

# X-IDEA: How to Use a Systematic Innovation Method for Social Innovation Projects



Detlef Reis and Brian Hunt

## 1 Introduction and Theoretical Background

### 1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we introduce X-IDEA, a comparatively new innovation process method and related thinking toolbox, and discuss how such a structured innovation

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method can be used in the context of social innovation and corporate social responsibility activities.

We structure this chapter as follows: Section 1 sets the theoretical background by discussing some of the pertinent literature related to structured innovation methods on the one hand, and social innovation, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and sustainability on the other. Next, we introduce the X-IDEA innovation method and thinking toolbox. We describe X-IDEA's comprehensive yet elegant design architecture and special methodological features, and explain why X-IDEA goes beyond existing thinking frameworks for creative problem solving, innovation and design. In the third section, we discuss three case studies that illustrate how an innovation process method like X-IDEA may be used for social innovation projects, and can contribute to corporate social responsibility activities of corporations. In the concluding fourth section, we sum up how corporations may align their innovation initiatives with aspects of sustainability, corporate social responsibility and social innovation.

## ***1.2 Theoretical Background***

This chapter is situated at the intersection of three strands of literature: (a) the literature on structured process methods and thinking tools for creativity, innovation and design; (b) the domains on corporate social responsibility and sustainability; and (c) the writings on innovation types (including social innovation). Below, we briefly discuss each of these strands to build-up a theoretical platform for our further discussion.

The literature on problem solving, creativity, innovation and designs abounds with descriptions of structured thinking processes and innovation methods. Popular examples include the Creative Problem-Solving (CPS) model developed by Osborn (1963 [1953]) and Parnes (1967) and, more recently, design thinking (Kelley and Littman 2002; Brown 2008; Kumar 2013). While the different thinking frameworks vary in their detailed design, their common features is that they invite individual innovators or innovation teams to think and work their way through an innovation challenge by passing through different process stages. Other authors offer collections of thinking tools for serious thinking (e.g., de Bono 1992) and creativity and innovation (e.g., Michalko 1991, 2001; VanGundy 2005; Hudson 2007). However, a number of books such as Clegg and Birch (2002), Bragg and Bragg (2005) or, more recently, Kumar (2013) link a collection of thinking tools to an underlying systematic thinking framework.

Innovation facilitators use such innovation process methods and thinking tools for innovation to guide innovation teams through a concrete innovation project. Thereby, innovation projects typically focus on one specific innovation case that relates to a particular innovation type. Classical innovation types that organisations have already pursued for decades or even centuries are process innovation (e.g., Ettlé and Reza 1992; Pisano 1997) and product innovation (or new product

development, e.g., Goldenberg and Mazursky 2002; Trott 2002). However, over the past two decades, a wide range of modern innovation types has emerged and complemented the “classical” innovation types. The new innovation types developed and successfully applied by organisations and discussed in the literature include service innovation (e.g., den Hertog and Bilderbeek 1999; Tidd and Hull 2003), customer experience design (e.g., Pine and Gilmore 1998; Diller et al. 2006; Richardson 2010), strategy innovation (Johnston and Bate 2003), or business model innovation (Osterwalder et al. 2010), among others.

One particularly exciting new innovation type that is relevant for our discussion here is social innovation:

- Mulgan (2006) defines social innovation as “innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social.” This differentiation draws a line to typical business innovations created and diffused by for-profit organisations (Mulgan et al. 2007). However, Nichols and Murdock (2012) emphasise that by virtue of proposing a novel, original and meaningful new value proposition, every innovation has also a social dimension organization, regardless of whether it stems from a for-profit or not-for-profit organisation.
- Examples of social innovations include micro-credits first conceived by Muhamad Yunus, the founder of Grameen Bank, the “fair trade” or the open-source software and website development movement, or focused campaigns and activities of non-profit organisations such as Greenpeace.
- As these examples illustrate, and as Nichols and Murdock (2012), highlight, social innovations can happen at three levels: incremental (focusing on improving identified bugs in products and services that the market fails to address adequately); institutional (aiming to reconfigure existing market structures and patterns to create new social value), or disruptive (focusing on starting new social movements that alter the cognitive frames of reference around markets and social issues).

