INTERRUPTING INNOVATION

CENTRING THE SOCIAL

EDITED BY

MELANIE PANITCH
SAMANTHA WEHBI
JESSICA PIMENTEL MACHADO

Fernwood Publishing
Halifax & Winnipeg

Development Editor: Fiona Jeffries
Copyediting: Karen May Clark
Cover Design: Jess Koroscil
Text Design: Brenda Conroy
Printed and bound in Canada

Published in North America by Fernwood Publishing
2970 Oxford Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3L 2W4
Halifax and Winnipeg
www.fernwoodpublishing.ca

Fernwood Publishing Company Limited gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund and the Canada Council for the Arts. We acknowledge the Province of Manitoba for support through the Manitoba Publishers Marketing Assistance Program and the Book Publishing Tax Credit. We acknowledge the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage for support through the Publishers Assistance Fund.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication
Title: Interrupting innovation : centring the social / edited by Melanie Panitch, Samantha Wehbi and Jessica Pimentel Machado.
Names: Panitch, Melanie, editor | Wehbi, Samantha, editor | Pimentel Machado, Jessica, editor.
Description: Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: Canadiana 20240539001 | ISBN 9781773637297 (softcover)
Subjects: LCSH: Social change. | LCSH: Social systems—Growth. | LCSH: Social justice. | LCSH: Social action.
Classification: LCC HM831 .I56 2025 | DDC 303.4—dc23

Contents

About the Contributors

STEPHANIE CHILDS has a background in conflict transformation, collaborative decision-making and alternative governance developed over a decade of working in the food movement. In her role as the lead on community engagement and shared power at SHIFT, she prioritizes care and creativity in the co-development of organizational structures that allow insights from diverse perspectives and worldviews to advance work toward a more just and equitable future.

BROOKE FILSINGER is an Indigenous scholar pursuing doctoral studies at Toronto Metropolitan University. Her work focuses on Community-building and space-making for Indigenous Knowledges, pedagogies, and research methodologies within science. She is dedicated to elevating and amplifying Indigenous student voices.

KIARAS GHARABAGHI is dean of the Faculty of Community Services at Toronto Metropolitan University. He spent over twenty years working in various positions in the homelessness, child welfare and mental health sectors. For over ten years, Dr. Gharabaghi has been involved in social innovation theory and practice and has co-developed a minor in the field at TMU.

CHERYL GLADU is an assistant professor of human enterprise and innovation at Thompson Rivers University and an interdisciplinary scholar who studies dynamic systems of governance and innovative approaches to community-led research and development. She became involved in SHIFT while completing her doctorate at Concordia University and is a member of SHIFT's Governance Hub.

WILSON LEUNG is the director of the Graduate Leadership Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University. He is also the vice-president of Global Learning and Leadership Development at Plus Company. Dr. Leung is a certified executive coach and holds a doctorate specializing in leadership. He is passionate in his work to help leaders flourish and communities thrive.

CHARLOTTE LOMBARDO is a community-engaged scholar, educator and facilitator whose practice is rooted in youth empowerment, community arts and participatory research. For over twenty years she has led and

collaborated on diverse creative research and action projects for promoting youth voice and cultural leadership and for addressing issues concerning: social and environmental justice; community wellness and health equity; and youth-centred systems and services.

JESSICA PIMENTEL MACHADO has been creating and supporting social innovation initiatives in higher education for nearly ten years. She is a steward with her local union and is involved in grassroots community activism in gender-based and sexual violence. She is pursuing her M.Ed in Adult Education and Community Development at the University of Toronto where her work explores critical pedagogy through coalition-building activities and social movements.

QUINN MacNEIL holds a B.A in Rhetoric and Communications from the University of Winnipeg and an M.A in Communication and Culture from York University. Quinn's research focuses on surveillance, the data economy, visual culture, and discourses of community safety and criminality. She was a co-principal investigator for the project "Deconstructing/Performing the Amazon Ring Security Apparatus" as part of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada Contributions Program 2022-2023 and continues to critically engage with our entanglement with oligopolies, surveillance, and images in the digital age.

KEN MOFFAT (he/him) is Professor of Social Work at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), Adjunct Professor, MacMaster School of Social Work, and the past Jack Layton Chair (Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Community Services TMU, 2018-2022). His research interests include affect, creative arts, and imaginative engagement as well as the limiting effects of capitalism and neo-liberalism on personal expression and well-being. He is the author/editor of Troubled Masculinities: Reimagining Urban Men (2012) and the author of Postmodern Social Work: Reflective Practice and Education (2019). He is the creator of the Podcast on art and social justice, Downstream from What (2023-2024) and Principal Investigator of SSHRC-funded Crafting Community Project and Collective (2022-2024). He loves curating and co-creating queer art spaces in small venues.

