CJNSER / ReCROES
Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research
Revue canadienne de recherche sur les OSBL et l'économie sociale

CJNSER / ReCROES
Vol. 15, No. 1, 2024
pp. 52 – 72

An Upside-Down Approach to Social Innovation at Institutions of Higher Education

Maryam Mohiuddin Ahmed, University of Waterloo
Ross VeLure Roholt, University of Minnesota
Jennifer M. Catalano, Starling Collaborative
Sean Geobey, University of Waterloo

ABSTRACT

Experts commonly assert that social innovation is best taught outside of higher education, given that higher education institutions are prone to rigidity traps. Opposing research suggests that social innovation can flourish *within* institutions of higher education when they embrace new ways of teaching and learning. Using a student-initiated and led Social Innovation Organization (SIO) at a university in South Asia as a case study, this article considers how social innovation education might emerge from and take root within institutions of higher education and what the consequences are for social relations, power structures, and institutional practices.

RÉSUMÉ

Les experts affirment généralement qu'il est préférable d'enseigner l'innovation sociale en dehors des établissements d'enseignement supérieur, étant donné que ceux-ci sont sujets à des pièges de rigidité. Des recherches opposées suggèrent que l'innovation sociale peut prospérer au sein des établissements d'enseignement supérieur lorsque ces derniers adoptent de nouvelles méthodes d'enseignement et d'apprentissage. En utilisant comme étude de cas une organisation d'innovation sociale (OIS) lancée et dirigée par les étudiants d'une université en Asie du Sud, cet article examine comment l'éducation à l'innovation sociale pourrait émerger et s'enraciner dans des établissements d'enseignement supérieur, et quelles en seraient les conséquences sur le plan des rapports sociaux, des structures de pouvoir et des pratiques institutionnelles.

Keywords / Mots clés : social innovation, higher education, decolonial pedagogy, community-based participatory approaches / innovation sociale, enseignement supérieur, pédagogie décoloniale, approches participatives communautaires

INTRODUCTION

Many scholars and practitioners believe that social innovation is best taught outside of higher education (Wilson, 2016), given their propensity to rigidity traps (McGowan, Kennedy, El-Hussein, & Chief 2020; Tidball, 2016; Rogers, 2013; Butler & Goldstein, 2010; Carpenter & Brock, 2008). Others argue that social innovation education can flourish within institutions of higher education, but this suggests the embrace of new ways of teaching and learning (Wagner, 2012). In the authors' experience, social innovation education outside of institutions of higher education has advantages: the education can be flexible, include participants from a wide variety of backgrounds, and allow student entrepreneurs to move quickly from ideation to pilot. The case study described in this article indicates that placing social innovation frameworks within institutions of higher education has value. The social innovation curriculum can receive institutional stability, benefit from the university's material resources (in-kind donations), the curriculum can tap into a wider ecosystem of learning, and institutional bureaucracy can provide levels of transparency and accountability that external funders often value.

This article shares a case study of the student-initiated and led Social Innovation Organization (SIO) at a university in South Asia between 2010 and 2012. Stories of innovation and institutional change within higher education are often told from the perspective of the institution or faculty. This case study shares a story of how students can also drive change and innovation at universities, highlighting the conditions, process, and implications of an impetus to structural change within the institution that originates from the "bottom" or grassroots of the institutional system, rather than from the top down. For this reason, this article refers to the SIO's curricular structure and pedagogical leanings as an "upside-down approach" to social innovation education. The authors explore how this approach fundamentally gestured towards decoloniality (Andreotti, 2021) through a centring of land-based, community-centred approaches rooted in traditional and indigenous wisdoms (Coomaraswamy, 1943; Panikkar, 1993). In its attempts to navigate the rigidity traps inherent in modern colonial (Andreotti, 2021) institutions of higher education (McGowan et al., 2020), the SIO created a pathway for students to both take curricular leadership around social innovation and to design and pilot test social innovations.

POSITIONALITY AND DECOLONIAL LENS

This research and case study arise from over 10 years of relationship and friendship between the first three authors rooted in participatory, land-based, and wisdom-centric (Coomaraswamy, 1943; Panikkar, 1993) leanings to systems change work. In their work together, the authors have unlearned, (re)discovered, and strengthened their commitment to decolonizing their lenses, methods, and ways of being, knowing, and doing. Each of the four authors brings overlapping and distinct lived experiences to inform and guide this collaborative work.

The first three authors met through a joint project. Maryam was the co-founder of the SIO, which was eventually funded by the Mastercard Foundation in partnership with Tufts University, where Jennifer served as the Project Lead. Ross was contracted as part of the project evaluation team. Sean was brought into the mix given his deep relationality with the first two authors and expertise in social innovation.

Maryam Mohiuddin Ahmed grew up in Pakistan and completed her studies in law and human rights in Lahore, Pakistan and Berkeley, United States. She brings over 15 years of experience in human rights, social justice, youth leadership, social innovation, and entrepreneurship. Maryam is currently completing her doctoral work and teaching at the University of Waterloo in Canada. She is a decolonial scholar and wisdom practitioner based in the Haldimand Tract (colonially known as Waterloo, ON).

Ross VeLure Roholt grew up in the Midwest of the United States and completed his undergraduate studies in political science and international relations, his master's in social work, and his doctorate in education at the University of Minnesota. He is a publicly engaged scholar with over two decades of experience and active research partnerships in the United States, Northern Ireland, and Croatia.

Jennifer Catalano grew up on the East Coast of the United States. She completed her undergraduate studies in international relations at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a master's degree in international affairs at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. She has 20 years of experience as a practitioner in the field of global social change.

Sean Geobey is a first-generation post-secondary student who grew up in Southern Ontario and is now a publicly engaged scholar with over 20 years of experience as a social innovation practitioner based at the University of Waterloo on the Haldimand Tract where he directs the interdisciplinary Waterloo Institute for Complexity and Innovation (WICI). He completed undergraduate studies in economics and political science at Wilfrid Laurier University. He received a master's degree in economics at Queen's University, and a PhD in environment and resource studies at the University of Waterloo.

The authors are united by their commitment to decolonial, participatory, and liberatory education practice and scholarship. They bring unique perspectives on decolonial studies given their different upbringings and education.

METHODOLOGY

Data on the SIO first emerged during a wider, multi-site study on the role of higher education in supporting youth economic futures (VeLure Roholt, Carrier, Furco, DeJaghre, & Fink, 2016). The project was initially designed around innovations within higher education that created pathways from degree to career. After a competitive process to select eight university partners, the focus shifted slightly as all finalists focused on entrepreneurship education, and several of the eight program sites included social entrepreneurship as a priority in addition to standard entrepreneurship. Funded by the Mastercard Foundation, this larger action research project provided data on and documented impacts from the teaching and learning initiated by the SIO.

This article draws from a larger study that includes mixed methods, with the researchers gathering survey, observational, and interview data over a three-year period with yearly visits to each of the eight sites. Data from both the larger project, joint gatherings, historical document review, and informal conversations and formal interviews with leadership and designers of the SIO informs and shapes this description (VeLure Roholt et al., 2016).

This article focuses on the data collected from one of these eight partner program sites, the Social Innovation Lab (SIL), where the SIO originated. The overall methodology of the project was conceived as a learning partnership (Magolda, 2012; VeLure Roholt, Fink, & Ahmed, 2023), with the researcher and site-partner team working together to develop and prioritize evaluation and research questions as well as gather data, analyze it, and report on the findings. The learning partner methodology draws from participatory, liberatory, and decolonial approaches to knowledge (VeLure Roholt et al., 2023). The authors sought to craft a study grounded in cultural ways of knowing (Chilisa & Mertens, 2021), spending several days talking about and coming to an understanding of how to design the evaluation and action research to align with local values and include culturally responsive methods. The study incorporated storytelling, dialogic interviewing, and participatory observation as important elements to gather data. The authors discussed the emerging data and the ideas they understood were important to illuminate. The learnings were shared initially in conversations with the community. The learning partners took the ideas explored in conversation with the community and drafted reports and other documents to share what was learned. All documents were returned to the partner for review and comment. Reports were finalized when all involved agreed with the overall story in the report.

