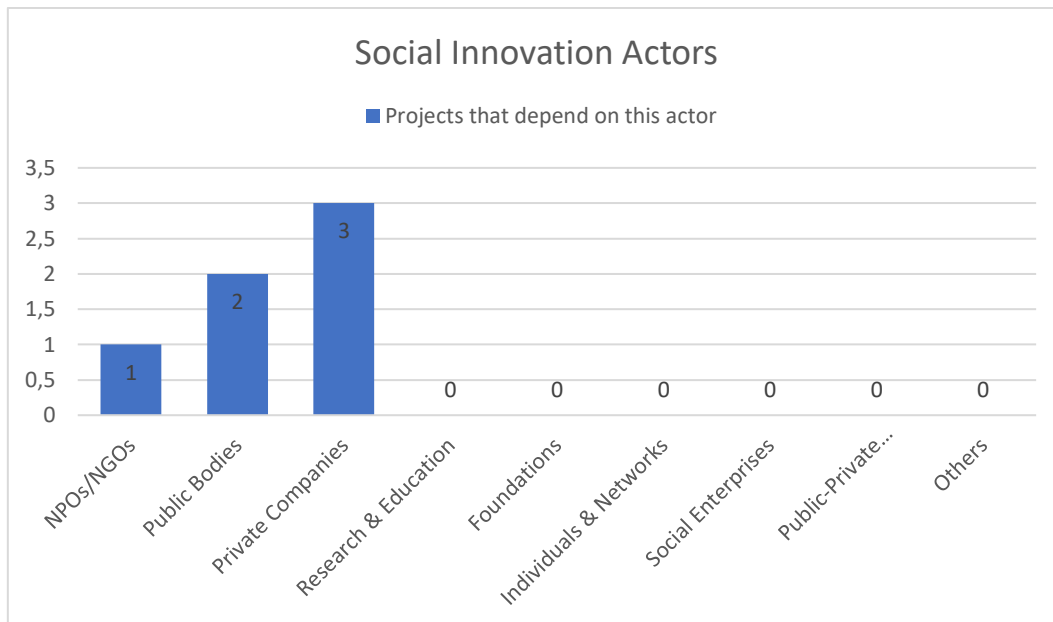*12. What actors do you depend on for this social innovation project?*

Figure 4.3-1 Representation of the most frequently dependent on actors

As for question 13, it is an open-end question to also see what resources they depend on.

13. Without what resources do you consider the project cannot be completed?
    (Open end)

On the one hand, the Ampros project's main resource are investment funds, which currently are very hard for social economic enterprises to obtain. They explain that this is due to the fact that investment plans are designed to work for for-profit companies without taking social businesses into consideration. Therefore, there is no type of investment plan that have the objective of helping the more vulnerable, which essentially makes funding and investments very difficult for social projects.

On the other hand, the Venvirotech project does not seem to rely on any specific resources for the project to be completed. As for Helpsy, they would not be able to complete their project without their private partners and having a clear and rational regulatory framework.

In the interview, Howard states that whether you like it or not the project cannot be completed without funding. However, he also mentioned that without the input and empowerment of the people they are trying to help, they would not be able to complete the project. Therefore, apart from needing funding, there needs to be a social mission that binds everything together.

Question 14 is also an open-end question, but in this case to identify at what stage essential agents and resources are identified.

14. At what stage of the process would you consider having identified them?
    (Open end)

In general, most projects were not able to identify a specific stage of the process for realizing what essential agents and resources they need. Howard explained in his interview that it is something you realize very early on at the beginning of the project. However, Helpsy said that it is an iterative process, which means that identifying the essentials repeats itself many times throughout the project.

4.4.   Objectives

Moving on to the questions related to the objectives, for question 15 a closed-end question was used with two possible answers to see whether they establish clear or wider objectives. As Table 4.4-1 shows, establishing clear objectives was found to be the most frequent answer, but only because SolarEar said they use both methods.

During the interview Howard explained that for his first social innovation project; SolarEar, they used very wide objectives because they were solely interested in being able to survive. Due to the fact that he was going into a market he did not know well and not having had enough experience, in the interview he explains that there was no sense in establishing clear objectives that would create a boundary and limit what they would achieve without even knowing who their customers truly were. However, now that the project is better established and they are moving on to expand and start new projects, also related to hearing aid devices but through phones, the objectives are very clearly defined. Therefore, even though they are branching into new territories, they understand what targets can be met as they have experience in the sector and with social innovation projects and therefore they know what objectives they should be striving for.