LAUREN "L" MORRIS (they/them) is an interdisciplinary artist-scholar, care worker, and community builder from Southern Alberta. For the past ten years, they have supported a variety of queer, feminist, and community-led grassroots initiatives. Their master's research studied 2SLGBTQIA+ and Mad/Disabled community care using community-engaged and art-based methods.

PHYLLIS NOVAK (she/they) is a social arts curator, researcher and strategist, trained in theatre performance with an interdisciplinary arts practice. The founding artistic director of SKETCH Working Arts (1996–2021), she is now working on her PhD in arts and social movements, connecting academic and community activist scholarship in the arts that centres cultural leadership and counter-narratives "from the margins" to make social and environmental change.

MELANIE PANITCH is the executive director in the Office of Social Innovation at Toronto Metropolitan University. Previously she held the John C. Eaton Chair of Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the Faculty of Community Services and was the founding director of the School of Disability Studies (1999–2011). Her exhibit, "Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember," is installed in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. She is the author of *Disability, Mothers and Organization: Accidental Activists* (2008).

KATARINA PRYSTAY is an early career researcher exploring the potential of arts-based community infrastructure development. Her academic background is in theatre and urban planning. She became involved in SHIFT as a research assistant and a member of the Governance Hub.

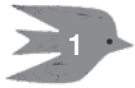
AL ROGERS is a masculinities and political violence scholar and archivist-in-training. They have a BSS in political science and communications from the University of Ottawa, an MA from Toronto Metropolitan University, and they are attending the University of Toronto's Management Information Systems program. They currently work on SSHRC-funded research on racism, public consultation and the city of Toronto.

ROXANA SÜHRING is an assistant professor in analytical environmental chemistry in the Department of Chemistry and Biology at Toronto Metropolitan University. She holds a doctoral degree of natural sciences (Dr. rer. nat.) in environmental chemistry from the Leuphana University in Lüneburg and conducted postdoctoral research in Germany, Canada and Sweden. From 2016–18, she led a regulatory scientist team at the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science. During this time, she also was the policy advisor to the Netherlands' delegation for the OSPAR Offshore Industry Committee regarding offshore chemicals, as well as advisor to the UK's Ministry of Defence regarding potentially polluting shipwrecks. Her interdisciplinary research focuses on understanding the fate and behaviour of emerging contaminants in the environment that originate from consumer products, such as microplastics and plastic additives.

REENA TANDON is an interdisciplinary, community-engaged scholar and practitioner. She leads the Faculty of Arts Community Engaged Learning and Teaching (CELT) initiative at Toronto Metropolitan University. Dr. Tandon has taught at universities in New Delhi and Toronto and was selected as the DiverseCity Fellow by Civic Action, Toronto. She is the co-author of *Immigration and Women: Understanding the American Experience–Finding Agency, Negotiating Resistance, and Bridging Cultures* (2011). Dr. Tandon was a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland, and held a CIHR Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Centre for Research in Inner City Health at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. She received her PhD in social work and social policy from La Trobe University in Melbourne, Australia.

SAMANTHA WEHBI is professor of social work at Toronto Metropolitan University. Her research and artistic practice interests have focused on international issues, grassroots community activism and organizing in Canada and abroad, including Lebanon, her country of origin. Her work has explored the complexities of urban landscapes and issues of displacement, postcolonialism, translocality and social change. Her scholarship explores interdisciplinary intersections of art, community practice and pedagogy. Dr. Wehbi is the co-editor of *Reimagining Anti-Oppression Social Work: Reflecting on Research* and *Re-imagining Anti-Oppression Social Work: Reflecting on Practice* (2017).

KRISTEN YOUNG is a community archivist and records manager currently splitting her time between Tiohtià:ke/Montréal and Tkaronto/Toronto. She graduated with a MISt from McGill University in 2016, and since then has worked in government, private, corporate and community archives. As a Jamaica-born Canadian citizen, she has a vested interest in the Caribbean-diasporic community in Tiohtià:ke/Montréal, working to ensure that Black communities maintain access to their community archival materials through conservation, advocacy and capacity building.



Framing Social Innovation as a Call for Social Transformation

Melanie Panitch, Jessica Pimentel Machado and Samantha Wehbi

"FOLLOW THE MONEY!"

A CATCHPHRASE POPULARIZED by the 1976 docudrama *All the President's Men* may seem a curious introduction to a book on social innovation and social justice; however, if you "follow the money!" when it applies to the student debt crisis, you will find you are in the territory of a complex social issue.