Keeley (2013) integrated ten modern innovation types into one elegant and relevant framework, the “ten types of innovation”. Regrettably, Keeley’s concept omits a number of important modern innovation types including strategy innovation and social innovation. The first author of this book chapter has personally developed a framework to systematise the modern spectrum of innovation types for his innovation company Thinkergy (Reis 2006, 2014). Labeled the Value-Leverage Innovation Typology, the framework organises the various modern innovation types across four levels (value optimisation, new value creation, value leverage through multiplication, and value leverage through magnification). Moreover, this typology also considers strategy innovation and social innovation as innovation types that may be delivered on any or all four levels. Figure 1 presents this more expansive framework of innovation types with the general innovation focus and the desired impact on each level (Reis 2018).

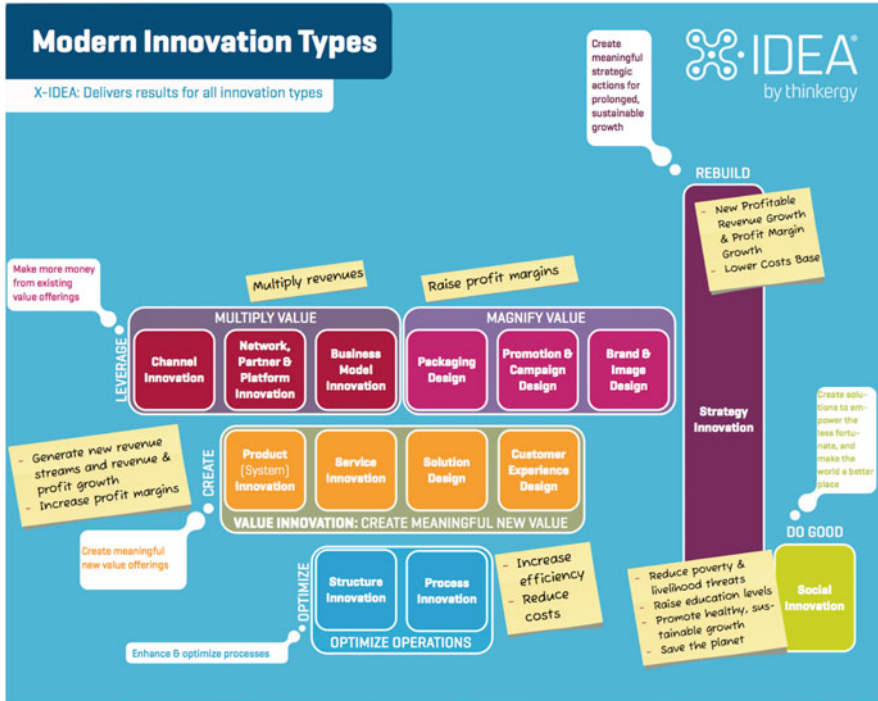


Fig. 1 The modern-spectrum of innovation types

We conclude our discussion of the theoretical background of this chapter by taking a brief glance at Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Over the past two decades, CSR has become a more established component of corporate strategic thinking. Organizations have become aware that CSR practices can transform their engagement with local communities as well as adding value through partnerships with local communal ventures. Global consulting firm Accenture reports on a variety of CSR initiatives throughout India, established with the aim of ‘shaping India’s economic future’ (Accenture 2014). Co-prosperity is a core goal of twenty-first century business organizations; in essence, developing the ‘business of business is business’ ethos that has traditionally informed corporate decision-making and actions. In the process, CSR activities can transform the perceptions of individuals, whether these are employees or members of other stakeholder groups, including consumers (see: Bauman and Skitka 2012; Rupp and Mallory 2015). Not the least attraction for organizations of CSR is its proven valuable contribution to profitability (see, for example, discussions in: Brammer and Millington 2008; Bonini and Swartz 2014).

