Social Innovation in Refugee Support: Investigating Prerequisites Towards a Conceptual Framework

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Abstract This paper investigates the required elements in the advancement of social innovation (SI) produced by entrepreneurial organisations. These efforts are to assist the establishment of a new conceptual framework including the voices of those, most vulnerable and ferociously impacted by not only local but also global crisis. Qualitative data by an organisation which educates social workers and refugees fuel the concept of social innovation by pointing to the interplay of structure and agency as well as social issues and impact on economy. Our existing knowledge on the role of social enterprises and refugee support through social innovative services are limited. Social innovation is closely linked to social entrepreneurship (SE) in practice and in literature. SE in context of refugee support is a concept currently gaining attention. Social innovation could be equally relevant in this regard. SI is a broad, versatile term, believed to hold a yet fully to be discovered potential. While SI is not a new revelation it is, however contested as a term and is yet to be fully understood, defined and diffused for it to be exploited at its maximum potential.

Keywords Innovation · Social enterprise · Social innovation · Refugees

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1   Introduction

Mulgan (2006) stresses the growing diversity of countries and cities demand social innovative ways of organising schooling, language learning, housing and conflict management. This becomes more important in the case of social innovative ways of supporting refugees. In the first 9 months of 2015, 487,000 people seeking refuge entered Europe, doubling the number from the whole of 2014 (Banulescu-Bogdan & Fratzke, 2015: in Holmes & Castaneda, 2016). According to Holmes and Castaneda (2016) there are estimates of over one million more refugees yet to come, leading the European Commission to call this the 'largest global humanitarian crisis' of our time (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016). The Young Foundation (2012) explain impeding the interception of these challenges are silos in the public sector, market failures in the private sector and a lack of scale and fragmentation in the civil sector. SI could be the answer to overcoming these challenges. Where these overarching challenges and failures impact on some of the most vulnerable individuals such as refugees, SI must be investigated in this context to enable potential solutions while deepening an understanding of the SI concept.

While efforts are made to advance SI in the academic arenas and SI is occurring in practice settings they happen often unknowingly (Stott & Tracey, 2018). Mulgan (2006) criticises that the absence of sustained and systematic analysis is holding back the practice of SI, making it harder to detect gaps in current provision of funding, advice, and support. To this extent, this paper aims to contribute to our existing knowledge by investigating the missing elements in the progress of social innovation, especially when targeting vulnerable groups such as refugees through social enterprising. With that said, the recent trends in literature regarding achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through entrepreneurial activities highlight the importance of social entrepreneurship and social innovation (Apostolopoulos, Al-Dajani, Holt, Jones, & Newbery, 2018).

The paper is structured across five chapters. After the introductory chapter, the second chapter critically reviews literature revolving around social innovation. The third chapter introduces the case study organisation, followed by the research design including findings, discussion and lastly concluding remarks.

2   Theoretical Background

Social innovation is a disputed term which has been defined often generically as the creation and implementation of new solutions to social problems, holding benefits that are shared beyond the confines of the innovators (Elsen, 2014; Matei & Antonie, 2015; Tracey & Stott, 2016). Significant work is still required to identify a comprehensive SI definition (Ayob, Teasdale, & Fagan, 2016; Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; De Bruin & Read, 2018; Kocziszky & Somosi, 2016; Lorenz & Elsen, 2014; Matei & Antonie, 2015; Mulgan, Tucker, Ali, & Sanders, 2007; Nicholls, Simon, & Gabriel,

2015; The Young Foundation, 2012; Tracey & Stott, 2016; Van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016; van Niekerk et al., 2017). Bulut, Eren, and Halac (2013) claim the SI concept can develop original and sustainable ideas to problems that range in a spectrum from working conditions to education, individual or societal development, tracking health and environment as well as climate change. Elsen (2014) raises the definition to more complex explanation and goes on to combine the functions of social innovations which act within levels of society such as the micro (e.g. changes in family structures), the meso (such as new institutional arrangements) or the macro (e.g. Social Security for everyone), with these levels existing in structures (such as flatter hierarchies), processes (e.g. participative planning) and individual agency of the innovative thinkers allowing the spark of innovation to ignite and come to realisation. Lisetchia and Brancu (2013) explain:

> Various definitions approach the social innovation concept by observing different aspects: what is social innovation, which is the object of the innovation process, which are its motives and effects, which is the object of change, which is the targeted area of change, which are the components (Lisetchia & Brancu, 2013, p. 89).