Student loans and grants are typically a policy issue, but given the crisis of postsecondary education, scrutinizing the world of student debt for what it can reveal is an instructive entry point to this field. We discovered this when we received an interesting invitation from our university's student financial aid department. It was a call for help from the newly appointed manager of the student financial aid department who was perplexed as to why students were always so upset. As an office of social innovation, we position ourselves to create a space to imagine alternative pathways and perspectives. But student loans? We were intrigued by the question and the unique partnership. Guided by our commitment to collaboration, we became explorers, learning all we could about how student loans work, and so we arrived at the intricate and sometimes murky world of loans and student debt.

We began by meeting with administrators to hear about the complexity of their jobs. We looked into job descriptions, government policies, manuals and regulations; we observed practices and behaviours and located academic research. We learned that our university has the highest take-up of student loans in our province of Ontario; so, this was relevant. Just how relevant became abundantly clear when we hosted a town hall session to hear directly from students about their experiences and their challenges with navigating the financial aid system. Over three hundred of them turned up for an online

session and many more participated in focus groups.

The students eagerly shared their thoughts, feelings and concerns. We heard about their anxiety, their insecurity and the inequitable impact of loans. They described the ways financial pressures affect their mental and physical health and academic performance as they try to balance part-time employment, housing and food insecurity. They spoke of the worrisome impact of gateway debt, the ballooning balance of what they will owe when they graduate and how this financial reality of theirs perpetuates social inequality, especially in an environment of high interest rates. We documented through systems mapping and their student voices the nuances and intricacies in an ongoing research study called "Degrees of Debt," itself a methodological innovation as we attempted to report on this issue in a unique way. All of this innovation was sparked by one question from a thoughtful manager who reached out for help. The benefits of this innovative partnership were mutual. The financial aid office gained a deeper understanding of the impact of their work, and our team found a pedagogically relevant case study with which to foster a systems-thinking approach with students concerned about social and environmental issues of social justice.

Excited by the critical discussion on social innovation and transformative social change generated through the case of student debt, we began to search the scholarship for relevant articles and books that might similarly approach social innovation through a social justice lens. While we found that the current scholarship offers much in terms of understanding social innovation, as well as examples of social innovation in practice through case studies and examples, we struggled to find examples that pertained to the Canadian context. This gap is of importance because, as we shall argue in this book, social innovation is contextual, relational and socially located, and thus the sociological and national contexts make a difference in how we understand and see social innovation in action.

Stemming from this desire to find core material of application and interest in the Canadian context, we developed this book as a beginner's guide to the key ideas, thinking and examples of social innovation. Our intention in this book, as the title suggests, is to interrupt the continuity and uniformity of innovation from one that is nebulous and primarily focused on entrepreneurship, the limitations of which we will note later. In addition, we have sought to take this guide one step further so as to anchor it conceptually and practically as a tool and guiding lens to social justice. By interrupting innovation, we have wrestled the social to arrive at centre stage through many manifestations of social life taken up by the authors included here.

Our vision for what is possible is inspired by a poster of Peter Schumann's iconic print, one that we see every day in our workspace, reminding us to engage in "resistance of the heart against business as usual." (See the poster at breadandpuppetpress.org/products/resistance-of-the-heart.)

Beginning in this chapter, we provide readers with key concepts and theoretical reflections to guide understandings of social innovation, specifically as it relates to social justice and transformation. The chapter begins with an overview of the historical and contextual development of social innovation, including a discussion that explores and troubles social innovation through a social justice lens. We then proceed to a discussion of some of the distinguishing features of social innovation when viewed from a social justice perspective. Specifically, we highlight and discuss the following characteristics of social innovation: creative approaches to understanding and addressing social issues and seemingly intractable social problems; sharing and shifting power; forging community partnerships and local networks of change; understanding the historical and systemic nature of injustice; and the role of higher education institutions as a complicated site of, and catalyst for, change. These concepts are illustrated through case studies in the second section of the book. The chapter ends with a discussion of the main themes drawn from these case studies, as well as an overview of the book's structure. We then conclude with some thoughts as to how the book can be used by students and educators.

SOCIAL INNOVATION: KEY CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

Over the past decade, there has been a rise in interest in social innovation as an approach to tackling systemic social issues in new ways (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019; Nichols, Simon, & Gabriel, 2018). Nichols, Phipps, Provençal and Hewitt (2013, p. 25) contend that: "Although innovation in science and technology remains critical, there is increasing recognition that *social* innovation is required to achieve sustainable social and economic impact" (original emphasis). Interest in social innovation has led to the growth of social innovation courses, programs and specializations at Canadian, American and European universities. These offerings are currently available through management and business schools, international development programs, community development programs, schools of environmental studies and planning and public policy, to name but a few.