Inherent in corporate thinking is the belief that ‘shared value’ brings added value to a broad range of stakeholders, including shareholders and society at large (Porter and Kramer 2011; Rangan et al. 2012). Organizations in many diverse industries

devote space to CSR activities in their annual report. Leading edge global companies such as Adidas, Air Canada, British–American Tobacco, Cisco Systems, Johnson & Johnson, McDonalds, Pepsico, Prada, and Procter & Gamble report on-going CSR initiatives, many of these instigated and driven by ‘grassroots’ employees or external stakeholders. CSR activities in organizations can have a positive influence of employees’ creativity. In this case, effective corporate communication is an essential component of managerial discourse as employees need to be aware that their employer is acting for the greater good (Brammer et al. 2015).

## **2 The X-IDEA Innovation Method and Toolbox: An Introduction**

### ***2.1 What Is X-IDEA?***

X-IDEA is an innovation process method created by the current first author. The method is marketed and distributed by the innovation company Thinkergy. X-IDEA is a systematic thinking framework designed for innovators and innovation teams to follow while working on an innovation project related to any of the modern innovation types.

Over the past decade, X-IDEA has been used on more than 150 innovation project cases spanning almost all major innovation types. X-IDEA has also been taught to graduate students in master’s degree programs at business schools in Thailand, Hong Kong and Finland (Reis 2016b). In a comprehensive longitudinal study, innovation learners confirmed that the use of the structured process flow and integrated application of thinking tools of X-IDEA has led to better thinking and better outputs compared to an unstructured approach (Reis and Hunt 2016).

### ***2.2 How Does X-IDEA Work in General?***

The X-IDEA Innovation Method consists of five main process stages: Xploration, Ideation, Development, Evaluation, and Action. Each of the five stages of X-IDEA follows a different objective, requires a different styles of thinking, and focuses on producing a different, yet specific target output. The five main process stages are introduced as follows:

- **Stage X—Xploration:** In this first process stage, an innovation team thoroughly explores an innovation case to develop a deeper understanding of the related project background. Thereby, the delegates of an innovation project workshop first express their understanding of the challenge, and what they know and do not yet know about the case. Then, they calmly explore the case using four cognitive

strategies (check, ask, look, and map). Finally, they extract their “ahas!” (i.e., novel and important insights into their case) as well as a final definition of the challenge.

Practical experiences from more than 150 innovation projects suggest that after a thorough Xploration of the case, the initial perception of the innovation challenge almost always changes. This is because in this stage, participants working on an innovation project uncover knowledge gaps and perceptual blind spots that lead to novel insights into the case, which then allows the teams to uncover their real innovation challenge. As such, this important first stage of X-IDEA ensures that a project team works on and generates ideas for their real challenge, and does not waste scarce resources such as time, effort and capital on what they initially perceive to be the issue.

- Stage I—Ideation: Ideation is the first of two exclusively creative stages with a focus on idea quantity. True to notion of Lateral Thinking, the participants laterally ideate, imagine and incubate raw ideas in this stage. To stress the focus on idea quantity upfront, the innovation facilitator sets an ambitious, yet achievable raw idea quota for the innovation teams to pursue as a target. Depending on the time allotted, an innovation team generates anything between 400–1000 raw ideas with a combination of classic creativity techniques and new ideation-tools developed by Thinkergy. The high number of raw ideas increases the probability of having a sizeable number of original, intriguing ideas.
- Stage D—Development: Development is the second creative process stage of X-IDEA. Now, the objective is to turn idea quantity into quality. At first, the innovation teams are asked to discover intriguing raw ideas within the large pool of raw ideas. Then, they work with this much smaller pool of interesting, original and—at times—wild raw ideas to design and develop these into meaningful idea concepts. This is done by applying the creative principles of elaboration, combination and transmutation and by using special design tools such as Yin And Yang or Get Real (Reis 2016a, 2017).
- Stage E—Evaluation: The fourth stage of X-IDEA, Evaluation, balances the creativity of the previous two stages with realism and pragmatism. Here, the innovation teams evaluate their portfolio of developed idea concepts, enhance promising ones, and finally elect a few top idea concepts that deserve being pitched for real-life activation. As such, the sober Evaluation-stage separates the wheat from the chaff to ensure that time, finances and employee efforts are directed to those few top concepts that are likely to succeed in the market space (high value potential) and can be activated (high implementation feasibility).
- Stage A—Action: Finally, the innovation teams take Action on these top ideas, and turn them into tangible innovation deliverables. Thereby, the participants assess the situation at regular intervals during an idea activation, arrange for the next steps and then activate the planned actions.

