

REIMAGINING

# Social Innovation Platforms

Design for Social Innovation (DSI) aims to tackle modern society's complex "wicked" problems by making new ways of thinking, doing, and being (social innovations) more probable, effective, long-lasting, and scalable.

Social Innovation Platforms (SIPs) are a promising approach to address collaboration challenges, but haven't achieved a level of adoption that would meaningfully impact DSI practice as a whole. Through exploratory prototypes, this thesis aims to propose a conceptual model of a SIP that addresses these problems and opportunities.

## PROBLEM SPACE

Expert interviews, literature review, and desk research highlighted key challenges in DSI practice, as well as platforms supporting DSI.

### CHALLENGES IN DSI PRACTICE

- Consensus of Many Stakeholders
- Wide & Diverse Process Activities
- Community Inclusion
- Trust & Transparency
- Technology Barriers
- Capacity-Building
- Culture Shifts
- Implementation & Adaptation
- = In some way addressed by platforms

### PLATFORM CAPABILITIES

- Central Location for Collaboration Activities
- Transparent, Neutral Space
- Integration of Digital Technologies
- Resource- and Knowledge-Sharing
- Synchronous/Asynchronous
- Communication
- Project Management

### PLATFORM CHALLENGES

- Resource-Heavy (Time, Money, Human)
- Digital & Technology Literacy
- Adoption & Engagement
- Scalability & Growth

*Despite the potential of platforms to enhance efforts within and across DSI initiatives, they have not yet achieved a level of widespread adoption.*

## LANDSCAPE

Further research into the landscape of Social Innovation Platforms (SIPs) revealed differences in their capabilities and focus.

### TYPES OF PLATFORMS

#### Open Innovation Platforms

Platforms open to the general public for participation in, or collaboration on, a specific activity or process phase of an initiative.

Ex. Open IDEO, Wazoku

#### Workspace Platforms

Generally closed spaces for stakeholders of an initiative to engage in collaborative activities; sometimes opened to broader local community.

Ex. UNDP SIPs, Common Cause Collective

#### Resource Platforms

Platforms that collect resources (articles, videos, case studies, toolkits, etc.) related to DSI practice in a central, searchable place.

Ex. DIY Toolkit, Social Change Innovators

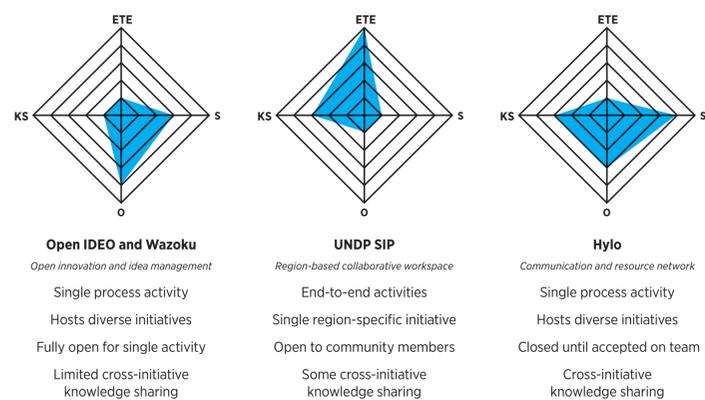
#### Design Intervention Platforms

Platforms created in support of a DSI initiative.

Ex. Let's Localize, Circle

### EXAMPLE PLATFORMS AND THEIR CAPABILITIES

ETE=End-to-end process activities S=Initiative diversity/scale range O=Open and accessible KS=Knowledge-sharing functionality



## OPPORTUNITIES

Analysis of the problem space and landscape highlighted areas of opportunity for design intervention.

### GAPS & OPPORTUNITIES

There currently exists no platform framework that is cost-effective regardless of initiative scale, while supporting the full range of DSI process activities, and connects multiple, diverse initiatives in a knowledge-sharing network.

### APPROACH

This thesis will propose a design concept and prototype for a collaborative social innovation platform, with functionality that addresses the pain points experienced by practitioners, and the opportunities identified through research into the problem space.

In order to analyze the effectiveness of the proposed design, this thesis will apply an exemplary DSI initiative within the platform design concept.

## DIRECTIONS & QUESTIONS

Themes and characteristics I'm considering while moving forward.

### ACCESSIBILITY

How might we design a cost-effective platform for initiatives of all scales?  
Can design assist in reducing barriers into and within DSI practice and initiatives?

### AUDIENCE

In terms of thesis project scoping, would it be helpful to narrow in on a specific audience, like grassroots initiatives, healthcare, or youth?

### MODULARITY

How might modularity allow for nuanced levels of support from the platform?  
Could modularity help address scaling issues?

### ARCHIVE

Is there value to archival functionality that enhances cross-initiative knowledge-sharing?  
How might different audiences benefit from an archive of DSI projects?

### OPEN/CLOSED VARIABILITY

How might the ability to open or close collaboration or information-sharing efforts to others provide value (or not) to initiatives?

### OTHERS?

What other design opportunities exist that I might be missing? I plan to continue to conduct expert interviews and literature review to continue exploring and validating my findings.

### CONNECTEDNESS

How might we connect initiatives to allow for increased cross-initiative knowledge sharing?  
What layers and levels of connection could be enhanced with a platform?