At this time, there is an exciting growth of the scholarship as conceptualizations of social innovation develop across these disciplines and become

explored in others. Scholars are deepening their examination of existing approaches to social innovation through the creation of interdisciplinary sub-fields, such as in creativity, governance and socio-political movements (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019; van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016). Critical perspectives of social innovation are also emerging in the scholarship and are addressing issues of power relations that have long been ignored — a significant example being Goodchild's (2021) exploration of decolonizing systems thinking and awareness. Goodchild uses the visual code of the Two-Row Wampum belt to invite us into a sacred space of "non-interference in between [Indigenous and non-Indigenous] epistemologies" (p. 99). Because of the importance of relationality and context to social innovation, critical perspectives are necessary in addressing the problematic components of the field.

The predominant conceptualizations of social innovation have aligned it with entrepreneurship (Baldarelli & Del Baldo, 2016; Dey & Steyaert, 2016; Duarte Alonso, Kok, & O'Brien, 2020; Farinha, Sebastião, Sampaio, & Lopes 2020). However, social innovation is a growing field with multiple approaches, mandates and applications not solely tied to conceptions of entrepreneurship (Teasdale et al., 2020). Moreover, as Addo (2017) notes, assumptions of social innovation tied to entrepreneurship are implicitly based on conceptions of the formal market economy that do not take into account racialized and gendered engagement in informal economies. Similarly, an entrepreneurship lens on social innovation has been challenged to recognize unique understandings of entrepreneurship as tied to values, history, place and colonial and precolonial contexts for Indigenous communities (Mika, Warren, Foley, & Palmer, 2018).

As well, alignment with the concept of entrepreneurship in a neoliberal capitalist economy often moves away from the effort to challenge and shift power that is necessary for social transformation. It is especially problematic when this discourse absorbs social innovation — for instance, when "social entrepreneurship" and "social innovation" are used similarly or interchangeably — because it depoliticizes social innovation. Alternatively, this discourse may lead toward charitable models trying to attempt social change, which also fails to address the conditions that are ultimately creating precarious situations for communities (e.g., in housing, employment and healthcare). The authors in this book instead illustrate community-based examples of social innovation that align with building collaboration, solidarity and coalitions for social change.

In recognition of the intractability of social problems and the limits of entrepreneurial conceptions of social innovation, scholars have called for

looking beyond defining and framing social innovation as individualized, "virtuous citizenry" (Slee et al., 2021, p. 793) or as the "charitable dimension of the concept" (Batle, Orfila-Sintes, & Moon, 2018, p. 15), both of which have tended to reproduce existing social power relations. Departing from these entrepreneurial approaches, this book adopts a conceptualization of social innovation aligned via social justice. We define social justice as a process and a goal which seeks the full and equitable participation of all in a mutually shaped society. Defining social innovation as a social justice process and goal requires us to emphasize the key concepts of creativity, collaboration, systemic change and engagement, as discussed below.

Creative approaches are necessary in developing our understanding and addressing complex social issues. Several chapters in this book engage with creative approaches to problem identification and proposed responses; they also discuss the process of teaching and learning about social innovation. We take up artistic expressions of creativity, as well as engagements with various cultural spaces and forms, as a means to bring about important conversations that contribute to our understanding of social innovation. We believe that the importance of creativity and its integration in the understanding of social innovation lies in its long history of being inextricably linked to social transformation through protest and other forms of community mobilization for social justice (Kester, 2011; Reid, 2005; Thompson, 2012). Creative approaches hold the potential to not only interrupt the status quo but to also provide a vision for what could be possible. As such, creativity is fundamental to understanding and responding to social issues and to building a vision of social transformation.

Indeed, van der Have and Rubalcaba (2016) have identified a strong interdisciplinary scholarly community in social innovation with a focus on creativity research. In these studies, researchers and practitioners are interested in the process-oriented questions of how new ideas and new social relationships can be organized to create social transformation. Considering creativity in a conceptualization of social innovation that is aligned with social justice invites us to identify, question and challenge our sources of creativity. Which relationships and environments encourage us to imagine and think in creative ways? What conditions build and expand our capacity for creativity? Where do we feel supported to attempt creativity and to learn from those messy endeavours? What limits and restrains our creativity?