Figure 2 illustrates the flow of the five process stages of X-IDEA.



X-IDEA Process  
5 stages



Fig. 2 The five process stages of X-IDEA

### 2.3 Why Is X-IDEA a Valuable New Addition to the Armoury of Innovation Process Methods?

**X-IDEA was created by the current first author with the intent to cure identified flaws and delivery gaps of other innovation methods and creative process methods. What are some of these shortcomings?**

- Firstly, many process methods use only one main creative stage. This is problematic because during an idea generation session, most participants tend to immediately judge ideas on their practicality, thus suggesting only “normal”, “safe” and “acceptable” ideas. This violates the third ground rules of ideation, which mandates creative thinkers to shoot for wild, crazy and funny ideas.
- Secondly, many innovation project methods also neglect to systematically focus on inputs-throughputs-outputs as an innovation case is taken through the various process stages. Innovation projects tend to be messy and fuzzy, so it’s easy for facilitators and participants to lose track of these important questions: What input factors do we need to start a particular step or activity? What interim throughputs are involved in the process? And most importantly, what final outputs do we need to produce in which quantity and quality before we can move on to the next process step?

- Thirdly, while there are many fine books on thinking tools and creativity techniques, comparatively few of these link to a process framework in a systematic way. This is problematic because many inexperienced facilitators and most participants of an innovation project feel overwhelmed having to navigate a rich collection of thinking tools without fully understanding exactly when and where a tool has to be used within a sequence of process steps to accomplish what kind of objective and output.
- Fourthly, a number of popular innovation process methods cater only for one or a limited number of innovation types, such as the Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder et al. 2010) or Blue Ocean Strategy (Kim and Mauborgne 2005). This niche focus typically inhibits those methods from delivering meaningful results for all the many other modern innovation types.
- Fifthly, almost all innovation process methods have been developed—and tend to work fine—in Western cultures. However, most methods neglect the existence of cross-cultural impediments towards certain procedural mechanisms in their framework.

For example, a common theme in Asian cultures is the fear of losing face. Hence, even when the process instruction during idea generation mandates Asian participants to suggest wild ideas, they rarely do so in order not to “lose face”. Another common cultural phenomenon in Asia is to show “consideration to seniority” and “respect to authority.” Hence, if a senior participant or superior advocates an obvious idea in a typical “brainstorming” session, most younger participants or subordinates will go along with it although the idea is neither novel, nor original, nor meaningful.

- Sixthly and finally, most innovation process methods do not systematically consider and prevent common cognitive biases and process traps that innovation teams are likely to encounter as they journey through the stages of an innovation project. This oversight leads to the disregard or misinterpretation of project relevant evidence and the production of suboptimal outputs at different process stages, and for the project overall.

Through its integrative design architecture, X-IDEA cures each of these identified ills as follows (Reis 2014):

- One, X-IDEA distinguishes two separate creative stages with different work objectives and target outputs: In the Ideation-stage, your objective is to generate a large pool of raw ideas including wild ones. In the Development-stage, we turn idea quantity into quality by designing and developing a portfolio of realistic, meaningful idea concepts. Because the two creative stages greatly differ from each other in their cognitive activities and output focus, innovation teams are able to move beyond conventional ideas that are usually the result of having only one creative process stage (Reis 2016b).
- Two, X-IDEA has a strong IPO-focus considering inputs, throughputs and outputs on three levels: the overall project, a process stage, and a tool. The IPO focus allows us also to track IPO-related measures on each level. We use these also to set ambitious yet realistic target quota that motivate innovation project teams towards achieving desired outputs and results.