Edwards-Schachter, Matti, and Alcántara (2012) investigated 76 journals to examine social innovation definitions on characteristics associated with SI and the correlating dimensions; Aims, Purposes/objectives, Drivers, Sources, Context, Agents, Sectors, Process, Empowerment and capacity building (social capital), Governance, Results/outcomes. SI principal approaches and structural intersections interplay between the individualist, organisational and regional/national approach (Unceta, Castro-Spila, & García Fronti, 2016).

Considering Elsen's (2014) SI definition above of the micro, meso and macro levels, the complexity of social innovation processes becomes fully apparent in Unceta et al. (2016) analysis of approaches for SI indicators. However, the drivers to innovate are diverse but certainly include: necessity, responding to unmet needs, sharing a vision of what can be, achieving legitimacy in the eyes of external power and resource brokers (Stott & Tracey, 2018, p. 1).

Community-based social purpose organisational forms, predating social enterprise are often overlooked by innovation researchers, but Stott and Tracey (2018) place great relevance on these. They claim the concept innovation is traceable way back to over a century ago (Stott & Tracey, 2018). Despite rapidly growing SI literature which may offer the illusion SI is brand new, its history has been traced back at least as far as to the beginnings of cooperatives (Bobic, 2013; Stott & Tracey, 2018). In 1844, the Rochdale Pioneers brought to life the cooperatives to answer social problems of the time, that still prevail today (The Rochdale Principles—Rochdale Pioneers Museum, 2017). The Co-operative is now an international movement and applies a bottom-up approach giving equal power to all participants (Bobic, 2013).

Numerous social innovations created by community or civil society actors (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012; van Niekerk et al., 2017) evidence SI embodies a bottom-up approach and relies on the fundamental understanding that communities and citizens can interpret their own lives, recognise problems and competently find solutions (Mulgan et al., 2007).

Despite SI's wide application the concept holds considerable gaps in research. Mulgan (2015) believes SI research lacks evidence of value creation and destruction of social innovation, in as so far that it follows the same principle of innovation with its creation of value for some, but destruction of value for others. This research gap can be drawn back to Schumpeter (1942: In Carter & Jones-Evans, 2012) and his view of economic development, being a process of creative destruction with entrepreneurs playing a key role in the introduction and expansion of some enterprises whilst other enterprises simultaneously exit or collapse. However, this is not a phenomenon that occurred as abruptly as perceived but rather a continuous process of citizens wanting their needs heard and support (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2012). Kocziszky and Somosi (2016) believe innovation plays a key role in the constancy for the performance of an economy and see a correlation between the innovation potential of a region and its ability to produce economic output. Economists have long known SI functions as a compensating factor for a lack of economy and science innovation (Kocziszky & Somosi, 2016). Moreover, the European Union in the past decades pay great attention to the context of SI linked to social changes, incorporating it into their objectives for the programming period of 2014–2020 (Kocziszky & Somosi, 2016).

2.1 Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation

Social entrepreneurs are called on by Dees (1998, 2001) to develop new models for a new century. It is expected social enterprises to be the vehicle of social innovation (The Young Foundation, 2012) which is in line with the European Commission (2017a) vested interests in entrepreneurship. There has been a developed understanding of the importance of innovation for the future of European competitiveness and the global economy reflected in the European Commission (2017b) statement:

> The EU is implementing policies and programmes that support the development of innovation to increase investment in research and development, and to better convert research into improved goods, services, or processes for the market (European Commission, 2017b: online).

Al-Dajani, Carter, Shaw, and Marlow (2015) examined entrepreneurship aimed for social purposes in their research on destitute women who accessed micro-loans to improve their living standards. A focus on the value of entrepreneurship as a strategy for economic and social development is debated and whether entrepreneurship aimed at eliminating poverty and aiding marginalised peoples, in fact, can be an instrument of improvement or involuntarily cause disempowerment (Al-Dajani et al., 2015). Social entrepreneurship could be perceived as a swift, simple fix to aid stabilising economies whilst freeing those, most in need, from poverty. Data collated by Al-Dajani et al. (2015) suggest 'entrepreneuring' was pursued by research participants as a means available to 'get by' rather than an opportunity to 'break free'. Nonetheless, the means of entrepreneurship were proven to fulfil a

social function here insofar as support for disadvantaged women was offered with the scheme to provide microloans encouraging enterprise, enabling an income to be generated.