Through this process, the SIO emerged as a significant piece of the overall story within one university site of how social innovation education moved from the margins to the mainstream. To understand the multiple pathways universities can take to support and extend teaching and learning around social innovation, the authors directly focused on understanding the origins, early challenges, and practices of this SIO.

FRAMING SOCIAL INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PROMISES AND PITFALLS

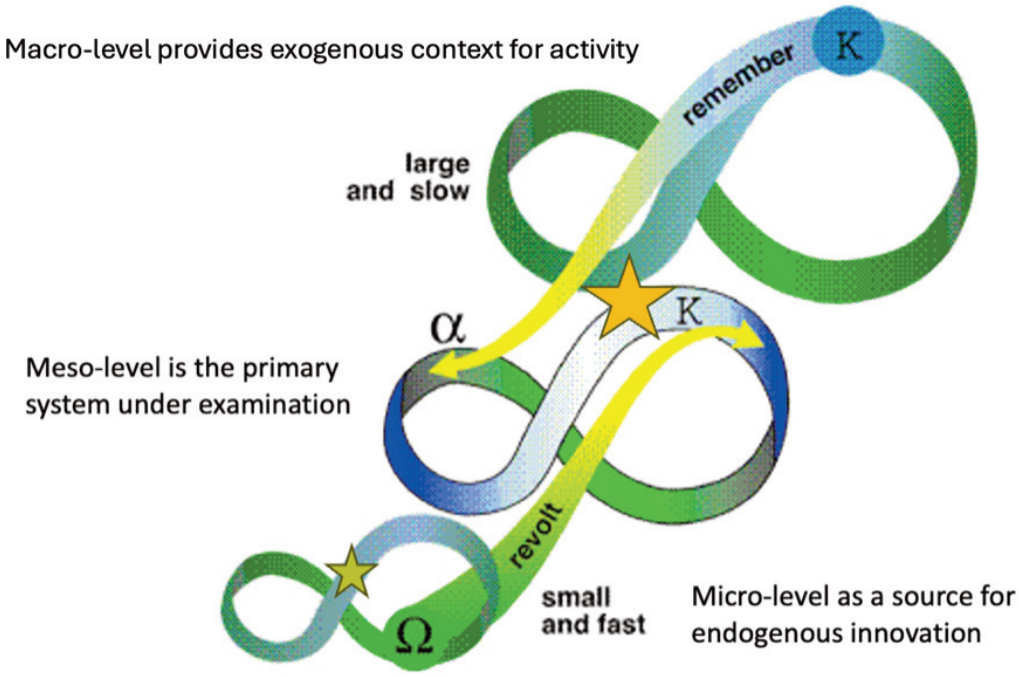
Currently, researchers and practitioners around the globe are working to expand and embed social innovation teaching and learning within higher education (Hazenberg, Ryu, & Giroletti, 2020). Many of these efforts are designed to support sustainable development and address pressing social issues both locally and globally (Hazenberg et al., 2020). The expansion of these efforts is shining a light on the promises and pitfalls of locating social innovation teaching and learning within institutions of higher education. This section begins with a definition of social innovation, then describes three promising movements in higher education that support social innovation teaching and learning, and three pitfalls that have to be reconciled for it to advance. This brief review frames the context for the case study on the SIO that follows.

Writing about social innovation poses challenges—an agreed upon definition does not yet exist, nor do universally accepted metrics to measure it effectively (Bund, Gerhard, Hoelscher, & Mildenberger, 2015). This article does not attempt to synthesize all the possible definitions, and instead focuses on those that have informed this work. The authors' understanding of social innovation recognizes a multitude of scholars and definitions. The variety of definitions often illuminate the social over the individual, a process toward a product or outcome, while constantly questioning the forms, uses, and possibilities of power (Bund et al., 2015; Westley & Antadze, 2013). The authors embrace the inclusion of students involved in social innovation education and how they come to understand what they are learning.

Fradette Whitney (2018) interviewed students who defined social innovation as "designing new solutions to make the world a better place" (p. 157). This definition includes two assertions about the meaning of the term *social innovation* that are worth unpacking: 1) that it involves something novel (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014), and 2) that it produces a benefit that is social in nature (rather than purely economic) (Bergman, Markusson, Connor, Middlemiss, & Ricci, 2010). The multiple truths in defining social innovation quickly emerge when one explores the literature. One group of scholars advocate for a definition of social innovation as being fundamentally concerned with the production of social benefit, many disagree with the idea that social innovation must be novel, while some disagree that it produces benefit (Hochgerner, 2011; Westley and Antadze, 2013). For example, social innovation might encompass processes that require decolonization (Kalema, 2019), regenerative design and development (Hardman, 2012; Wahl & Baxter, 2008; Wahl, 2016), and repair ideas, bringing forward old ideas to illustrate both how current problems have come to be and how historically others have worked to both prevent and now solve these social problems (Ahmed, Ayub, & Khan, 2012). By contrast, the historical approach taken by Westley, McGowan, Tjörnbo, and others (2017) also applies the social innovation lens to system changes that can be seen as having quite destructive social and environmental impacts, including intelligence tests, residential schools, and the global derivatives market. We are inclined to agree with those that describe social innovation as innovations that are social in both ends and means (Nicholls, Simon, & Gabriel, 2015), with a focus that extends beyond products and looks more toward transformations in social systems. Bringing together these ideas, contradictions, and themes, Bund et al. (2015) describe social innovation as having three dimensions: a product/service, a process, and attention to power. Social innovations simultaneously address a human need (product/service), work in ways that are inclusive and participatory (a process), and challenge or change existing power relationships within society (Bund et al., 2015). Our working definition of social innovations is a collective creative process that addresses a perceived social need.

Alongside this, the approach to social innovation taken here is grounded within complex adaptive systems theory (Westley & Antadze, 2013). In this vein, social innovation can also be described, depending on the scope and scale of its efforts, as either working within nested systems (Walloth, 2016) or by its propensity to cultivate the "new emergence" (p. 15) of systems. This multi-level lens is well-grounded in complex systems theory (e.g., Ahl & Allen, 1996; Gunderson & Holling, 2002) and connected to autopoietic (self-organizing) emergent behaviour (Maturana & Varela, 1991). When social innovation emerges within higher education, it illuminates higher education as a complex system, composed of nested systems and various propensities, all interacting to create an ecology of knowledge production, teaching, and learning. This article takes a multi-level systems perspective on innovation (Ahl & Allen, 1996; Holling & Allen, 2002; Holling & Gunderson, 2002), with the student-led efforts emerging from the micro-level within the university, the university itself as a meso-level site of interest for adoption of a potential social innovation, and the macro-level representing the economic, cultural, and political constraints faced by academic institutions in the region (see Figure 1). This framework for multi-level systems analysis has the strength of being able to show how different levels within the system work at different speeds through the dynamic process of exploration, exploitation, conservation, and collapse at different scales, with the innovative micro level generally moving quickest and the macro level changing slowly.

Figure 1. Multi-level dynamic system



Source: Adapted from Holling & Gunderson, 2002

In recent years, more Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have added language about social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship to their mission statements, moving beyond an implicit agreement that their teaching should benefit society to a more explicit agreement that they should teach and develop social innovators and even directly launch social innovations (Giesecke, Lassnigg, Steiner, Schartinger, Leitner, Vogtenhuber, & Kalcik, 2020). Over the last 20 years, we have seen promising movements that create fertile space for social innovation teaching. This article will focus on three such movements. First, HEIs often have major elements that support social innovation, including knowledge production, material resources, human resources, and curricular resources (Hazenberg et al., 2020). Second, HEIs are expressing a commitment to public engagement and community engagement in progressively significant numbers (Boyer, 1990). This is increasingly understood to be part of their role rather than optional (although in practice it still is optional). Finally, more and more HEIs are leaning into grand challenges and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals as a focus for their scholarship and curriculum (Popowitz & Dorgelo, 2018).