One of the recurring concepts in social innovation that demonstrates the necessity of creativity is the "wicked problem." Coined by Rittel and Webber (1973) and introduced in the context of social policy, the "wicked problem"

identifies an issue that is seemingly intractable and extremely difficult to solve. Common characteristics of a wicked problem include aspects of it that are incomplete, contradictory and constantly changing. Importantly, Rittel and Webber use the word "wicked" to denote the problem's resistance to resolution. Widespread social issues like poverty and homelessness are referred to as wicked problems. Often, a wicked problem is usually a symptom of other wicked problems too: while poverty itself is a wicked problem, it is also a symptom of homelessness and vice versa. Wehbi et al. (2023) note how wicked problems tend to drive social innovation because their systemic nature and immense complexity demand creative and collaborative approaches. Significantly, working through these wicked problems toward social justice requires strategies to share and shift power.

Avelino (2021) discusses how the notion of power is taken up in social transformation and social innovation literature and identifies common contestations of power, such as: power "over" versus power "to"; consensual versus conflictual; and constraining versus enabling. One of the most significant contestations is the relationship between power and knowledge — the extent to which power defines knowledge and the role of power in creating, manipulating and disseminating knowledge. It is crucial to understand the dimension of power and how it can be shared and shifted because it is an inevitable and necessary aspect of transformative change. Creatively addressing wicked problems will require attempts to challenge, alter and even replace dominant social power relations and institutions.

The scholarship also explores and documents case studies that demonstrate the negative sides of social innovation that emerge through failed attempts — attempts that often disrupt and destabilize communities and end up reproducing existing power relations. While illustrating this outcome in the context of renewable energy transitions and energy justice, Pel et al. (2023) interpret and position various outcomes of the negative sides of social innovation. One spectrum ranges from naïve optimism to paralyzing critique (e.g., from disavowing a negative side as an incidental setback to the exaggeration and de-legitimization of efforts). Another spectrum ranges from intended to unintended consequences (e.g., from purposive harm to unexpected outcomes). With such high stakes in attempting social innovation, it is of the utmost importance to become aware of potential harms and other negative outcomes.

Sharing and shifting power, specifically with and toward communities that have been severely impacted by oppression and injustice, requires forging community partnerships and local networks of change. Efforts in

social innovation must be informed and led by those most affected, and who are the most familiar with the depth and complexity of a wicked problem and the actions necessary to sustain social change. Case studies of social innovation processes demonstrate different levels of community relationships, often ranging from consultation to cooperation, as demonstrated by the authors in this book. Confronting the power relations and institutions that uphold and benefit from the persistence of wicked problems requires strong and trusting relations with affected communities. Creating these local networks moves beyond short-term collaboration efforts and toward politicized engagement. It is necessary to consider political action within a social innovation process when we centre community relationships that are developed with the goal of social justice. As such, there are opportunities for social innovation to engage community-led efforts of solidarity, coalition building and social movements since these are pathways into social transformation.

As we engage in relational work with these communities, there is an important responsibility for understanding the historical and systemic nature of injustice. Rayner and Bonnici (2021, p. 32) describe that "the most successful examples of social change focus on the process itself, ensuring that systems become *responsive* and *representative*, with learning at the heart of the change process" (original emphasis). Without community leadership and careful consideration in the design of a social innovation process, efforts can easily reproduce or worsen the same tensions, conflicts and relations that are causing a wicked problem to persist. Often, discrimination and exclusion are embedded in the ideological roots of these wicked problems and are manifested through oppressive systems such as colonialism, racism, sexism, classism and ableism. It is expected that this ongoing learning journey is difficult as it also requires us to be aware of our own positionality. Campbell and Eizadirad (2023) suggest that learning and dialogue around social justice must occur in a space that is supportive and kind and allows for calculated risk-taking in questioning historical and dominant institutions and discourses. Understanding the depth and complexity of injustice through multiple perspectives can expand our insight and capacity for imagining alternative and new possibilities and futures.

With a traditional mission in teaching and research, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are well-positioned to foster these spaces and mobilize scholarship for social change. Scholars in social innovation often debate the role of these institutions. Milley et al. (2020) note that in a Canadian context, most HEIs engage in mentorship and capacity-building activities

in social innovation, with half of these activities comprising entrepreneurial endeavours (e.g., supporting venture creation and commercialization). Under decades of federal, provincial and territorial policies of neoliberal austerity, HEIs have been under immense pressure to seek out and create revenue-generating opportunities in order to sustain their traditional activities which have come at the cost of their integrity: international students are exploited through soaring tuition fees and institutions are now invested in venture creation and commercialization activities (Kwong, 1993). As a result, HEIs are even more problematic as being sites of social change and social transformation. As they move toward resembling and becoming corporate and private entities, HEIs reproduce the same dominant interests and power relations.