Dees (1998, 2001) claims SE did not have to rely solely on not-for-profit structures but takes advantage of social purpose for-profit business structures or hybrid organisations with a combination of not-for-profit and for-profit elements. Social entrepreneurs are entrepreneurs with a social mission and face challenges due to their socially orientated mission (Dees, 1998, 2001). Progression in social entrepreneurship research increasingly focus on similar efforts in relation to refugees and SE (Betts, Omata, & Bloom, 2017; Bizri, 2017; Chahine & Grom, 2017; Marchand & Dijkhuizen, 2018; Obschonka & Hahn, 2018). Stott and Tracey (2018) take a critical stance to social entrepreneurship and the process of creating and growing a venture to address social challenges, which they believe is swiftly becoming the 'go to' strategy for policy makers and those aiming to create social change. While current policy, practitioner, and academic literature reiterates social enterprise is an effective response to social ills, Stott and Tracey (2018) warn:

> . . .the weight of expectations placed on social entrepreneurship to overcome others' 'failures' is at best unhelpful and at worst counterproductive, not least because sustaining social enterprises appears to be inherently difficult (Stott & Tracey, 2018, p. 6).

Beyond social entrepreneurship, SI is conceptualized as a new avenue to create positive social impact (Van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016) and it is believed to accelerate in the next hundred years (Mulgan, 2006). The Young Foundation (2012) highlight the issues for global societies are the 'failure' of the modern welfare state, the failure of conventional market capitalism, resource scarcity and climate change, an ageing population and the associated care and health costs, the impact of globalisation, the impact of mass urbanisation and more. Throughout literature SI has been rooted in innovation (Bulut et al., 2013; Lorenz & Elsen, 2014; Matei & Antonie, 2015). Studies conducted by the European Commission show companies prioritising innovation achieve the highest increase in turnover with 79% of companies introducing at least one innovation since 2011 experiencing an increase of their turnover by more than 25% by 2014 (European Commission, 2017c). The initial Innobarometer was a survey collating data on activities and attitudes related to innovation and each year it gathered opinions and feedback from the general public and EU businesses (European Commission, 2017c). The progression of the Innobarometer, in 2016, began to capture details of the main behaviours and trends in innovation-related activities in EU businesses (European Commission, 2017c).

The main results of the research found further action must be taken to support efforts to promote innovation in Europe (European Commission, 2017c). Mulgan et al. (2007) suggest that SI is ever more important for economic growth due to climate change issues or ageing populations which may only be overcome through SI. These crises aren't recent phenomena but rather the interconnection in the context of global systems is elevating these issues to new levels of urgency (Westley, 2008). Tommasi (2015) raises attention to the aftermath of the European Financial Crisis resulting in an ever more pressing need for SI and highlights that the impact of

globalisation has become more relevant with the outbreak of the global financial crisis. Globalisation advanced significantly the vast development of civil society and international non-governmental organisations (NGO's) estimated to amount to over 55,000 (Lawrence & Weber, 2017). Key growth sectors in the twenty-first-century are predicted to revolve around health education and care, accounting for around 20–30% of GDP (Mulgan et al., 2007). This change is rooted in the decline of manufacturing and the increasing dominance of service industries (Mulgan, 2006). It is not coincidental that the EU Commission incorporated specific policies on development of social innovation in Horizon 2020 (Elsen, 2014). The re-occurring dialogue on Small to Medium Enterprise's (SME), including NGO's are linked to economy, sustainable future and social innovation. The term SME is often concerned with companies, but the term covers charities, universities, statutory bodies, government and more (GOV.UK, 2017). Westley (2008) argues SI can be aided by market demand or equally by political demand, but these dynamics are as complex as they are difficult to manipulate directly. Charities and NGO's face decreasing funding sources (BBC, 2012; Butler, 2017; May, 2016; Pati, 2011; Tyler, 2016) which is drawing interest in seeking new opportunities and creative ideas to support those most vulnerable. Where NGO's do obtain funding, they may have a better chance to succeed, but such alignment with national and regional funding can violate the organisation's own goals cultural strategies (Dym & Hutson, 2005).