Promising movements supporting social innovation education

Social innovation teaching and learning requires resources. Wagner (2012) describes three critical factors to teaching social innovation: expert knowledge, creative thinking, and personal motivation. As anchor institutions (Garton, 2021) in their communities, HEIs have resources that they can often easily share to support social innovation, including material and human resources. Material resources are abundant on college campuses, including space, technology infrastructure, libraries, and common spaces that can be used to support social innovation teaching and learning. They also have human resources—faculty, staff, legal representation, community partnerships, and alumni—that can be invited to support social innovation teaching and learning. Finally, many HEIs already

offer curricular options that support social innovation teaching and learning (Hazenberg et al., 2020; Monteiro, Isusi-Fagoaga, Almeida, & García-Aracil, 2021). HEIs have resources and expert knowledge that can be directed toward supporting social innovation.

Many HEIs stated public commitments to community engaged work also offer a promising window of opportunity for innovative social innovation teaching and learning. Building off discontent within higher education and what many perceived as its failed mission to serve the broader public, Boyer (1990) called on HEIs to consider scholarship beyond discovery. This report expanded the community engaged and public engaged movements on campuses globally, providing a rationale and framework to understand scholarship as discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Community-engaged scholarship aims to redesign basic university functions to support reciprocal relationships between HEI faculty, staff, students, and communities, however defined (Da Cruz, 2018). These partnerships create connections between "the intellectual assets of the institution (i.e., faculty expertise) to public issues such as community, social, cultural, human, and economic development" (Glass & Fitzgerald, 2010, p.15), which are consistent with promising social innovation pedagogies.

A final promising movement for social innovation teaching and learning in HEIs emerged with the increasing focus on grand challenges in both new curricular offerings and research agendas (Popowitz & Dorgelo, 2018). The purpose of grand challenge initiatives is to bring together multiple disciplines to respond to local and global problems with an emphasis on multi-disciplinary research and student-led innovation efforts (Popowitz & Dorgelo, 2018). These initiatives have been joined by other orientating efforts to address global problems through aligning HEI teaching and research efforts to the current Sustainable Development Goals (Ravazzoli & Varelo, 2020). Some HEI networks, such as Aurora in Europe, are forming to support interdisciplinary collaborations across HEIs to encourage innovative responses that impact these goals. While notable, all these movements in higher education continue the trend of top-down innovation, rather than the upside-down approach explored later in this article.

Persistent pitfalls for social innovation education

The rise of the promising movements in HEIs supportive of social innovation education is matched by the enduring pitfalls within HEIs that challenge and resist this form of education. This article focuses on three pitfalls: prioritization of the individual, "banking" knowledge consumption (Freire, 2000), and cultures of exclusion. Each of these create challenges for social innovation education to fully flourish beyond a set of courses or a degree program students complete.

HEIs are geared toward individual accomplishment and production. These attitudes have been further reinforced in higher education with the ongoing neoliberal global education reform movement (Adamson, Astrand, & Darling-Hammond, 2016). This reform strengthens competition and standardization at the expense of public engagement and further reinforces education as a personal commodity to be consumed, rather than a public good. This can be seen across HEIs predominantly in the Global North (and increasingly in the Global South as well) with the added emphasis on individual accomplishment and the mundane focus on individual assessments (del Cerro Santamaría, 2019). Social innovation education has a different foundation, one that emphasizes collaboration and knowledge sharing as the basis for changemaking (Alden Rivers, Armellini, Maxwell, Allen, &

Durkin, 2015; Wagner, 2012). In practice, social innovation frameworks can also support a focus on individual accomplishment and hero discourses (Martin, 2003; Nicholls & Murdock, 2012), but this is misleading. While stories of successful social innovation often create a hero narrative of a lone individual who struggled to surmount enormous challenges to bring their social innovation into the world (Young & Lecy, 2014), further questioning usually reveals the networks of support and effort that truly came together for the innovation to work (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012). A good idea alone does not make a social innovation. Even though it has been said often, it is worth repeating here: "social innovation is not a solo endeavor" (Fradette Whitney, 2018, p. 197).

The neoliberal movement in HEIs further strengthens the social roles and social processes around knowledge and its production as extractive, individualistic, and competitive (Morgan, 2022; Saunders, 2007), and intentionally or unintentionally have contributed to epistemicide —the killing of knowledge systems (Hall & Tandon, 2017). Current social processes and socio-structural arrangements create an environment where knowledge is evaluated through economic utility (Morgan, 2022; Saunders, 2007). This one-way process of knowledge production, shaped by the epistemological norms of settler-colonialism (Andreotti, 2021; Kalema, 2019; Mamdani, 2015), creates another barrier to social innovation education given that social innovation often envisions students as the primary producers of knowledge in partnership with communities—taking responsibility for their own learning and creating connections between what is known and what must be done to address pressing social problems (Giesecke et al., 2020). Students bring knowledge that is contextual, place-based, and rooted in their lived experiences. Within social innovation education, students develop comfort with not-knowing, as they wade through complex adaptive problems that have no instruction manual. Cooperative peer-to-peer learning, where students are both knowledge consumers and producers, remains central to social innovation education (Wagner, 2012). Typical pedagogical approaches in social innovation teaching and learning include community engagement whereas more critical approaches (Kalema, 2019) encourage radical collaboration (Tamm & Luyet, 2004) with communities. They promote reflective and reflexive activities to recognize the value of their communities', other communities', and their own wisdom and knowledge. Finally, they encourage co-production and co-design, whereby students become partners in what is learned and designed (Elliott, Robson, & Dudau, 2021), sharing it with others so that together they can address public issues they personally care about.

A final pitfall for social innovation education in HEIs is the issue of diversity and inclusivity. In the universities we have worked in, diversity is promoted even while the system continues to operate according to a logic of exclusivity—of students, faculty, and curriculum (Rosinger, Sarita Ford, & Choy, 2020; Saunders, 2007). This poses a critical challenge for the role of HEIs in education for social innovation. We know that people who have a deep understanding of a social issue also have ideas for how to solve them (Wilson, 2016). Yet, HEIs participate in epistemicide (Hall & Tandon, 2017), have a poor record of increasing diversity among students (Rosinger et al., 2021; Saunders, 2007), and function as exclusive spaces (Hall & Tandon, 2017), making community engagement challenging (Farner, 2019). For social innovation education to flourish within HEIs, engaging a wide range of stakeholders is often described as critical (Martin, 2003; Nicholls & Murdock, 2012). An exclusive HEI environment can create a persistent challenge to social innovation teaching and learning.

HEIs have increasingly focused on social innovation as an institutional strategic goal, research focus, and educational programmatic area. In many ways, HEIs have much to offer social innovation education. At the same time, current structures, cultures, and power dynamics in HEIs create real and significant barriers for the necessary learning processes within social innovation education.

The debate as to whether HEIs *should* support social innovation education for us comes down to a question of pedagogy and power. As we explored the promises and pitfalls of teaching social innovation in HEIs, we began to ask: how can higher education invite students to be innovative so that it lives up to its promise while avoiding the pitfalls? This article dives into one example of social innovation teaching and learning to understand how higher education can support social innovation teaching and learning. In our analysis, this case study offers an example that illuminates how social innovation education can exist within HEIs by inviting unexpected leaders and working through an upside-down approach. This example offers a strategy for HEIs to support social innovation that amplifies their promises and works hard to avoid the pitfalls.

