Chapter 7
Digital Social Innovation for Better Connected Government:
The Case of Republic of Macedonia

Natalija Najdova
University Ss Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Macedonia

Jasmina Belchovska Tasevska
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Skopje, Macedonia

Smilka Janeska Sarkanjac
University Ss Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Macedonia

Branislav Sarkanjac
University Ss Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Macedonia

Dimitar Trajanov
ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3105-6010
University Ss Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Macedonia

ABSTRACT

Social innovation (SI) refers to new products, processes, and methods that, in a creative and sustainable way, offer a better solution to social demands, which often requires changes in the practices of existing social systems. Digital social innovation (DSI) is ICT-based SI that uses digital technologies to invoke such changes. This chapter presents an insight into DSI in the Republic of Macedonia and reports the results of a survey to show the level of understanding, awareness, and knowledge of DSI in the country. Although the idea of DSI is to bypass the governments, motivate people to self-organize, and solve their societal problems, results suggest that without a good strategy, enough funding, and suitable societal governance, it is difficult to tackle the challenges of raising the awareness of an individual or a community that it is they themselves who are the change-enablers as members of a social network.

INTRODUCTION

Societies in the 21st century are facing numerous complex challenges. Among many of these societies, climate change, aging populations, high unemployment rates and inequality, corruption, urban over-crowding, increased conflicts, health, and education services for marginalized groups, demand urgent action. Traditional approaches to solving these challenges are undertaken by institutions like ministries, governments, and agencies, but this classic concept of good governance with its pillars (of market, state and civil society) are no longer sufficient or even adequate (Howaldt, Domanski & Kaletka, 2016; Murray, Mulgan & Caulier-Grice, 2008). Thus, a growing number of scientists and researchers are looking for the answers in the field of social innovation (SI). SI tends to be defined quite generically as new products, processes and methods that, in a creative and sustainable way, offer a better solution to one or more social demands whose satisfaction involves changes in the social practices of the existing social systems (Anheier & Korreck, 2013; Tevdovski, 2014; Hubert, 2010; Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010; Phills, Deiglmeier & Dale, 2008; Alvord, Brown & Letts 2004; Crozier & Friedberg, 1993; Datta, 2011).

The authors of this chapter prefer to use the definition of social innovation that highlights the importance of fostering social relationships and the concerted actions of citizens (Hubert, 2010), viz:

Social innovations are innovations that are social in both their ends and their means. Specifically, social innovations are defined as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society's capacity to act.

Therefore, social innovation can be considered as a process of deliberate change in the existing social practices. It encompasses new ways of actions that are introduced in a certain social area. Social innovations include an intent, a plan, and effect or expected impact on the targeted social settings (Howaldt & Schwarz, 2010).

In a general sense, social innovation is as old as civilization itself. The novelty to the concept brought by the 21st century is ICT-based social innovation, generally known as Digital Social Innovation (DSI). Rapid changes in almost all segments of human life are today fueled mainly by technology (especially Information, Communication, and Mobile Technologies) as it has shaped this century more drastically than any other technology that existed before. However, ICT innovation is not usually driven by social needs, but is primarily focused on spotting opportunities for profit, especially in todays mechanized societies. Even though Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* has reconciled the personal and the social interest, it is evident that for-profit endeavors, or current political or non-governmental structures, these are not powerful enough to solve the abovementioned pressing social demands (Autio, Kenney, Mustar, Siegel & Wright, 2014; Saunders & Baeck, 2015; Heeks, 2009).

To put it more directly, here is a relevant question as posed by Antadze & Westley (2010):

What is the alternative to the market model? Are there ways in which the complexity of social innovation can work in favor of those wishing to see successful cases of social innovations changing social systems? If growth in demand is so hard to assess, in what ways can the media, governments, and foundations play a role in making disruptive innovations more successful, assuming that this is a goal?

Related Content

Fog Computing Architecture, Applications and Security Issues
Rahul Neware and Urmila Shrawankar (2020). *International Journal of Fog Computing (pp. 75-105).*
www.irma-international.org/article/fog-computing-architecture-applications-and-security-issues/245711

The Attitudes of Chinese Organizations Towards Cloud Computing: An Exploratory Study
Tomayess Issa, Yuchao Duan, Theodora Issa and Vanessa Chang (2019). *Cloud Security: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 1577-1597).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-attitudes-of-chinese-organizations-towards-cloud-computing/224647

A Survey on Research Initiatives for Healthcare Clouds
Rahul Ghosh, Ioannis Papapanagiotou and Keerthana Boloor (2014). *Cloud Computing Applications for Quality Health Care Delivery (pp. 1-18).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-survey-on-research-initiatives-for-healthcare-clouds/110426

Fog Computing Qos Review and Open Challenges
R. Babu, K. Jayashree and R. Abirami (2018). *International Journal of Fog Computing (pp. 109-118).*
www.irma-international.org/article/fog-computing-qos-review-and-open-challenges/210568

A Study on the Performance and Scalability of Apache Flink Over Hadoop MapReduce
Pankaj Lathar and K. G. Srinivasa (2019). *International Journal of Fog Computing (pp. 61-73).*
www.irma-international.org/article/a-study-on-the-performance-and-scalability-of-apache-flink-over-hadoop-mapreduce/219361