Kestenbaum (2008) claims innovation is crucial to improve public services, ensure economic competitiveness and social wellbeing. Storey and Salaman (2004) believe charities and NGO's are often seen as innovative by their very nature, due to their focus to fulfil unmet social needs. However, not all charitable organisations are truly innovative as they may begin with a new idea, but then settle swiftly into a secure and predictable routine (Storey & Salaman, 2004). Vast amounts of Third Sector organisations explicitly aim to solve or relieve social needs, especially those of disempowered peoples, which makes them important actors in the production of SI (de Wit et al., 2017). Stott and Tracey (2018) argue the survival of people in poor places served by SI depend on it. This is illustrated by the fact that community or civil society actors are the creators of a sizeable number of social innovations (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012; van Niekerk et al., 2017). Howaldt (2018) explains during the last century systematic innovation politics advanced the potential of natural and engineering sciences' research and development and calls for the same pioneer's attitude in the twenty-first century for the quest to advance social practices.

Taking into consideration the current literature, this paper aims to expand our existing knowledge by:

1. Investigating how a social enterprising organisation, which offers services to refugees, develops social innovative initiatives
2. Exploring how social innovation can be further developed by embracing elements that support society to deal with human crisis.

2.2 Background of the Case Study Organisation

Informed by the literature review a charity undertaking social entrepreneurial activities was chosen as a case study. Students and Refugees Together (START) has operated in Plymouth, in the South-West of England, since 2001. START has proven to create an innovative learning environment, whilst providing high quality support services to refugees and providing community activities (Butler, 2005, 2017) with social entrepreneurial aspects. While START is part funded by charitable grants, student fees and other smaller income, it also wins large government tenders (START, 2016), supplying significant services as well as contributing to the economy pulling financial resources into the city. Amongst the many START ventures, is the Cultural Kitchen, where upon entry a small contribution or donation is expected by all attendees to part finance a two-course meal and community activities by the charity. START's empowerment ethos and the applied strengths approach (Butler, 2005; Saleebey, 2006) are also vital interest points in exploring the relevance of the bottom-up approach within SI.

3 Research Design

This study was undertaken using a social constructivist approach (Young & Colin, 2004: in Andrews, 2012) and triangulation through interviews, focus group and literature review (Chang, 2016) which promoted validity in analysing the research question from multiple perspectives (Brewer & Hunter, 2006; Denzin, 2006). Close, personal ties to START with one of this study's researchers allowed an in-depth, privileged access to a naturally guarded and protected organisation working with vulnerable people. Autoethnographic observations additionally informed findings, ensured authenticity (Diagle, 2015) and heighten relational ethics (Ellis, 2007: in Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Through autoethnography a researcher not only aims to make personal experience meaningful and cultural experience engaging, but also reach out wider to a more diverse audience (Bochner, 1997; Ellis, 1995; Goodall, 2006; Hooks, 1994: in Ellis et al., 2011).

Participants for interviews were invited via a circulated email by a START trustee. Students and service users were invited by a staff member to join the focus group. All potential participants were offered a research brief regarding this study digitally or in hard copy and several introductions of the researcher were made to staff, students and service users particularly before or during autoethnographic observations. This sampling approach successfully engaged one trustee and one manager to take part in two in depth interviews as well as a staff member, two placement students and two service users, who are also START volunteers, took part in a focus group. START's founder took on an advisory role in the study and offered significant insights through regular meetings from the outset of the research. Six autoethnographic observations took place in different START settings, two hours per session, with observations and reflections separately recorded afterwards.

3.1 Data Collection

Insights from collected data emerged, and relevant themes surfaced throughout the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of secondary data. These were further expanded by the thematic interview protocols. This in turn was used to guide the focus group session. START's founding trustee contributed essential insights in an advisory capacity throughout all research phases with regular meetings at Plymouth University. Detailed minutes were taken. The interviews were framed around an overarching understanding of START as an organisation and its impact on service users, students and the city in which it is located. The focus group centred on participant experiences and perceptions of support services in Plymouth.

Interviews lasted approximately 1 h. One interview took place at Plymouth University, the other interview and the focus group took place at START. With permission, interviews and the focus group were recorded for transcription under assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used to protect identities. Debriefs after interviews and the focus group added further insights. The constructivist approach (Ponterotto, 2005) combined with interviews, focus group and observations were appropriate for the exploratory nature of this study (Barcik 2017; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). These methodological decisions acknowledge the extent to cultural and linguistic barriers to conduct research in an organisation with significant diversity, to gather insight ethically and appropriately.