Hence, eschewing simplistic and uncomplicated understandings of social innovation, we embark on a journey of exploration of the contours of social innovation as connected to the pursuit of social transformation with the authors of each chapter. The book, as a whole, explores the questions, struggles and experiences of conceptualizing and practicing social innovation as an endeavour of collective action. In line with social innovation thinking that begins with redefining the key questions, the exploration in this book is guided by such questions as: Can social innovation be conceptualized and practised in a way that is socially transformative? Is it possible to take up social innovation in a way that dismantles harmful and exclusive systems while avoiding cooptation? What is the role of social innovation in sabotaging and resisting neoliberalism in our institutions, communities, partnerships and personal lives? What does social innovation mean and look like within community participation, artistic engagement and radical direct action? Importantly, how does exploring these questions influence pedagogy and praxis in social innovation? In this context, the ambiguity that marks theorizing and defining social innovation can be celebrated as it opens up many opportunities to integrate social innovation in interdisciplinary ways.

STRUCTURE AND THEMES

The book began by providing readers with key concepts to guide their understanding of social innovation, specifically as it relates to social justice and transformation. What will follow are five chapters that detail various case examples from the Canadian context which will allow readers to understand how conceptualizations of social innovation through a social justice lens can be applied to systemic issues. Drawn from disciplines such as chemistry, social work, psychology, sociology, art-making and community practice,

the examples provide key reflections and analyses of social innovations and highlight several interconnected themes. Throughout the volume, common ideas among the chapters are cross-referenced. Readers may follow up on the ideas presented in one chapter by reading complementary ideas in other suggested chapters. We have also included a glossary of key terms at the end of the book; when these terms first appear in the book, they will show up in bolded text.

The first theme is that social innovation actions create new spaces to think, reflect and develop solutions to long-standing social issues. In Chapter 6, Reena and Ken demonstrate how **collage** is used to help students break out of the confines of traditional learning spaces in order to create new solutions and responses to social problems, such as racism, heterosexism and other forms of marginalization. Similarly, in Chapter 3, Phyllis and Charlotte discuss socially engaged art practices as a way of reframing and reclaiming public space so as to tackle longstanding social issues. The key here is to engage with action beyond a focus on analysis, thereby creating "new paradigms for intervention, which address root causes of social problems rather than the symptoms" (Nandan, London, & Blum, 2014, p. 66). Activities such as collage or community interventions that alter the landscape require us to think through ideas about social change in a concrete way, creating an alternative space where we can dream and bring into being a different reality.

The second theme considers using the goal of social transformation to reorient our thinking. This is innovative because though we may begin with the familiar goal of attaining social justice, what is required is not only action but a change in our thinking. In Chapter 2, Kiaras lays the groundwork for this rethinking through a discussion of what we mean by the "social" in "social innovation." Thinking through a different understanding of the concept, Kiaras teaches us how to move to a fuller comprehension of how solutions can also work to address social transformation for the most marginalized, rather than serving only to eradicate social problems.

Furthermore, in Chapter 7, Roxanna and Brooke challenge us to rethink how we understand a traditional academic discipline such as chemistry from a social transformation perspective that would value and be inspired by Indigenous ways of being and knowing. Along the same vein, Stephanie and her colleagues discuss in Chapter 5 a shift in thinking in terms of governance and the opportunities for collaborative leadership that this shift can bring about. Their example allows us to see how an alteration in thinking about the role of higher learning impacts social change outside the confines of

the academic institution. This change is facilitated through co-creation by creating not only links to the community but also by modelling inclusionary decision-making and community-development practices. As Kumari et al. (2020, p. 4) note, co-creation is at the "core of the social innovation process." This type of rethinking dictates new priorities and asks new questions about age-old practices and institutions.

A related theme is that social innovation reminds us to look at the world around us in new ways. Social media, consumer culture and corporate influence have become routine aspects of our everyday. A critical understanding of social innovation allows us to rethink how these practices can be a detriment to the health and well-being of our communities. We see this theme reflected in Chapter 4 by Lauren, Al and Quinn through their critical analysis of social media, technological advances and social policy changes; in three case studies, they illustrate how social innovation can either be detrimental or how it can be leveraged to allow for social transformation.