RIGIDITY TRAPS AS A CONCEPTUAL BASIS FOR UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This case study is grounded in the concept of rigidity traps in higher education, as discussed by McGowan et al. (2020). In line with the framing of a HEI as a complex system, wherein social innovation emerges as a nested system (see Walloth, 2016), rigidity traps provide an important frame to understand the features and actions of the enclosing system.

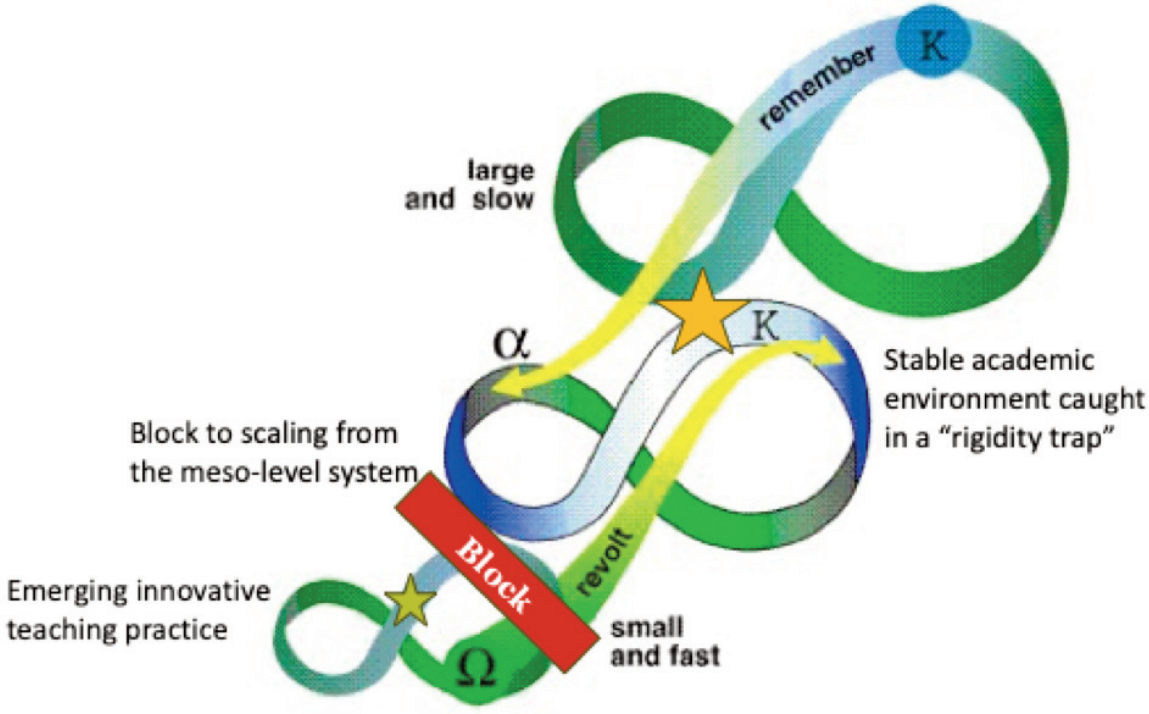
Rigidity traps occur "when a system becomes locked into a pathway that leads to a densely networked, self-reinforcing and inflexible set of arrangements—and power and profitability are mutually reinforcing, making change unattractive for those within the system" (McGowan et al, 2020, p. 307). Rigidity traps create incentives to continue working in the ways the system has always worked. These reinforce the pitfalls and challenge the promises of social innovation education in institutions of higher education. In other words, without rigidity traps, there would be no pitfalls.

Rigidity traps provide a nuanced understanding of this case study. As with most HEI's, there existed a power structure sustained by academic and management pursuits of an international scholarly agenda at the university, creating an environment where the SIO could flourish initially, because it was perceived as politically protected, less important, and non-threatening. The power structures within a HEI are themselves structured within the constraints offered by their broader social, political, cultural, and economic contexts. Senior leadership within HEIs can be expected to view the navigation of this wider contexts as amongst their core responsibilities.

The case study also draws on McGowan et al.'s (2020) framing of "dominionization," a process in which "the ownership of expertise" is "expressed primarily by those schooled and working in traditional Western higher education organizations" (p. 307). This dominionization can lead to "institutional path dependence on colonial and extractive practices and ethos," reinforcing rigidity traps. The SIO's work was aligned with decolonial principles, implicitly challenging colonial and neoliberal logics present in higher education institutions. This alignment created tensions as its work advanced.

The SIO's approach to social innovation education challenged the status quo, acting as a "systems-disrupting" force within the university. The concept of dominionization is reflected in this case, where the SIO's work challenged the dominance of one kind of knowledge within the institution. Challenging a fundamental epistemological underpinning of a system that perceives itself as being successful in its given context can spur a protective response limiting the growth of emergent social innovations that can simultaneously disrupt the status quo in the immediate term, while also adding to the long-term resilience of the system were it to be adopted (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Blocked innovation in a multi-level dynamic academic system



Source: Adapted from Holling & Gunderson, 2002

As evidenced in the following case study, an upside-down approach to social innovation education, combined with implicit wisdom-centric decolonization efforts (Coomaraswamy, 1943, Panikkar, 1993), offered a potential workaround to existing rigidity traps in this higher education institution. By scaling deep instead of up to begin with, and focusing on engaging in non-formal activities, the SIO managed to navigate around the rigidity traps until the scale-up brought new challenges. This study highlights the importance of navigating prevailing power structures and adopting innovative approaches to foster social innovation education in higher education institutions. It offers an answer to the question "How can an upside-down approach to social innovation training and education provide a case for addressing rigidity traps?"

THE SOCIAL INNOVATION ORGANIZATION (SIO): A CASE STUDY IN THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION EDUCATION

This case does not follow a top-down pathway. Instead, it started with a group of students who

had an interest, time, and ideas of how they could introduce and create social innovation teaching and learning with their peers.

The SIO adopted an upside-down approach to social innovation education, eschewing formal coursework and instead focusing on extracurricular learning and non-formal training. This approach allowed the SIO to create opportunities for students to learn about social innovation without directly challenging the prevailing rigidity traps at X University. The SIO's story invites HEIs to imagine possibilities for supporting social innovation teaching and learning by creating partnerships, networks, and opportunities that displace a banking model of education (Freire, 2000) and invite a participatory, collaborative, and inclusive methodology for teaching social innovation. When viewed as a propensity within the Panarchy framework (Gunderson & Holling, 2002), an upside-down approach acts as "ever-new emergence," leading to a nesting of a wisdom-centric, decolonial approach to social innovation within the complex system of higher education. Some key learnings from this approach are summarized as follows:

1. The SIO case provides a model of how universities can create the space and opportunity for students to lead. In essence, an upside-down approach to social innovation education in HEI ought to be based on the premise that everyone can lead.
2. The SIO case serves as an excellent example of the value of fostering partnerships between the university and the community. In essence, it allows for the (seemingly upside-down) recognition of the community as educators.
3. The SIO case further illustrates that innovation is not a "classroom." It is an ecology around space, which was exemplified in the experience of the organization. This leads us to the realization that innovation happens in the in-between spaces, not simply in classrooms, but most often in networks.
4. As the students behind the SIO went on to write the foundational handbook on social innovation and social entrepreneurship in the country, it became clear that, sometimes, documentation is the intervention. Through this publication where they added narrative to the stories they heard from the community, the SIO team garnered subject matter expertise, and therefore some degree of formal authority.
5. Given the SIO's decolonial lens to this work, one of the key learnings for the team was that truly upside-down approaches tend to be a social innovation in their own right. As such, community-based learning is social innovation.