3.2 Data Analysis

Analysis of the evidence commenced simultaneously with data collection which provided the opportunity and flexibility to probe potentially interesting issues as they emerged. This ensured, whilst focused on substantive research interests, data collection also incorporated participant perceptions, experiences and voices. An inductive approach was pursued in the analytical process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Critical themes and related categories were refined, developed and removed throughout the empirical data reduction process. Corbin and Strauss (2008) believe regardless of research project size it is paramount to integrate as many perspectives as is feasible to ensure depth, insight and richness of data obtained. Through pre-existing relationships to START we were privileged to share the confidences of participants, engaging extraordinarily vulnerable individuals and capturing their contributions to this research. Data were organised in tables to support the process of comparison of emerging themes and categories. These were compared with the additional data collected and knowledge acquired from the secondary research data. NVivo word frequency queries were run and assisted in the initial coding: Meetings with minutes taken with the founding trustee were not included in the word search as they were not recorded or transcribed. Comparisons and coding in a cyclical process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014), allowed the progressing from open nodes, confirming
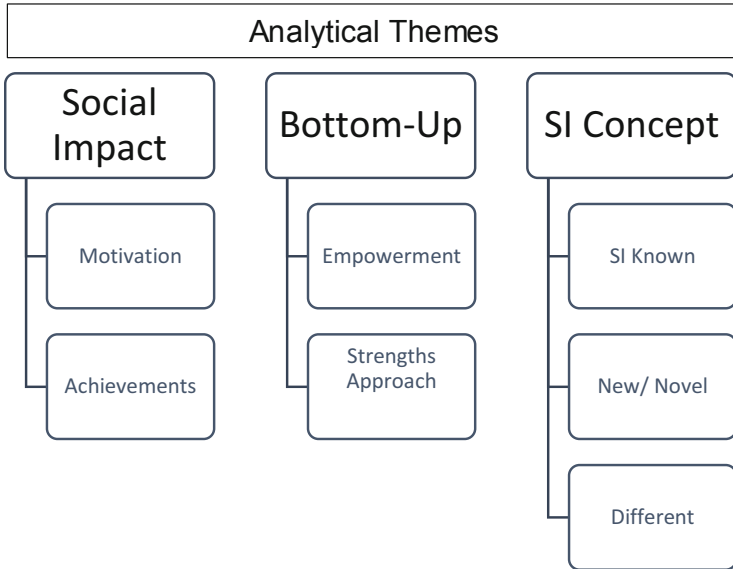
Fig. 1 Analytical themes

the established analytical themes, through to axial codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), identifying categories and relationships between categories as seen in Fig. 1.

The literature review established noteworthy lines of inquiry which developed in tandem with empirical data. The analytical themes, their respective categories and examples of raw data are presented in Table 1.

3.3 Findings

Van der Have and Rubalcaba (2016) conceptualise SI as a new avenue to create positive social impact. Social impact and its subcategories motivation and achievements bring together an understanding this vital aspect of SI at START. START's intentions to shape a better society clearly articulated by a trustee (Table 1) echoes in the achievements the manager speaks on in terms of students who are impacted by their placements and carry this into their professions impacting on their practice in the community. Further the manager states in relation to service users accessing START support '*that huge movement in people's lives is a huge achievement*'. Aiding those in crisis to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to their communities is tremendous success, but also to highly prepare professionals and thereby a wide-reaching impact is achieved.

Under the bottom up theme empowerment and the strength perspective are categories which resonate with SI's bottom-up approach as understood by Mulgan et al. (2007), Nicholls and Murdock (2012) and van Niekerk et al., (2017). Service