15. *Did you establish clear objectives to solve the social challenge or considered having a wider objective of contributing to help lessen the problem?*

Table 4.4-1 Companies type of objective

Companies / Objective Type	Clear objectives	Wider objective	Total
Ampros	1		1
Venvirotech	1		1
Helpsy		1	1
SolarEar	1	1	2
Total general	**3**	**2**	**5**

As for question 16, it is an open-end question that had the intention of seeing how effective and hard the objectives were.

16. *Have you been able to fulfil your objectives first time round and were they hard to achieve?*
    (Open end)

On the one hand, Ampros answered that no, they are not always able to fulfil their objectives first time round because for the past 10 years they have worked with a

strategic plan system; that last year had over 20 objectives, and annual management planes with many subdivisions, which makes achieving what is planned hard. Venvirotech on the other hand answered that they had been able to fulfil their established objectives.

In the case of Helpsy, even though they are a fast-growing project which they consider is making a real difference, they still have not even been able to solve 1% of the problem they are tackling. Therefore, because they answered before that they have broad objectives, it implies that they have not been able to fulfil these objectives due to the size of the problem.

In the interview, Howard explains that in his case they have barely been able to fulfil their objectives first time round due to many errors having been made. These errors provided their learning experience throughout the project and even in their upcoming social innovation project he feels that he is probably making mistakes without even realizing it. However, he also added that the way objectives are fulfilled depends greatly on the personality of who the social innovation project is being pushed forward by. Through an example he explains that a friend of his who also works on social innovation prefers an approach of thinking before doing whereas Howard prefers to act and afterward correct the mistakes. Nevertheless, whether you take one approach or the other, making mistakes is inevitable to achieve the objectives and therefore there is no benefit in over-thinking the objectives. However, it is essential that the errors are controlled in order to meet those objectives and not cause serious damage.

4.5.   Information and knowledge

Regarding the questions related to information and knowledge that is used by the social innovation projects, for question 17 a closed-end question was used with a one-choice answer scaling from 1 to 5, 1 meaning that information stays relevant with no need to update, and 5 that information is constantly changing and always needs updating. From Figure 4.5-1 we can gather that there was a wide array of answers, with 75% of them leaning towards not having to renovate their information very often. In the case of Venvirotech they never feel the need to renovate their information; Ampros sometimes do; but at the other end of the spectrum Helpsy always feels the need to do so.

In the case of SolarEar, Howard explained that they do not often renovate their information because he prefers to take a more practical approach of moving forward through trial and amending errors.

17. From a scale of 1 to 5, how often do you have to renovate the information related to the innovation you work on?
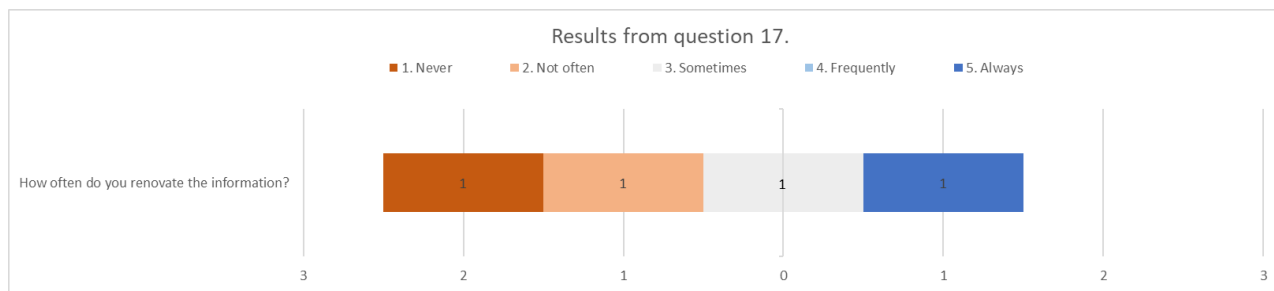
Figure 4.5-1 Results of how often innovation is renovated by the projects

Lastly, for question 18 a closed end question was used with two possible answers to see whether the information used can stay constant and can constantly be used through the project or if it loses its value quickly because of the rapid advances made in society. Table 4.5-1 gives us the idea that the information used by most social innovation projects remains constant and can still be used.

However, in our interview with Howard he expresses that technically he could maintain the information they have on hearing aids and keep the project going with it, but if they not only want to help a few hundred people but thousands they must seek new technologies. Therefore, even if the information remains constantly relevant it is in their best interest to keep on updating it to improve the progress of solving their social problem.