An upside-down approach: Designing from the ground-up[1]

As one of the founding members of the SIO in 2011, reflecting on our upside-down approach to social impact work reaffirms the fundamental idea that to produce different results, we also need to be doing things differently. Some of the "upside-down" nature of our work had to do with our reality at the time: the SIO was the product of a student movement (Literaty[2]) that had very little formal authority at the university. Important context here is that the university can be considered a premier neo-liberal institute of higher education; it is often referred to as the "Harvard (University)" of the country (Tavernise, 2019), and hosts the country's top business school. It has also received numerous accolades and international awards for its innovative approaches and emphasis on in-

clusion and access through its various scholarship programs. Given this framing, any new initiatives coming out of the Literaty movement were bound to take a bottom-up approach.

A great deal of our upside-down approach, however, also had to do with the culture and context we were steeped in. Our physical locus being a country in South Asia—a former-colony turned nation-state that was the result of decades of anti-colonial struggles and founded on theological principles—meant that faith and local indigenous wisdom traditions ended up informing our actions at a deeper level. This translated to an inherent decolonial foundation and a fundamental focus on individual transformation and looking inward, which was rooted in Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, Zoroastrian, and other indigenous wisdom traditions (Coomaraswamy, 1943; Panikkar, 1993) native to the land that now constitutes this country in South Asia. As we journeyed within and upward from the grassroots (and therefore upside-down, in all senses) is how we started our social innovation work at the SIO.

At the start, the SIO aimed to create opportunities for social innovation learning. It quickly became more than that and created pathways for student leadership, community engagement, and networking. This was also reflected in the way we were viewed by our champions in positions of authority.

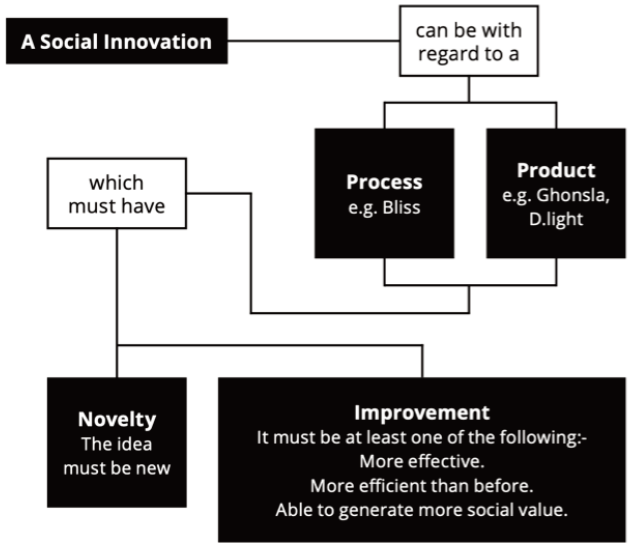
Everyone can lead: The sio continued a student movement

Dean A, our sponsor for the SIO, expressed the following in a letter to a funder:

> The typical relationship between an endorser and an endorsee is a hierarchical one—it is considered an honor for the latter to be endorsed by the former. This case is an exception—it is an honor for the School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law [at the University] to be asked for an endorsement by Literaty.
>
> The School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law is proud to be associated with Literaty and to claim ownership of a product to which it has contributed indirectly, at best. The most we can claim is that this partnership is the result of staying connected with our students, of seeking out talent and of encouraging, nurturing, and guiding it to the best of our abilities. (Dean A, letter to Tufts University, 2012)

At first glance, the SIO was a physical space in the Dean's office where a group of students gathered and worked on ways to bring the practice of social innovation, entrepreneurship, and impact work into mainstream academia and the job market. The SIO's core work entailed organizing informal workshops, training, and extracurricular events around social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and community-based research. It partnered with student societies and

Figure 3. Criteria for defining a Social Innovation Organization



Source: Adapted from Ahmed, Ayub, & Khan, 2012, p. 34

organizations around the country and internationally (where a South Asian student body was present) to organize workshops and introductory sessions around the *Handbook for Social Enterprise …* (Ahmed, Ayub, & Khan, 2012), which was written by its founding team. As part of this publication, the SIO team became part of a global conversation on the definition and implications of social innovation. Figure 3 illustrates the definition SIO chose to inform its work.

Most of this work was voluntary, and although students were able to use departmental facilities such as official meeting rooms, telephone lines, and stationary, and have a formal office address, the students did not receive compensation for their efforts in the beginning.

It was taken for granted that the SIO was in its "startup" phase and needed to "bootstrap." Over time, however, the social capital of being situated in the dean's office allowed the SIO team to rally networks and put together grant proposals in partnership with the University, whereby SIO took on the role of the implementing partner and the university became its fiscal sponsor. The proximity to the dean's office also resulted in interesting research roles for the students, which did lead to a paycheck. This way, the students were able to continue working on the SIO's goals while also building up their professional profiles through research assistantship opportunities.[3]

To carry out this work effectively, SIO leadership (comprised entirely of students) took an all-hands-on-deck approach, garnering faculty support, setting up student chapters across major local and international universities to replicate the Literaty model, and producing case studies and workshops on successful local and international social innovation and entrepreneurship models. To lock in faculty support, the SIO team found ways to align their research interests with community-based projects the students could undertake with faculty supervision. The SIO also encouraged faculty to become part of its advisory board and engaged them as mentors for its various projects and initiatives. In addition to this, the SIO team established student chapters of the Literaty movement both locally in other universities in the country and in diaspora communities in the United States and Canada. These student chapters shared stories of local social innovations from the country and established global networks and collaborations in unlikely places, such as the Muslim Jewish conference,[4] an international youth-led organization looking to foster peace building and harmony amongst inter-faith communities. All these combined enabled SIO to strengthen the case for its existence, providing the dean's office continued rationale for its ongoing support.

A prominent challenge worth noting for the students' leadership was gender and age bias. Not only was the SIO team a group of students with next to no formal credentials to support their leading a new curricular opportunity within a university, it was also majority female-led. This combination triggered a rigidity trap (McGowan et. al., 2020; Butler & Goldstein, 2010), as well as a microcosm of the gendered power dynamics (Martin, 2004; Meyerson & Tompkins, 2007) endemic to the global HEI space over the last several decades. The inclusion of young women in university discussions on innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialization of research alongside doctoral degree bearing, grey-haired men often made for interesting and uncomfortable environments for all parties involved. Often, female team members would be expected to capture and circulate high-level meeting minutes or other community building tasks. They were seen as subordinate and therefore assumed to be responsible for subordinate tasks. Interestingly, the gendered power dynamics

were not specific to older, male faculty and staff members at the university, but also ended up surfacing within the SIO team, with younger, male students and team members sometimes feeling threatened by their female counterparts. They too often assumed the female staff would be responsible for the community building tasks. This, however, did not hold back the young women in the SIO team, who instead of seeing it as a "gendered role," leveraged their relational prowess, and ended up creating buffer spaces in unimaginably difficult rigidity traps.

This is a theme we saw carried forward in the management and operation of the SIO's successor SIL as well, with the majority of the SIL team being women, and the entire entity being woman-led. However, as noted before, this was possible in these rigid, gendered spaces, with the additional support of powerful male allies such as the dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, or later on, the vice chancellor of the university. In some instances, the female team members' deeper level of relationality and mutual trust with champions such as the dean and vice chancellor eventually led to professional differences and rivalry with mid-level management and faculty heads. For instance, when the SIO transitioned to SIL and was allotted a bigger space on the university campus, the female executive director had to make a strong case to maintain control of prime real estate against the head of the Department of Economics, the most profitable program at the school.

Documentation is intervention: Scaling deep

Once it had garnered support at the university, and in the larger social impact space locally, the SIO team set out to become a thought leader in the social innovation space by researching and showcasing successful case studies of social innovation models that had been implemented in the country using the entrepreneurship route. This led to the SIO publishing the first ever handbook for social enterprise in the country (Ahmed, Ayub, & Khan, 2012). This handbook provided an accessible working definition of social innovation, and showed how it can be used to create sustainable change through social entrepreneurship. It also synthesized the SIO model and supported both scaling deep and scaling up (Tulloch, 2018).