Table 1 Analytical themes, categories and examples of raw data

Themes	Categories	Examples of raw data
Social impact	Motivation	'It's like our work is to do something that is better, to make something better a better society for us to live in….'(trustee) 'because my work is not about refugees (laughs) it's about possibility, it's about human possibility' (trustee)
	Achievements	'I think the impact student placements had on them becoming professionals out there working the field.' (manager)
		'Just look at the number of people who've worked with us. Just that huge movement in people's lives is a huge achievement. And I'm not saying people wouldn't have achieved that without START, but I think having START there has really enabled people to move through a very difficult system ….' (manager)
Bottom up	Empowerment	'It is important to empower people, to support them the right way.' (student 1)
		'You know if you're trying to help trying to create for themselves, trying to do things for themselves then the community is growing.' (service user 1)
	Strength's approach	'So, there's a focus on empowerment on the service users, it's very strength focused. they focus on the strength of the service user, but also the students as well.' (service user 1)
		'It's really, the service users telling their stories and us taking that on in how we support them so it's really a partnership. (student 1)
SI concept	SI known	'We have a panel where we sit to bring up an idea called conversation club which is a club to explain or to involve refugees that don't really have basic English …. So, this is the basic, like a foundation… it's an innovation actually.' (service user 1)
	New/novel	'…looking at innovation is something being new, is innovative. Everything we do we try and look at new models of practice, um, new ways of doing. We are really open to that. (manager)
		'I think innovation is something new. So, it is starting something that has a …that comes from and impacts on social relationships.' (trustee)
		'They (students) help them (refugees) to settle down and they learn more about where they're coming from which is something new and then they bring the information into the office and into the council and into other organisations. '(service user 1)
	Different	'This placement is different in a cultural way. In my previous placement I was dealing with people who are mainly Caucasian. It will bring up the opportunities how to communicate with different organisations and how to communicate with people from diverse ethnic background.' (student 1)
		'Different students come each year. People come with different ideas.' (manager)

User 1 believes empowering individuals enables them in '…*trying to do things for themselves*…' and she concludes consequently'…*then the community is growing*.' And links to the social impact sought from social innovation. This is further underlined by Service User 1 highlighting '…*focus on the strength of the service user, but also the student...*' demonstrating the required equality reinforced at

START. This is the fertile foundation allowing vital contributions made from all individuals involved in this support service processes.

Through word search the SI concept theme the three most prominent words associated to SI were established. Wording such as 'new or 'novel' which also can be found in various SI definitions in literature, did not appear to a significant extent in interviews or the focus group other than definitions of SI offered by trustee and manager (Table 1). The word 'different' came up 76 times during interviews and the focus group. The lack of social innovation in the word frequency searches evidences word search limitations. Social innovation by and large was found to be an unknown entity amongst all participants in this study, therefore no direct requests were made for participants to offer a definition of SI.

From the raw data examples interlinked with relevant literature informed findings resulting in response to this paper set out goals.

1. Investigating how a social enterprising organisation, which offers services to refugees, develops social innovative initiatives

    '. . . .it's about human possibility' (Trustee, Table 1) is the quote found in the data which best describes START. The fundaments and ethos of the organisation creates the basis in which possibilities are fostered and people are nourished.

    Hence, the most remarkable finding in this research is the contribution by Service User 1, a refugee woman who is a START service user and volunteer. Service User 1 confidently voiced her understanding of SI and how it translated in activities at START such as the Conversation Club created by service users. Service User 1 states in this context '. . . this is the basic, like a foundation. . . it's an innovation actually.' The conversation club is a social innovation with social impact and a bottom-up orientation. Based on this we believe a greater focus ought to be redirected in SI literature in the consideration of who the stakeholders in SI are and what they may or may not contribute in the progression of a new SI framework for social initiatives supporting refugees. It was not possible to fully establish who exactly are all stakeholder's in social innovation and where or how it can be determined to involve these in reframing SI within refugee support. However, the initial steps evidencing the importance in pursuing this line of inquiry to develop a new framework for SI has been set. Had data only been considered from the literature review in conjunction with trustees and management input, very different conclusions would have been drawn. The privileged access possible in obtaining data gave new insights from vulnerable individuals rightfully protected by organisations assisting them.

2. Exploring how social innovation can be further developed by embracing elements that support the society to deal with human crisis.

