



Social Innovation & Place-based Learning

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Overview

- In this seminar we will explore:
 - University of Northampton
 - Embedding social innovation
 - Universities & social innovation
 - Sustainability globally & the SDGs
 - Teaching SI
 - Skills of social innovators
 - Practical support
 - Social value focus
 - Examples:
 - Placements
 - MA Social Innovation
 - Changemaker
 - Q&A session



UoN

**University of
Northampton**



**Hello
Waterside**

Changemaker Campus

*Committed to Social
Innovation*

*Community Anchor
Institution*

21st Century University

*Community work informs
teaching*



Defining SI

- Not a ***singular definition*** of SI, as it's such a diffuse concept.
 - SI represents new ways of developing/delivering products/services that deliver social impacts and catalyse change in society (Heiscalea, 2007).
- Represents the growing focus on ***hybridity*** in society.
- ***'De-powering'*** of processes to allow genuine community engagement.
 - Beneficiaries are the experts and should be involved as co-producers.



Embeddedness & SI

- Social innovation is a ***socially embedded*** construct:
 - Socially constructed with different meanings across different communities.
 - Relates to community-led bottom-up social action.
- ***Power*** is central to enabling social innovation, as this inhibits and/or enables social action (Mulgan, 2019).
- Power exists in the form of ***institutions***, political power (policy), finance, and social networks



Embeddedness & SI

- The embedded nature of social innovation allows **powerful actors** to shape discourse:
 - Use their access to capitals (economic, social, intellectual, political, human etc.) to develop dominant narratives.
- Social innovators can overcome this discourse and **reshape** societal structures to create value.
 - This makes empowerment of those without traditional access to resource central to social innovation.



Community Engagement

- Community engagement is central to driving the **bottom-up** social innovation that we have discussed.
- However, this can be difficult to achieve as:
 - Some communities are **hard to reach** due to:
 - Disadvantage
 - Geography
 - Socio-economic factors
 - Willingness to engage
- However, social innovation involves the restructuring of society, so **community voices** are essential.
- Partnerships between communities & higher education, industry, government & wider civil society is critical (Nordberg et al., 2020)





Universities, Sustainability & Innovation

SDGs Overview

- The Sustainable Development Goals provide 17 impact areas of focus to run to 2030.
 - They provide a “...a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future” (UN 2022).
 - Build upon the Millennium Development Goals that preceded them and Agenda 21 before that.
 - 17 SDGs, 169 targets, one holistic pathway to sustainability.



SI/SE Impact Hexagon



*Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), should achieve **ALL** of these six outcome pillars where possible*



Teaching Social Innovation

- Need for '**place-based**' learning in the teaching of social innovation (Elmes et al. 2019).
- Having curricula that can deliver place-based learning & the networks to enable this is critical (Alden-Rivers et al., 2015):
 - Students are enabled to achieve learning outcomes through **experiential work** in the community (ibid).
- Lecturers need the **requisite skills** to be able to effectively teach in this manner (Cederquist and Golüke, 2016).



- Enables us to bring academia down from perceived ivory towers.
 - Creating impact & real-world value, whilst retaining theory and credibility.
- Curriculum embedding:
 - You don't need to 'throw the baby out with the bath water'. There will often be significant elements of SI **already present** in curricula.
 - **Language** is critical here and needs to be flexible to appeal to different fields/faculties.
 - Need to move away from **traditional assessment** models (i.e. exams) - how do these impact the way that students approach problems?



- In **developing social innovators** you are encouraging:
 - employability;
 - creativity;
 - self-efficacy;
 - empathy;
 - socially aware Changemakers.
- This enables them to **think laterally** and approach societal problems from new perspectives (e.g. **Singing for Breathing** hospital choir).
- Creating the **global citizens** of tomorrow, who can think idealistically, but engage in the realities of the world.





- Crucial that teaching social innovation involves ***learning by doing***.
 - encouraged to apply their learning in ***practical settings***.
 - ***mistakes*** are encouraged.
- Universities can also support social innovators to ***navigate barriers***:
 - overcoming power and resource deficiencies.
 - we are powerful institutions with ***significant resources*** (financial, intellectual, human, social).

Social Value Focus

- Ensure that you are engaged with your local communities:
 - What are their **social problems/priorities**?
 - How can universities support them to achieve these?
- Communities and social innovators are **the experts**:
 - We are there to support them with our knowledge and skills.
- We can use our power and networks, to drive collaborations and support social innovators to **develop social value**.





Examples...

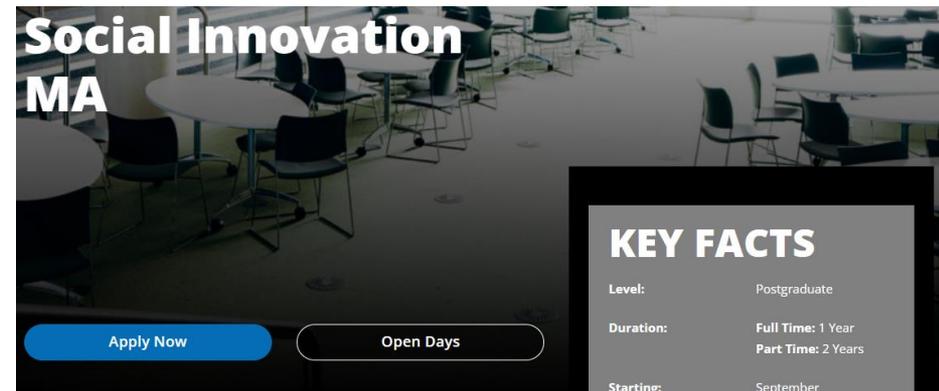
Changemaker



- Two core offers: Changemaker Gold & Employability+ Gold.
 - Delivered through our **Changemaker Hub**
 - **Changemaker Certificates**: Bronze, Silver & Gold:
 - Ultimately, students are supported to create their own SI/SE
 - **Employability+** Certificate: Self-development journey with work placements/volunteering:
 - These are provided with local employers including large corporates.
- Our Changemaker values mean that we are committed to developing the **leaders of tomorrow!**



- MA in Social Innovation is targeted at ***social innovators & entrepreneurs.***
- ***Work-based***, remote learning so that it is a genuine hybrid between academia & practice.
 - Only spend 6 days across the year on campus.
 - Dissertation is work-based project.
- Focus with MA on:
 - SI in practice
 - Marketing
 - Policy & impact
 - Procurement & commissioning
 - Personal development
 - Leadership



**Social Innovation
MA**

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KEY FACTS	
Level:	Postgraduate
Duration:	Full Time: 1 Year Part Time: 2 Years
Starting:	September

Changemaker Incubator

- In 2021 the University launched its Changemaker Incubator, to support students/staff & external social businesses to scale.
- Support in two phases:
 - Start-up & Grow
 - Scale & Invest
- Links into external partners:
 - Public sector
 - Social investors
 - Other HEI incubators
 - Corporates
- Social value sponsorship model.



Summary

- 5 key areas for driving place-based SI teaching in HE:
 1. Define what social innovation **means** to your institution:
 - a. Apply this **flexibly**
 2. Become genuine **community hubs**:
 - a. De-powering processes
 3. Embed SI in **the curriculum**, through academic, policy and practical methods.
 4. Empowering students to become **creative Changemakers**.
 5. Investing in SI strategically across the institution:
 - a. Multiple **resources**
 - b. Measuring your **impact**
 - c. Maintaining momentum through **leadership**



Thank you
for listening

Any questions?

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