The publication of this handbook opened a new set of doors for the SIO team. With the handbook, the SIO team designed workshops, training sessions, and a draft curriculum, which outlined what it takes to use a social innovation approach to addressing wicked problems, and how social entrepreneurship can help co-create and test the right solutions. The handbook for social enterprise ended with a questionnaire in it for aspiring social innovators and entrepreneurs. It was added in there as something comparable to the likes of the "I'm feeling lucky" button on Google. Little did we know that this form would be the ultimate product-market fit test for the need and eventual creation of the country's first social enterprise incubator, the Hatchery, just two years later. As the SIO team went around showcasing and distributing its *Handbook for Social Enterprise …* (Ahmed, Ayub, & Khan, 2012), they started receiving calls from all over the country with eager, aspiring change-makers asking for support in their social innovation journeys and a route to sustainability through social enterprise models.

The SIO talked about and worked on social justice issues, with an emphasis on poverty, through social enterprise incubation and advocacy. It did so by showcasing success stories of existing social enterprises and supporting nascent social entrepreneurs with strategy and outreach (film, online,

and print). The SIO also advocated the need for the creation of even more scalable and sustainable social enterprises across different domains and audiences, including the youth, academia, government, non-government organizations, corporate foundations, and philanthropists.

A primary activity of the SIO entailed documenting student-led social innovation processes and the resulting innovative products and services. This documentation as intervention illustrated the subject and process expertise of the student leaders and provided a framework for the design of workshops and eventually a social innovation space within the university. Through the stories of innovation, the SIO began to create a space for social innovation, one that occupied "in-between" spaces to teach about social innovation.

Innovation happens in the in-between spaces

One of its greatest assets, yet the source of a consistent challenge faced by the SIO, was its interstitial, in-between existence. Legally, the SIO was a project of the private entity and former student movement Literaty, and not formally part of the institution. This arrangement was loosely held together by Dean A's "upside-down" endorsement and continued support and nurturing. His support created possibilities within the university in what could otherwise be seen as an environment wrought with rigidity traps and a profound aversion to innovation and change (McGowan et al., 2020; Tidball, 2016; Rogers, 2013; Butler & Goldstein, 2010; Carpenter & Brock, 2008).

While the SIO was not a program, department, or major at the university, in many ways, it was all three. The SIO offered specialized training in an emergent field, allowed students to gain firsthand community-based research experience, and even started training them in how to turn solutions into potential entrepreneurial ventures. Given that it was not part of the university, the students did not have to worry about institutional liability or intellectual property disputes, or consider accounting for institutional overheads for any funding they received to create innovations around their ideas. This was also true for any independent projects the SIO's successor SIL ventured into. At the outset, the funds and benefits to the SIO and its student team were so marginal that they went unnoticed and therefore unhindered. As the team became skilled in writing funding proposals and the award amounts the SIO received started to increase, it began to receive more attention. University personnel, who had not paid much attention to the SIO at the beginning, now began to express concern and raise questions about the ability of students to effectively administer larger grant awards.

What provided some measure of protection to the SIO was its structural in-between-ness. The SIO was able to remain nested within an institute of higher education whilst existing legally independently of it. This allowed the SIO to create its own content and knowledge products, and essentially run a parallel knowledge economy and continue to control grant awards, even when the university served as the fiscal agent. This shadow stream of knowing and learning differently broke barriers and hierarchies, let unusual suspects "in," and created the space for a co-creation of solutions to deeply entrenched problems, in service of and in partnership with the communities that faced them every day.

Community members are our educators

This upside-down approach meant that knowledge keepers and seekers were no longer exclusively

highly credentialed faculty and staff or economically well-off students. Teachers were also the guards and gatekeepers at the entrances to the Ivory tower, the rickshaw drivers lined up outside to take students to and from the university, the janitorial staff tasked to clean up after the dorm residents and day visitors. They helped the students understand their context in unparalleled ways, giving them access to entirely new planes of perception (Mulder, 1979) and allowing for true place-based learning. In engaging the guards, the janitorial staff and the rickshaw drivers, the students had direct access to the lived experience of the majority of the country's populace and the key challenges facing them: from access to finance to inadequate healthcare and insurance.

Using social innovation as their go-to toolkit, the students and community co-created solutions and micro-movements that enabled better access to health insurance, fair wages, and decent work conditions for the janitors, guards, and rickshaw drivers in the microcosm that was the university. The SIO recognized, acknowledged, and centred the wisdom of the community and saw in them teachers, who are always present but often invisible in HEI settings. Whereas in HEIs, knowledge comes from books, credentialed faculty, and systems, the SIO in its decolonial approach saw the inherent wisdom (Panikkar, 1993) in community, making space for other ways of knowing, doing, and being.

If knowledge is power, the upside-down approach meant everyone had it, and this was unacceptable to various parts of the system, a classic case of the rigidity trap (McGowan et al., 2020; Butler & Goldstein, 2010). What continued to energize us to meet and address this challenge was the knowledge that emerged from the world surrounding the university as well as from within it. Our in-between spaces provided both challenges and possibilities. The SIO became an in-between space for knowledge creation, construction, and production, but not necessarily in the ways understood by the institution.

Community-based learning is social innovation

The other challenge that emerged as the SIO moved into the domain of knowledge creation was its wisdom-centric (Coomaraswamy, 1943, Panikkar, 1993), decolonial, pedagogical approach. Not only were the sources of data, information, and, subsequently, knowledge, different, the SIO's entire model was premised on sharing, articulating, and embodying this knowledge differently. In the research, teaching, and dissemination of social innovation cases, all aspects from data collection to writing and publication were done using a community-based, participatory lens (Reason, 1994; Khan, 1998; Khan, 2009). Instead of looking for proof of a phenomenon in peer-reviewed journals, the SIO team were recording oral histories from the community and sieving out patterns that were then put together into stories, images, illustrations, short videos, and easy-to-read narratives for consumption by other young people like themselves. These same students would then visit universities and colleges across the major hubs of the country and present those case studies to their peers, inviting them to imagine their collective futures differently.

The SIO's connections with other universities and successful efforts facilitated the advancement of the work. Initially, the dean's support and non-confrontational nature of the SIO's work allowed the organization to function smoothly. Writing a book and framing issues as being of public importance enhanced the SIO's credibility. Mentorship and partnerships with faculty further boosted its reputation. Additional training modules were developed, leading to the dream of expanding the in-

itiative into the SIO's successor, the SIL that housed the country's first social enterprise incubator. However, as the scale increased, the rigidity traps resurfaced as the practice creeped into domains relating to profit and power.

We experienced that our work was initially not taken seriously given the lack of credentials of the young, bright-eyed team of dreamers implementing them. We also noticed a small minority trying to shut down the organization's initiatives, deeming them unnecessary and a so-called "waste of students' precious time." For these reasons, the SIO's outreach arms, the Literaty student chapters across various universities, often had to work under the radar and avoid garnering too much attention so as to save the SIO's larger body of work from subsequent scrutiny. Over time, however, it became clear that there was a growing appetite amongst young people to explore new avenues altogether after their studies were complete. In addition, by the time the SIO's successor SIL became established as a thought-leader in the social innovation field, the government, egged on by international development agencies, started introducing new supports for entrepreneurship with a social bent, and some of the SIO & SIL's decolonial pedagogy ended up being recognized and valued in a new light. Some of this entailed international awards and recognition of the SIO's innovative model in the HEI realm, other examples included partnerships with other HEIs in the country to help them set up their own versions of the SIOs and SILs.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Once the SIO became institutionalized as the SIL, the South Asian university in question became a more inclusive space. Learning from their example, to address the pitfall of lack of diversity and inclusivity, HEIs can benefit from noting the importance of "scaling *down*" and "scaling deep" (Tulloch, 2018) in the diffusion of innovation education in various domains. The work by social innovators at the SIO eventually reached outward and invited marginalized voices **in the university** to enter, "hang out," and collaborate on projects. Before it ended, the SIO's next iteration, SIL, became a resource for community social innovators without college degrees as well. Community members found ways to connect to this movement in the university and found a receptive listener and collaborator in the SIO. The partnerships that formed addressed real issues in the community in meaningful ways, by expanding sources of knowledge and wisdom around issues, problems, needs, and solutions. The SIO sponsored a way of working that fed socially innovative products and, more notable, a socially innovative process. It worked with community members, listening, learning, and jointly acting on the wellspring of knowledge and wisdom to address community issues. It made social innovation relevant to local communities around local issues e.g., class justice, the housing crisis, and climate change. It became a centre for community-engaged teaching and learning as well.