- Three, X-IDEA systematically links every thinking tool to a natural default position within the process flow where a tool is typically used. Currently, the X-IDEA toolbox comprises 150 thinking tools. New tools are added in regular intervals to incorporate new market trends and client needs. The X-IDEA tools are accompanied by related worksheets and stimulus cards that make it easy for innovators to think through a thinking tool, or for innovation facilitators to guide groups through an innovation project.
- Four, X-IDEA is purposefully designed to cater to all modern innovation types (Keeley 2013; Reis 2006, 2017): from process innovation over product and service innovation to customer experience design; from channel over network and platform to business model innovation; from packaging over promotion to brand and image design; and from strategy to social innovation. The comprehensive range of thinking tools in the X-IDEA toolbox allows innovation facilitators to pick those tools that suit the particular nature of, and produce the specific results for, a particular innovation type.
- Five, X-IDEA uses the five X-IDEA Roles of the Explorer, the Child, the Alchemist, the Judge, and the Champion to overcome intercultural barriers. For example, Asian workshop participants feel comfortable to suggest wild ideas without being afraid of losing face if they know that it's not them suggesting the idea, but them acting in the role of a child.

Moreover, X-IDEA uses different communication and interaction modes (such as solo brainwriting or pool brainwriting) to circumvent intercultural problems occurring when teams just “brainstorm” for ideas.

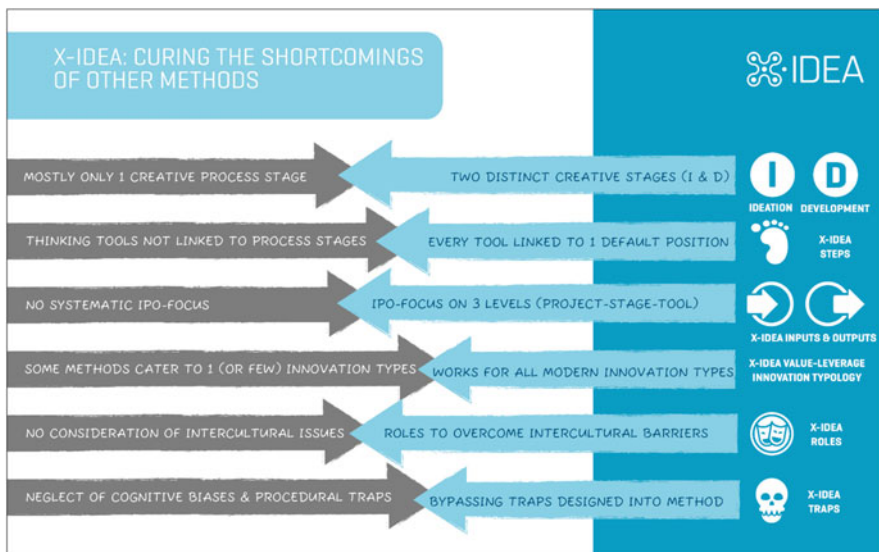
- Six, X-IDEA Traps help innovation project teams to systematically avoid cognitive biases and common process traps that are prevalent in any innovation projects.

Figure 3 summarizes how the various X-IDEA features discussed above address the shortcomings of many other innovation methods and problem-solving processes.

### 3 Application of X-IDEA in Social Innovation: Three Case Studies

X-IDEA is a neutral process method designed to work for all modern innovation types, including social innovation. Below, we present three case studies that illustrate how a systematic innovation method like X-IDEA might be used to support CSR activities and successfully approach social innovation projects:

- (a) Case study 1 describes how a company (Merck Thailand) selected an innovation case with a CSR-background to let Thinkergy train their employees and managers in how to use a structured innovation method like X-IDEA (corporate training)
- (b) The second case study illustrates how X-IDEA was used in a social innovation project with an external focus for an environmental campaign design with Greenpeace Southeast Asia



**Fig. 3** How the features of X-IDEA counter identified shortcomings of other innovation process methods

- (c) The third and final case study features the use of X-IDEA in a social innovation project with a mixed internal and external focus (UNICEF Thailand).

### 3.1 Case Study 1: X-IDEA in an Innovation Training Using a CSR Case (Merck Thailand)

Merck is a leading science and technology company in healthcare, life science and performance materials. Merck has been active in Thailand since 1991, when the first representation was opened and later expanded into a joint venture.