    At the crossovers of academic research, professional practice and the maximising of stakeholder engagement is the potential to fully understand and determine social innovation and all it holds within. Only when both research and practice increase the engagement of informants to SI development is the concept likely to develop fully. Figure 2 emphasises the importance of stakeholders in SI to enrich both the academic and practice-led understanding of SI.
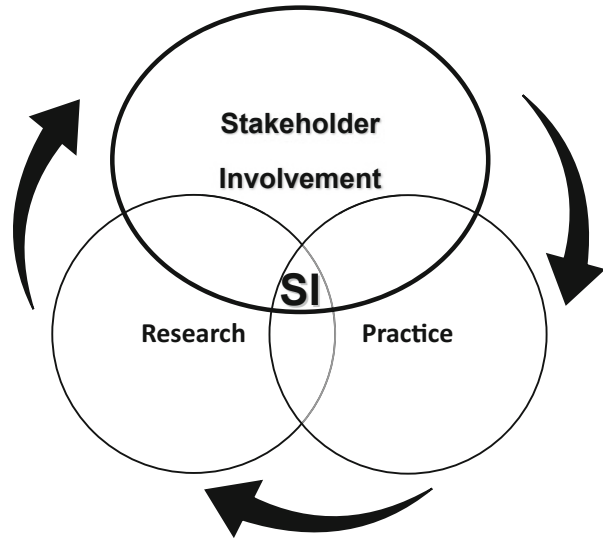
Through understanding who SI stakeholders are and how they best contribute to advancing SI, there is a possibility for bridges to be built between academia and professional practice informed by those who currently have a quiet voice, if a voice at all.

4 Discussion

The strengths approach applied at START highlights the importance of every individual being the expert of their own lives (Saleebey, 2006) and during the interview the START trustee speaks of the considered effort of instilling this approach throughout START. Relating the qualities of applying the strengths approach to SI, Mulgan (2006) states:

> Some of the most effective methods for cultivating social innovation start from the presumption that people are competent interpreters of their own lives and competent solvers of their own problems. (Mulgan, 2006, p. 6)

This study involved service users, students, staff and leadership allocating equal relevance to all input gathered, ensuring a bottom-up approach instilled within the research design. The most impactful contribution was made by Service User 1, a young woman who swiftly developed an understanding of SI through the focus group discussions and articulated confidently how and where SI takes place. This highlights the importance and the effectiveness of expanding the stakeholder pool exponentially to inform social innovation in order that those impacted the most by it contribute and guide its interpretation, comprehension and application.

This paper investigated literature around social innovation, recognising it as a contested term whilst considering the concepts positioning within SME's, the

economy and the role it plays within local and global crisis. Findings from the empirical data demonstrate within the process of enquiry vital knowledge on SI. Young Foundation (2012) urge that reaching a common understanding of the term is critical if the field is to mature and develop further. Murray, Caulier-Grice, and Mulgan (2010) argue that the design of services should start from the user, and that its diffusion should be approached from the perspective of users, not least because they are in many cases also co-producers. The promotion of SI has focused on the supply side and how innovations can be diffused among service providers through experts, intermediaries, and collaboration (Murray et al., 2010). Dym and Hutson (2005) believe community-based organisations align themselves with their communities because if they didn't then services may be refused and lead to the organisation failing. Therefore, leadership that aligns with community and other group cultures increases the organisation's chance of success (Dym & Hutson, 2005). Lorenz and Elsen (2014) echo Mulgan's prediction of service industries being the biggest growth areas in the economy and take this further in claiming the process must be coming from the bottom up. This is poignant in terms of where input is sought in SI processes and how this informs understanding and diffusion of social innovation.

5   Concluding Remarks

Recognising social innovations essential role where social impact is needed whether in economic changes, welfare shifts, or global crisis highlights the imperative in advancing SI. In this regard, understanding who is impacted by SI leads to identifying voices who will contribute crucial perspectives.

Wording is a relevant aspect to consider in future research, particularly where diverse participants are involved, and the meaning of social innovation may need to be improved through offering more information to research participants. This, however, may increase the risk of influencing responses to research questions.

As with any study, we recognise limitations but suggest these offer scope for future research. This study began with a collation of varied SI definitions and the conclusion was reached given the constraints of space, we only consider in a lesser detail the theoretical issues raised by diverse definitions and reserve the endeavour to collect larger volumes of SI definitions for research with more suitable lines of enquiry in this respect. For reasons of confidentiality we were not able to include sections of data from the focus group. Restrictions in this projects scale allowed merely a brief survey on SI case studies as well as limiting the investigation into other SME's such as START to a very basic understanding. However, a larger sample would offer more emerged themes in future research.

Undeniably, SI can offer clarity in strategy, new solutions, improved services, extended comprehension of stakeholder involvement, novel approaches in building equality and a fairer, more sustainable world. Therefore, research and practice efforts to further the concept, fully define and diffuse it will continually prosper.

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