Supporting an "upside-down" approach to social innovation in HEIs entails creating interstitial spaces with the support of champions with formal authority. From the SIO's example, it is clear that young people, when given the right tools, opportunities, and nurturing, can surface wisdom-centric (Coomaraswamy, 1943, Panikkar, 1993), decolonial approaches that move beyond the paradigm of "reform" (Andreotti, 2021) and tap into other ways of knowing, doing, and being in the world. The recognition of the value of other kinds of data and knowledge sources comes from cultures and contexts where relationality and connection reign supreme. It was therefore precisely in this

South Asian country, a multi-faith, multi-ethnic, incompletely modernized place, or as Coomaraswamy (1943) puts it, an "uttermost part of the earth" where traditional wisdom "is still remembered" (p. 363), that the fast-eroding, centuries-old, paradigm of relationality and belonging, is what allowed for the eruption of an "upside-down" approach to social innovation.

For HEIs across the world to practice their own versions of "upside-down" approaches to social innovation, it is crucial that they create cultures and sheltered spaces that invite and support student leadership, innovation, and engagement. Furthermore, they must create the nutrients for expanded curricular offerings and opportunities, valuing different kinds of knowledges and wisdoms that may come from unusual, and often, un(der)-credentialed sources.

The SIO case study shows that HEIs have a low overhead, high-impact opportunity to mainstream social innovation in their local communities by inviting students to lead. Ceding power and inviting student leadership and energy into the mix can, and very likely will, help HEIs to have a transformative impact on the grand challenges facing humanity today.

NOTES

1. This section of the case study is written in first-person by the first author as she reflects on her time as one of the co-founders of the SIO.
2. Literaty was a student initiative that worked to inculcate a sense of positivity, confidence, and responsibility in the youth of this South Asian country. On a macro level, it aimed to do justice to the global image and reputation of the country and worked to shed light on all that is worth appreciating and being inspired by. In a sense, it aimed to increase "positive sensationalism," which was much needed in our context at the time (and probably still is). The cornerstones of this initiative included promoting cultural revival and tourism, critical thinking, and social innovation. The students achieved their goals with the help of a biannual publication by the same name (which was spearheaded by students and academics from the university and others) and on-ground events (conferences, workshops, movements, and drives) that supplemented the literature they disseminated.
3. In 2013, the SIO received multi-year funding, which enabled it to hire a formal team and transition into the SIL, which housed the country's first social enterprise incubator. The incubator graduated over a hundred social enterprises over the course of four years until 2017, and the lab became an extraordinary example of what a successful partnership between an HEI and youth-led initiative could look like.
4. The Muslim Jewish Conference (MJC) is a dialogue-based leadership and educational non-profit based in Vienna, Austria. For over a decade, the MJC has brought together students, civil society workers, and other young leaders aged 18–35 from around the world for an immersive, multi-day interfaith experience. The MJC took place annually between 2010 and 2020 in European locations including Paris, Sarajevo, Vienna, and Berlin, welcoming 50–150 participants for approximately five days of thematic presentations, skill-building workshops, capacity-building brainstorming, and informal discussions under the slogan, "we talk to each other, not about each other." It equipped participants with tools to engage in effective communication, to retain volunteers in their organizations, and to secure funding for their work." Read more at: https://mjconference.org/mjc/muslim-jewish-conference-2022/
5. The names of the student organization, the university, and the country have been anonymized for this study.

REFERENCES

Adamson, F., Astrand, B., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2016). Global education reform: How privatization and public investment influence educational outcomes. Florence, KY: Routledge.

Ahl, V., & Allen, T.F. (1996). Hierarchy theory: A vision, vocabulary, and epistemology. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Andreotti, V.M.O. (2021). Hospicing modernity. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
Ahmed, M.M., Ayub, A., & Khan, T. (2012). Handbook for social enterprise in Pakistan. Karachi, Sindh: Literaty Pakistan Publishers.
Alden Rivers, B., Armellini, A., Maxwell, R., Allen, S., & Durkin, C. (2015). Social innovation education: Towards a framework for learning design. *Higher Education, Skills, and Work-based Learning, 5*(4), 383–400.
Bergman, N., Markusson, N., Connor, P., Middlemiss, L., & Ricci, M. (2010, February 25–26). *Bottom-up, social innovation for addressing climate change. Energy transitions in an interdependent world: What and where are the future social science research agendas conference.* Sussex, UK.
Boyer, E.L. (1990). Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate. Hoboken, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
Bund, E., Gerhard, U., Hoelscher, M., & Mildenberger, G. (2015). A methodological framework for measuring social innovation. *Historical Social Research, 40*(3), 48–78.
Butler, W.H., & B.E. Goldstein. 2010. The US fire learning network: Springing a rigidity trap through multiscalar collaborative networks. *Ecology and Society 15*(3), 21. URL: http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol15/iss3/art21/
Carpenter, S.R., & Brock, W.A. (2008). Adaptive capacity and traps. *Ecology and Society, 13*(2). http://www.jstor.org/stable/26267995
Cajaiba-Santana, G. (2014). Social innovation: Moving the field forward. A conceptual framework. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 82*, 42–51.
Coomaraswamy, A.K. (1943). Eastern wisdom and western knowledge. *Isis, 34*(4), 359–363.
Chilisa, B., & Mertens, D. (2021). Indigenous made in Africa evaluation frameworks: Addressing epistemic violence and contributing to social transformation. *American Journal of Evaluation, 42*(2), 241–253. doi:10.1177/1098214020948601.
Da Cruz, C.G. (2018). Community-engaged scholarship: Toward a shared understanding of practice. *The Review of Higher Education, 41*(2), 147–167.
del Cerro Santamaría, G. (2019). A critique of neoliberalism in higher education. Oxford, UK: Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education.
Elliott, I.C., Robson, I., & Dudau, A. (2021). Building student engagement through co-production and curriculum co-design in public administration programmes. *Teaching Public Administration, 39*(3), 318–336.
Farner, K. (2019). Institutionalizing community engagement in higher education: A case study of process towards engagement. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, 23*(2), 147–152.
Fradette Whitney, A. (2018). Developing creative problem solvers: A case study examining a high-impact social innovation fellowship program for undergraduate students (Publication number 13425517) [Doctoral dissertation, Northeastern University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
Freire, P. (2000). The 'banking' concept of education as an instrument of oppression. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed. 30th anniversary ed.* (pp. 71–86). New York, NY: Continuum.
Garton, P. (2021). Types of anchor institution initiatives: An overview of University Urban Development Literature. *Metropolitan Universities, 32*(2), 85–105. doi:10.18060/25242
Giesecke, S., Lassnigg, L., Steiner, M., Schartinger, D., Leitner, K., Vogtenhuber, S., & Kalcik, R. (2020). *Prospective report on the future of social innovation in education.* European Commission. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/be885abe-135f-11eb-9a54-01aa75ed71a1/language-pt
Glass, C., & Fitzgerald, H. (2010). Engaged scholarship: Historical roots, contemporary challenges. In H. Fitzgerald, C. Burak, & S. Seifer (Eds.), *Handbook of engaged scholarship. Contemporary landscapes, future directions: Volume 1: Institutional change* (pp. 9–24). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.
Gunderson, L.H., & Holling, C.S. (2002). *Panarchy: Understanding transformations in human and natural systems.* Washington, DC: Island press.
Hall, B.L., & Tandon, R. (2017). Decolonization of knowledge, epistemicide, participatory research and higher education. *Research for All, 1*(1), 6–19. doi:10.18546/RFA.01.1.02

Hazenberg, R., Ryu, J., & Giroletti, T. (2020). *Social innovation and higher education landscape in East Asia: Comparative study.* British Council. https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/sihe-report-asia_final.pdf

Hardman, J. (2012). *Leading for regeneration: Going beyond sustainability in business, education, and community.* Oxford, Oxfordshire: Earthscan.