Merck Thailand has followed a comprehensive stakeholder management approach focusing on customers, shareholders, employees, and society at large. During its first two decades, Merck Thailand achieved double digit revenue growth in four out of 5 years. The former Chairman & Managing Director of Merck Thailand, Mr. Heinz Landau, attributed this standout growth (even at the time of the Asian crisis in the late 1990s) to the four stakeholder approach that he established at the firm. According to Mr. Landau, sustainable leadership coupled with regular CSR activities drove profitable growth and boosted employee engagement in Merck Thailand (Landau 2010a, 2013). Among other corporate social responsibility activities, Merck Thailand established a partnership with the Raks Thai Foundation, an organization that follows the mission to strengthen the capacity of poor and disadvantaged communities in Thailand by analysing root causes of problems,

determining suitable solutions and participating in development activities (Panitchpakdi 2010).

In 2005, Merck Thailand approached Thinkergy to train its managers and employees in the use of a structured innovation method. Typically, most innovation training courses use standardised case examples and/or a vanilla innovation case to illustrate the application of an innovation process and a thinking tool, as this approach tends to ensure a smooth, controlled learning experience.

However, Thinkergy agreed to use a neutral CSR case related to Merck's CSR activities to train the delegates on a realistic yet not too stressful case. The case was intentionally framed widely as "How to raise employee engagement for CSR activities in Merck Thailand?"

One idea that came out of the training was to have a joint tree planting day with Merck's staff, lead customers, local shareholders, and CSR partners (such as the Raks Thai foundation) that was later activated with the help of another NGO, the Plant A Tree Today (PATT) Foundation (Landau 2010b).

The Chairman & Managing Director of Merck Thailand, Mr. Heinz Landau, emphasised that the value of a structured innovation method like X-IDEA is enhanced by its playful, energetic delivery style:

Through his unique style, Dr. Reis was able to energize all workshop participants and to build up confidence in them to deliver creative ideas, not only during the workshop but also for the future.

As this example illustrates, replacing a standardised training case with a real-life CSR-case in an innovation training can be a win-win-win-win for all parties involved:

- Corporations can benefit because the use of a CSR innovation case increases participants' engagement during the training (compared to using an artificial, simulated case);
- Employees get an opportunity to learn how to use a structured innovation method like X-IDEA by working on a realistic, yet at the same time not overly stressful innovation case (compared to using a real case from their own business that tends to increase stress-levels and impairs learning)
- Innovation companies such as Thinkergy typically refrain from using a real innovation case of a corporation in a training. This is because they prefer tackling such a real innovation challenge in the form of an innovation project that has a different emphasis than a training (i.e., producing a tangible innovation deliverable vis-a-vis building up learner's creative competence and confidence), and also sells at a much higher price point compared to an innovation training. However, they tend to be open to replacing a standardised innovation training case with a realistic innovation case with a CSR background, as this promises to enhance the learning experience and gives innovation companies an opportunity to demonstrate their own social responsibility.
- NGOs providing the innovation case can win because they get the resulting ideas for free, some of which they may implement later on with or without the support of their CSR partner.

### **3.2 Case Study 2: X-IDEA in a Social Innovation Project: Campaign Design at Greenpeace Southeast Asia**

In Q4.2011, Thinkergy used X-IDEA to guide Greenpeace Southeast Asia through a social innovation project. Thereby, the focus was on creating a pipeline of impactful environmental campaigns that the NGO may activate in the following 3 years. Thinkergy agreed to conduct a 3-day X-IDEA Social Innovation Project for Greenpeace at third of the normal fee, because as part of our own social contribution, we wanted to support this NGO in the pursuit of the worthy cause of saving our planet from environmental degradation.

The innovation project was integrated in a week-long regional conference that took place at a seaside resort in Chonburi, Thailand. Over 100 delegates from three countries (Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand) were split-up into ten teams, each of which worked on one particular innovation challenge that Greenpeace wanted to address in the coming years. As such, Thinkergy helped Greenpeace Southeast Asia to tackle ten different innovation project cases in one event, which was possible thanks to the well-structured approach of X-IDEA.

The innovation challenges addressed five main focus areas identified as important by Greenpeace Southeast Asia: stopping deforestation of rain forest in Southeast Asia; ensuring preservation of maritime resources and oceans; highlighting climate change and promoting sustainable energy solutions; fighting toxic pollutions of environments; and internal talent acquisition.