A fourth theme is that of the impact of **neoliberalism**. Often associated with economic policies of privatization, free trade, austerity and reductions in government spending on public works in order to increase the role of the private sector in society, neoliberalism and its policies have increased economic inequality, giving rise to socio-economic insecurity and alienation. It is a field ripe for social innovation. Further, neoliberal thinking prioritizes quantifiable factors such as economic indicators of growth and inflation over social factors such as community-building, labour rights and access to education. When the discourse of innovation is rooted in neoliberal ideology, we can see its impact in higher education: the commercialization of knowledge; the strengthening of ties to the private corporate world; the reductions in funding; the calls for efficiencies; and standardization via benchmarks and performance indicators (Moffatt, et al., 2016). The individual actor in this perspective is one who is self-defined, autonomous and competitive; and one whose self-interest is elevated over social need.

Pushing back against this neoliberal framing, Kiaras asserts the fallacy of the solitary social innovator or heroic entrepreneur in Chapter 2. Likewise, Lauren and colleagues, in Chapter 4, illuminate through their case example of a surveillance approach to community safety, how in practice it leads to individual silos, disempowering community members from building deeper relations with one another. Countering the rugged individualism embedded in neoliberal thought, the authors in this book celebrate a critical understanding of responsibilization, a process in which individuals working collectively at the grassroots, outside of traditional structures and

institutions, are able to exert influence over their own social well-being and that of their community.

A final theme is that of the need to transform ourselves, so we can contribute to social transformation in the world around us. Social innovation takes up ideas of leadership in a way that promotes authentic leadership to support the union of personal and social transformation. Lawrence, et al. (2018, p. 636) invite us to consider that "leading includes the whole person, beyond a set of skills, competencies and knowledge." In Chapter 8, Wilson incorporates these ideas of leadership by engaging readers with reflection activities to think about how they could move their social innovation vision further and how they can integrate social innovation thinking in their frame of reference. Scholars have noted the urgency of integrating leadership and social innovation as both reinforce each other in the search for systemic responses to societal problems (Nandan, London, & Blum, 2014; Stauch, 2016). Starting with a vision of change, ethical guidelines and self-awareness, Wilson's contribution offers a space for reflection and skill development so as to enhance leadership potential that can, in turn, contribute to meaningful change.

We have provided a space to go well beyond highlighting the 'social' in social innovation, reflecting the maturity of the field in research and practice. All of the authors here have problematized, critiqued and challenged narrow conceptions of social innovation that relegate it to a limited understanding of entrepreneurship in sharing their experience to answer one of the guiding questions outlined earlier: Can social innovation be conceptualized and practised in a way that is socially transformative? We have taken "the small initiatives that have the greatest potential to foreshadow by persuasive example, the transformation of those arrangements and that consciousness" (Nichols, Simon & Gabriel, 2018, p. 234). The extent to which power is shifted in favour of a disadvantaged group is the key test for social innovation as social justice. All the authors have addressed this and made manifest in their analysis how their initiatives have delivered on that front, delivering a social good that includes, for example, resources, water, accessibility, decision-making, education and the opportunity to be heard.

What is core to the work of social change but not always recognized as central to the discussions and debate is the extent to which social innovation is the work of the heart as well as the mind. A sense of passion as a driver for change is less prominent in the social innovation literature but it is very much present in practice as can be seen in this book; the social innovators, scholars and practitioners writing here are driven, often tirelessly, by their

own experiences and their commitment to making the world a better place. In their work and in their research, they have made a place for art, creativity, imagination and a sense of adventure. They are not objective and aloof, and they certainly are not dispassionate observers—they are very much inside the frame.

We invite you to find your own way into this frame!

Reflection Questions

1. Thinking about this chapter's discussion of "wicked social problems," what are some such issues that you can identify in your community? Which ones do you feel a passion toward addressing?
2. What causes "wicked social problems" to persist? Why do you think these issues have existed for so long? Who stands to benefit from these wicked problems continuing to persist?
3. How does creativity manifest in your life? How can it contribute to social transformation in your community?

REFERENCES

Addo, P-A. (2017). "Is it entrepreneurship, or is it survival?": Gender, community, and innovation in Boston's Black immigrant micro-enterprise spaces. *Societies, 7*(3), 1–19.

Avelino, A. (2021). Theories of power and social change: Power contestations and their implications for research on social change and innovation. *Journal of Political Power, 14*(3), 425–448.

Baldarelli, M-G., & Del Baldo, M. (2016). Ethics, gift and social innovation through CSR and female leadership in business administration in Italy. *uwf UmweltWirtschaftsForum, 24*(2-3), 141–150.

Batle, J., Orfila-Sintes, F., & Moon, C. J. (2018). Environmental management best practices: Towards social innovation. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 69,* 14–20.

Campbell, A.B., & Eizadirad, A. (2023). Cultivating brave spaces to take risks to challenge systemic oppression. In A. Eizadirad, A.B. Campbell, & S. Sider (Eds.), *Counternarratives of pain and suffering as critical pedagogy: Disrupting oppression in educational contexts* (pp. 19–37). Routledge.