Hochgerner, J. (2011). *The analysis of social innovations as social practice.* https://www.zsi.at/attach/The%20Analysis%20of%20Social%20Innovations%20as%20Social%20Practice.pdf

Holling, C.S., & Allen, C.R. (2002). Adaptive inference for distinguishing credible from incredible patterns in nature. *Ecosystems, 5*, 319–328.

Holling, C.S., & Gunderson, L.H. (2002). *Resilience and adaptive cycles.* Washington, DC: Island Press.

Kalema, N.L. (2019). Decolonizing social innovation for global development. [Masters Thesis, Harvard University]. https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/42004242

Khan, A.H. (1998). Community-based schools and the Orangi Project. In P. Hoodbhoy (Ed.), *Education and the state: Fifty years of Pakistan.* Karachi, Sindh: Oxford University Press.

Khan, S.S. (2009). *The Aga Khan rural support programme: A journey through grassroots development.* Karachi, Sindh: Oxford University Press.

Magolda, B. (2012). Building learning partnerships. *Change, 44*(1), 32–38.

Mamdani, M. (2015). Settler colonialism: Then and now. *Critical Inquiry, 41*(3), 596–614.

Martin, J. (2004). Swimming against the tide. *Renewing Research Practice, 29*.

Martin, R. (2003). To the rescue: Beating the heroic leadership trap. *Stanford Social Innovation Review, 1*(3), 37–43.

Maturana, H.R., & Varela, F.J. (1991). *Autopoiesis and cognition: The realization of the living* (Vol. 42). New York, NY: Springer Science & Business Media.

McGowan, K., Kennedy, A., El-Hussein, M., & Chief, R.B. (2020). Decolonization, social innovation and rigidity in higher education. *Social Enterprise Journal*.

Meyerson, D., & Tompkins, M. (2007). Tempered radicals as institutional change agents: The case of advancing gender equity at the University of Michigan. *Harv. JL & Gender, 30*, 303.

Monteiro, S., Isusi-Fagoaga, R., Almeida, L., & García-Aracil, A. (2021). Contribution of higher education institutions to social innovation: Practices in two southern european universities. *Sustainability, 13*(7), 1–15. doi:10.3390/su13073594

Morgan, H. (2022). The impact of neoliberalism on higher education. *Education, 143*(1), 7–14.

Mulder, W. (1979). Seeing "New Englandly": Planes of perception in Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost. *New England Quarterly*, 550–559.

Nicholls, A., & Murdock, A. (2012). *Social innovations: Blurring boundaries to reconfigure markets.* London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nicholls, A., Simon, J., & Gabriel, M. (2015). *New frontiers in social innovation research.* London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Panikkar, R. (1993). *A dwelling place for wisdom.* Delhi, UP: Motilal Banarsidass Publ.

Popowitz, M., & Dorgelo, C. (2018). *Report on university-led grand challenges.* https://escholarship.org/uc/item/46f121cr

Ravazzoli, E., & Valero, D.E. (2020). Social innovation: An instrument to achieve the sustainable development of communities. In W. Leal Filho, A. Azul, L. Brandli, P. Özuyar, & T. Wall (Eds.), *Sustainable cities and communities. Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals* (pp. 1–10). New York, NY: Springer.

Reason, P. (Ed.) (1994). *Participation in human inquiry.* Washington, DC: Sage.

Rogers, P. (2013). The rigidity trap in global resilience: Neoliberalisation through principles, standards, and benchmarks. *Globalizations, 10*(3), 383–395.

Rosinger, K.O., Sarita Ford, K., & Choi, J. (2020). The role of selective college admissions criteria in interrupting or reproducing racial and economic inequities. *The Journal of Higher Education, 92*(1), 31–55.

Saunders, D. (2007). The impact of neoliberalism on college students. *Journal of College and Character, 8*(5), 2–8.

Tamm, J., & Luyet, R. (2004). *Radical collaboration.* New York, NY: Harper.

Tavernise, S. (2009, December 18). One Pakistani institution places his faith in another. *New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/19/world/asia/19ali.html

Tidball, K.G. (2016). Traps in and of our minds: Relationships between human logic, dialectical traps and social-ecological traps. *Sustainability Science, 11*(6), 867–876.

Tulloch, G. (2018). *Problematizing scale in the social sector (1): Expanding conceptions*. https://www.inwithforward.com/2018/01/expanding-conceptions-scale-within-social-sector/

Velure Roholt, R., Carrier, C., Furco, A., DeJaghre, J., & Fink, A. (2016). *Integrating and elevating youth entrepreneurship in higher education: Strategies, challenges, impacts*. Youth economic participation initiative second year report. Report to Talloires Network and Mastercard Foundation.

VeLure Roholt, R., Fink, A., & Ahmed, M.M. (2023). The Learning Partner: Dialogic approaches to monitoring and evaluation in international social development. *Knowledge Management for Development Journal, 17*(1/2), 181–204.

Wagner, T. (2012). Creating innovators: The making of young people who will change the world. New York, NY: Scribner.

Wahl, D.C., & Baxter, S. (2008). The designer's role in facilitating sustainable solutions. *Design issues, 24*(2), 72–83.

Wahl, D.C. (2016). *Designing regenerative cultures*. Charmouth, Dorset: Triarchy Press.

Walloth, C. (2016). *Emergent nested systems: A theory of understanding and influencing complex systems as well as case studies in urban systems*, 1, 13–17.

Westley, F., & Antadze, N. (2013, November). *When scaling out is not enough: Strategies for system change*. Social Frontiers: Social Innovation Research Conference, London.

Westley, F., & McGowan, K. (Eds.). (2017). The evolution of social innovation: Building resilience through transitions. Cheltenham Glos, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Wilson, A. (2016). Why universities shouldn't teach social entrepreneurship (SSIR). *Stanford social innovation review: Informing and inspiring leaders of social change*. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/why_universities_shouldnt_teach_social_entrepreneurship

Young, D.R., & Lecy, J.D. (2014). Defining the universe of social enterprise: Competing metaphors. *Voluntas, 25*, 1307–1332. doi:10.1007/s11266-013-9396-z

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Maryam Mohiuddin Ahmed is a decolonial scholar-practitioner based at the University of Waterloo, whose work centres wisdom-centric approaches to systems transformation. Email: Maryam.mohiuddinahmed@uwaterloo.ca

Ross Velure Roholt is a publicly engaged scholar at the University of Minnesota who focuses on sustaining long-term collaborations to create opportunities for youth leadership and healing. Email: rossvr@umn.edu

Jennifer Catalano is a social impact consultant based in Burlington, Vermont. She supports changemakers through program design, project management, facilitation, and coaching. Email: jmcatalano@gmail.com

Sean Geobey is Associate Professor in the University of Waterloo's School of Environment, Enterprise and development (SEED) and Director of the Waterloo Institute for Complexity and Innovation (WICI). Email: sean.geobey@uwaterloo.ca