18. Do you consider that it remains constantly relevant or does it lose its value quickly?

Table 4.5-1 Type of information gathered by the companies

Companies / Information Type	Remains constant	Loses its value quickly	Total
Ampros	1		1
Venvirotech	1		1
Helpsy	1		1
SolarEar		1	1
Total general	**3**	**1**	**4**

5. Discussion

Returning to the research question "What is the best way of implementing social innovation?" after having completed the theoretical and the practical framework, all ideas can be put together to obtain the established objectives and ultimately answer the research question.

Firstly, addressing the objective of getting insight on the motivation behind social innovation projects to understand where they come from and their purposes, the theory suggested that social challenges can either be found or searched for, and both could be considered the starting point of the process of implementing social innovation. Candidates showed a wide array of answers stemming from personal motivations of trying to help people with physical or mental disabilities, to wanting to solve climate change problems to trying to help the overall health of the planet. Thus, if only taking into consideration the answers given by the candidates that

participated through questionnaires one could venture to say that the results were consistent with the theory.

However, if the story behind the motivation of SolarEar is carefully taken into consideration we can see that Howard did in fact search for the social innovation, even though he answered that from his personal and others' experience social problems are not looked for but landed on you from certain aspects in your life. In Howard's case the reason to consider that his challenge was searched for is based on him deciding to drop standard businesses and search for a way he could help others, without actually knowing how or what to help them with. By chance, in his search he stumbled upon Sarah and her story, which led him to decide what social cause he wanted to help. Nevertheless, in his search for a social challenge the core value stated by the definition of social innovation, which is having a personal drive to help society through innovation by addressing social challenges, were always present. Thus, as this value is also present when finding or coming upon a social problem, these two divided ways of reaching for the challenge should not be considered as separate. By joining them together, the main motivation is always based on a desire to help society through innovation, which can be considered a starting point for implementation regardless of different contexts.

Secondly, regarding the objective of seeing how the projects are implemented and the steps that need to be taken, not only was a model for process of implementation identified through the theory, but it was then added to other ideas and a hypothetical model was proposed.

Interestingly, even though the hypothetical process aligned with the theory, it did not meet candidates' expectations as all but one felt it did not reflect their own projects and all candidate considered there were missing stages, thus concluding that it is not an accurate representation. It could be argued that the oversimplification of a model means that perfect alignments between reality and theory are not going to be possible and therefore does not mean the model should directly be ruled out. Moreover, in the case of SolarEar, not only did it not align but he rejected the need of the model all together.

The practical aspect of this paper showed that the process of implementing social innovation varies as much as the different types of social innovation that can be found. Some take a more standard business approach and use the same systems as any other business would; others use specific business models and others opt for a learn-as-you-go way of functioning.

Nevertheless, no candidates, except for Howard, found any of the stages to be unnecessary; meaning that whether in that order or not they should all be considered as necessary stages. By taking this into consideration and adding that the most important stages were considered to be establishing a social mission, the strategy, and Howard's three bottom-up system, some alterations could be considered to reflect a more accurate process.

These alterations would start by establishing there is no need for a clear step-by-step order, instead a set of steps which should continuously be addressed and that

can be moulded to suit each project. Establishing the social challenge can be linked to knowing and working with a clear mission in mind, which would be maintained as one step; strategic work would also be another step, but presenting to the public and making the project go live can be grouped into Howard's dimension of working and being in contact with your clients. By grouping these ideas, we address the clear need of having a closer link to the clients and problem, which the theory and practise have shown is essential.

Having proposed these alterations we end up with a similar concept to what Howard proposed through his bottom-up system where there are three main components which are necessary for the implementation of social innovation to work. However, in this model the outcomes seem to have been left out, which were considered one of the difficult stages of implementation. Therefore, because the theory suggests outcomes should be emphasised and the reality shows that obtaining them is not only hard but provides a learning experience from which the project can grow, we must consider them as the fourth key component for implementation. Thus, these four key steps or components now make for a better representation seen in Figure 5-1 for what is needed in the process of implementing social innovation, without limiting it to a rigid one-step-after-another structure. Instead this model offers an approach where all steps must be implemented regardless of their order or whether they are implemented at the same time or not.

Figure 5-1 Reconsideration of the hypothetical process of implementing social innovation

Thirdly, with respect to the objective of establishing what essential agents and dependencies exist with social innovation projects we see that even though many agents were identified through the theory, the reality is that regardless of being social projects they still depend on funds. Thus, any agent which will provide these funds could be considered as essential. However, considering funds essential does not mean they are part of the mission or that they are what drives the project, but non-profit or not, funds are necessary to make projects feasible.