On the first workshop day, the teams took their innovation case through the initial stage of X-IDEA, Xploration. At first, the teams expressed their initial perception of their challenge in sentences like “How to preserve the population of Sumatra tigers?” or “How to clean-up the dirtiest river in the world?”, which is the heavily polluted Citarum river in Indonesia.

Then, the ten teams were sent on the Xplorer’s Journey to four different Xploration stations (check-ask-look-map), where each team used a blend of related Xploration thinking tools to thoroughly and deeply Xplore their case. The tools help the teams become aware of perceptual blindspots and knowledge gaps related to their case, and to gain novel insights into what is their real challenge. Finally, the teams stated their deepened understanding in an improved statement of their Final Challenge (e.g. “How to effectively fight toxic industrial pollution of the world’s dirtiest river?”).

The second day saw an intense morning of outdoor Ideation-activities taking place at ten “Idea Stations”, where the delegates used Ideation Tools such as “Star Advisor Board”, “Idea Race” and “What If”, among others, to generate raw ideas. The teams came up with over 7000 raw ideas for their challenges. In the afternoon, the teams entered the powerful second creative stage of X-IDEA, Development (Reis 2016a). Here, the teams first Discovered the most intriguing raw ideas and then Designed and Developed them into over 250 realistic, meaningful idea concepts.

In the subsequent Evaluation-phase (done on the morning of the third and final day), the ten teams evaluated their portfolios of idea concepts in order to Evaluate each concept, to then Enhance promising ones, and finally to Elect their top five idea concepts.

Finally, each team presented these top five campaign concepts related to their respective innovation challenge to a grand forum. The top ideas that received the best feedback were earmarked for being activated for real as Greenpeace campaigns in the coming 2–3 years. For confidentiality reasons, we cannot present the chosen ideas in greater detail. However, to give you a flavour, one top idea to counter toxic industrial pollution of the world’s dirtiest river was the following campaign: A Greenpeace team sets up an aquarium filled with polluted Citarum river-water outside the venue of the annual meeting of a supranational financial institution involved in the funding process for the factories alongside the Citarum river,

Ms. Dawn Gosling, a former Interim Executive Director at Greenpeace Southeast-Asia, summarised her view on the outcomes of the project in 2011 as follows:

In December 2011 we worked with Thinkergy to bring a new and innovative approach to our campaign planning process. Over the course of 3 days our staff from around the region (approx. 100 people from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand) used the X-IDEA approach to find new ways to tackle some of the most important environmental challenges facing the world today (climate change, deforestation; preservation of oceans and toxic pollutions) plus the organisational challenge of staff/talent acquisition.

After going through the stages of the X-IDEA Innovation Method, the ten teams each presented their top five campaign concepts related to their respective challenge to a grand forum on the third and last day of the event. Over the next month these concepts were developed further and became key elements of our work in 2012.

### ***3.3 Case Study 3: X-IDEA in Social Innovation Projects: Creating the UNICEF of the Future***

In October 2016, UNICEF Thailand hired Thinkergy to run a X-IDEA Innovation Project aiming to create a more effective, productive and innovative UNICEF office of the future. The said social innovation project was part of a staff retreat in Hua Hin, Thinkergy had only 2.5 days to guide the 44 UNICEF delegates (split into four project teams) towards the desired project outcomes.

Given the rather short time allocated for the project workshop, Thinkergy held a series of preparation meetings with UNICEF Thailand’s management team, and also conducted a series of pre-workshop staff interviews to become more aware of possible innovation challenges (relating to both issues faced by the organization and perceived opportunities to innovate). We used the insights gained from these meetings and interviews to structure the overall flow of activities, and to pick those X-IDEA tools that we believed would help the project teams to become aware of their real challenge.