Dey, P., & Steyaert, C. (2016). Rethinking the space of ethics in social entrepreneurship: Power, subjectivity, and practices of freedom. *Journal of Business Ethics, 133*(4), 627–641.

Duarte Alonso, A., Kok, S., & O'Brien, S. (2020). "Profit is not a dirty word": Social entrepreneurship and community development. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship, 11*(2), 111–133.

Farinha, L., Sebastião, J. R., Sampaio, C., & Lopes, J. (2020). Social innovation and social entrepreneurship: Discovering origins, exploring current and future trends. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing, 17*(1), 77–96.

Kester, G. H. (2011). *The one and the many: Contemporary collaborative art in a global context.* Duke University Press.

Kumari, R., Kwon, K-S., Lee, B-H., & Choi, K. (2020). Co-creation for social innovation in the ecosystem context: The role of higher educational institutions. *Sustainability, 12*(307), 1–21.

Kwong, J. (1993). Canadian universities in an age of austerity: Moving towards the business model. *Oxford Review of Education, 19*(1), 65–77.

Lawrence, E., Dunn, M.W., & Weislfeld-Spolter, S. (2018). Developing leadership potential in graduate students with assessment, self-awareness, reflection and coaching. *Journal of Management Development, 37*(8), 634–651.

Mathie, A. & Gaventa, J. (2015). Planting the seeds of a new economy: Learning from citizen-led innovation. In A. Mathie & J. Gaventa (Eds.), *Citizen-led innovation for a new economy* (pp. 1–23). Fernwood Publishing.

Mika, J.P., Warren, L., Foley, D., & Palmer, F.R. (2018). Perspectives on Indigenous entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise. *Journal of Management & Organization, 23*(6), 767–773.

Milley, P., Szijarto, B., & Bennett, K. (2020). The landscape of social innovation in Canadian universities: An empirical analysis. *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research, 11*(1), 21–41.

Moffatt, K., Panitch, M., Parada, H., Todd, S., Barnoff, L., & Aslett, J. (2016). Essential cogs in the innovation machine: The discourse of innovation in Ontario educational reform. *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies, 38*(4), 317–340.

Moulaert, F., & MacCallum, D. (2019). *Advanced introduction to social innovation.* Edward Elgar Publishing.

Nandan, M., London, M., & Blum, T.C. (2014). Community practice social entrepreneurship: An interdisciplinary approach to graduate education. *International Journal of Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation, 3*(1), 51–70.

Nichols, A., Simon, J., & Gabriel, M. (2018). *New frontiers in social innovation research.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Nichols, N., Phipps, D., Provencal, J., & Hewitt, A. (2013). Knowledge mobilization, collaboration, and social innovation: Leveraging investments in higher education. *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research, 4*(1), 25–42.

Pel, B., Wittmayer, J. M., Avelino, F., Loorbach, D., & de Geus, T. (2023). How to account for the dark sides of social innovation? Transitions directionality in renewable energy prosumerism. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions, 49*, 100775.

Rayner, C., & Bonnici, F. (2021). Complexity, scale, and depth. In C. Rayner & F. Bonnici (Eds.), *The systems work of social change: How to harness connection, context, and power to cultivate deep and enduring change* (pp. 18–32). Oxford University Press.

Rittel, H. W., & Webber, M. M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences, 4*(2), 155–169.

Slee, B., Burlando, C., Pisani, E., Secco, L., & Polman, N. (2021). Social innovation: A preliminary exploration of a contested concept. *Local Environment, 26*(7), 791–807.

Stauch, J. (2016). *Leadership for social innovation: Results of a pan-Canadian study on leadership learning for social change.* ISIRC Conference Proceedings, Glasgow.

Teasdale, S., Roy, M.J., Ziegler, R., Mauksch, S., Dey, P., & Raufflet, E.B. (2020). Everyone a changemaker? Exploring the moral underpinnings of social innovation discourse through real utopias. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship, 12*(3), 417–437.

Thompson, N. (2012). *Living as form: Socially engaged art from 1991–2011.* MIT Press.

van der Have, R. P., & Rubalcaba, L. (2016). Social innovation research: An emerging area of innovation studies? *Research Policy, 45*(9), 1923–1935.

Wehbi, S., Panitch, M., Courneya, J., Fraticelli, R., Idrees, A., Machado, J., & Boonstra, O. (2023). (Re)Searching from within: Arriving at a scholarly approach to social innovation in higher education. *Educational Action Research, 31*(5), 920–930.