It must also be mentioned that in some cases there are legal requirements linked to the social challenge which might also make legal actors and specific laws essential, as Helpsy stated. Furthermore, interestingly input and empowerment of the people involved in the project was also identified as a necessity for the project to work, which can sometimes be forgotten. Therefore, as teams are a key component of a

project it is vital that their work is recognized and that they feel valued, which can be supported by the importance of team-work mentioned in the design thinking paper by Brown & Wyatt, (2010) mentioned in the theory.

With regards to the fourth objective of targeting the types of goals mainly used, and how difficult they are to achieve, the theory of social innovation thriving on trial and error was identified. The only candidate to have said to be able to fulfil their objectives first time round were Venvirotech, which suggests that it is as hard as stated in the theory to reach the established goals. It should also be mentioned that the difficulty of fulfilling the objectives can depend on the type that they are; thus for Venvirotech, as they established very clear and specific objectives, they could have been easier to achieve. Also, from the interview you can gather that the theory of social innovation projects thriving on trial and error is correct due to the complexity of their challenges that require a process of learning as you go.

It is also interesting to note the risk of establishing specific objectives mentioned by Howard, because without truly understanding the problem and not having enough experience with it and its clients, these objectives can instead of pushing the project forward can limit it. Nevertheless, the more you work with the challenge and the more information you gather, the easier and more productive it is going to be to establish more specific goals, because you know and understand what you are working with.

Finally, the last objective was to identify the approach taken on information and knowledge, to see whether for social innovation projects they have to constantly renew their information, or if it maintains constant. Throughout the theory, it is stated that social innovation is linked to many changes making it difficult for the information gathered to remain useful for long periods of time. However, candidates showed very varied answers, leaning specially towards not having to renovate their information as much as we thought and all but one thought that the value of the information remains constant without losing it quickly.

It is possible that the topic on knowledge and information is not as black and white as it may seem, which explains candidates' answers. It may be true that information and knowledge for social innovation projects is constantly changing and requires a constant learning process, but it does not mean that the information gathered up to that point is not useful anymore. By gathering and adding information to the project's knowledge, they are able to get a deeper understanding of the social challenge; thus they are not renewing but adding. Nevertheless, the fact that the information does not decay as stated in the theory does not minimize the necessity of adding to current knowledge. As Howard explained, always being open to new technologies and updates is essential to make sure they are able to expand and help as many people as possible, which would not be possible without a constant learning process.

6. Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the best way of implementing social innovation. Based on the literature analysed and the study carried out in this paper, it can be concluded that the best way of implementing social innovation is not through a clear structurally defined model or a step-by-step hand-book, but by acknowledging that there are key factors and steps that need to be understood and tailored to each project, thus ensuring success.

This was concluded by understanding the theoretical literature written up to this point, which put together with a hypothesis was tested through an 18-question study on real life social innovation projects to see if the reality aligned with the gathered ideas. The expected outcomes were that the answers would support the arguments provided, and therefore conclude that they are correct. However, the obtained results varied more than expected resulting in adjustments needed to pinpoint the most relevant ideas to meet the objectives and answer the research question.

These ideas can be summarized as; (1) social innovators must ensure that they truly have a personal drive to help with the social mission, regardless of what motivated them in the first place. This will ensure that the social mission is always present, which will not only push their project forward but will enable them to get closer to the problem and how they can address it.

Having a core social mission, (2) projects can implement their innovative ideas by tailoring the steps presented in the model from Figure 5-1 to their processes' needs. These four key steps were the social mission, strategic work, a close relationship with the clients and analysis of the outcomes, which should be considered without a specific timeline, through the whole project.

Also, even though working with projects where profit is not the main goals is very difficult, (3) it is clear that funding and a strong team are the main necessities for the project to achieve their mission. However, this necessity for funds must not be mistaken for a core value, which it is not. As for the teams, the research supports the idea that without a strong connection with all the people involved the project's success could never be guaranteed.

Furthermore, objectives are equally as important but not in the way one may think. Normally objectives are used to measure whether what was expected was obtained, whereas with social innovation, due to the complexity of social problems, (4) objectives should be used less as a measure and more as a learning mechanism. Thus, instead of creating boundaries, objectives can be used to understand the outcomes and where to go from there.

Lastly, (5) information and knowledge, as discussed in chapter 5, is not in need of being reviewed, but does need to be added to. The problem does not lie in the decay of information, because even if not current it serves as a base that can be added to with new information that will lead to a development of the project.

Ultimately, this paper illustrates the difficulties of establishing a theory on social innovation and its implementation, which explains why many projects tend to improvise. As a result of the diversity in candidates' answers it also raises the question of how successful each project will be in comparison to each other, which would emphasize what ideas worked best at the outcomes. However, it was able to provide five key ideas that should be implemented by customization to suit each social innovation project.

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Tables

Figures