In the Xploration stage, the innovation teams checked on their core assumptions and on the existence of “rules for fools” (i.e., non-sensical internal guidelines, policies and practices that slow down the teams and prevent conducive actions). They also walked a mile in the shoes of key stakeholders (e.g., donors, delivery partners, government agents, and UNICEF’s head office). They looked at their challenge from different scales by examining the big and small picture. They

answered powerful—and at times provocative—Xploration questions, too. As a result, the teams realised that compliance to audit guidelines and internal bureaucracy has made the organisation too inside-focused, slow and passive. The teams consensually agreed to reframe their Final Challenge to reflect their real challenge: “How to make UNICEF Thailand fast, flexible and fearless?”

In the subsequent Ideation-stage, the four teams produced over 3000 raw ideas. These formed the ground stock for then designing over 130 realistic, meaningful idea concepts in the Development-stage. In the subsequent Evaluation-stage, each team elected its three top concepts, which they finally pitched in the final Action-stage. Two interesting themes emerged throughout the top idea pitches:

- Several top ideas focused on ways to make internal meetings at UNICEF Thailand shorter, leaner and more output-oriented to free managers’ and employees’ time and move from talking to action.
- Interestingly, while the Final Challenge was more internally focused, more than half of the pitched top idea concepts made meaning for UNICEF Thailand’s external stakeholders (e.g., local and migrant children, partners, and donors).

Mr. Thomas Davin, the Chief Representative of UNICEF Thailand, commented on his take-aways from the social innovation project in 2016 as follows:

The X-IDEA Innovation Project workshop that we undertook with Thinkergy was an amazing energy boost for all of the UNICEF Thailand team.

The 2.5 days was a real whirl storm of ideation which enabled the team to create over 3000 ideas focused on ways to make UNICEF “Fast, Flexible and Fearless” so as to make an all the more powerful impact in changing vulnerable children lives in Thailand.

Both myself and quite a number of the team were simply amazed at not just the number of ideas we were able to create in such a short time span, but also of the depth and quality of the proposed innovations, as well as the level of energy, buy-in and innovation mindset shift that the workshop created for the vast majority of the staff.

Not the fainthearted given the hard-paced approach and demanding rhythm of the Thinkergy team ☺, but absolutely and totally worth it in terms both of teambuilding impact as well as of the range and depth of innovation concept that the workshop created in a tiny amount of time!

## 4 Conclusion and Discussion

### 4.1 *Summary and Other Possible Applications of Innovation Process Methods Like X-IDEA for Social Innovation/ CSR/Sustainability*

In this chapter, we introduced X-IDEA, an innovation method and toolbox as a framework to guide the thinking of project teams in innovation and more general projects. In particular, we illustrated with the help of three case studies how innovation methods like X-IDEA can add value to individuals, teams and organisations working on projects related to social innovation, corporate social

responsibility, and sustainability. Our three case studies showed how the innovation company Thinkergy used X-IDEA to:

- Train businesspeople in how to apply a structured innovation method with the help of a CSR-related innovation case that focused on a partner organization of the corporation undergoing the innovation training (Merck Thailand and Raks Thai Foundation);
- Help an NGO advocating environmental preservation and sustainability to work on campaigns to raise the social awareness for—and affect positive social change for—ten environmental social innovation challenges (social innovation project with Greenpeace Southeast Asia);
- Support a supranational organization caring for child protection and development to create a more agile internal organization as well as more effective external social campaigns for their key stakeholders (social innovation project with UNICEF Thailand).

Abstracting from these three concrete cases, we can envision the following applications for a systematic innovation process methods like X-IDEA to support organisational activities related to sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and social innovation:

- Training companies and their corporate clients might use innovation cases with a social innovation or CSR background to train employees in creativity and structured innovation training courses;
- A corporation might sponsor a social innovation project (conducted by professional innovation experts) for a NGO as part of its CSR activities;
- A NGO may engage a professional innovation company to help them in a social innovation project using a structured innovation method;
- An innovation company (such as Thinkergy) might deliver a social innovation project for a NGO at cost (or do it for free if they're already well-established) as part of its CSR- or social entrepreneurship activities;
- A humanitarian foundation (such as the Gates Foundation) might engage the help of an innovation company (and its structured innovation method) to jointly work on large-scale social innovation challenges.
- A corporation might sponsor a social innovation competition (that is structured following the methodology of a systematic innovation method) as part of its CSR activities.

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