



# Designing Social Innovation

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# Hello, #DSS2022!

Thanks for joining our session.

I'm

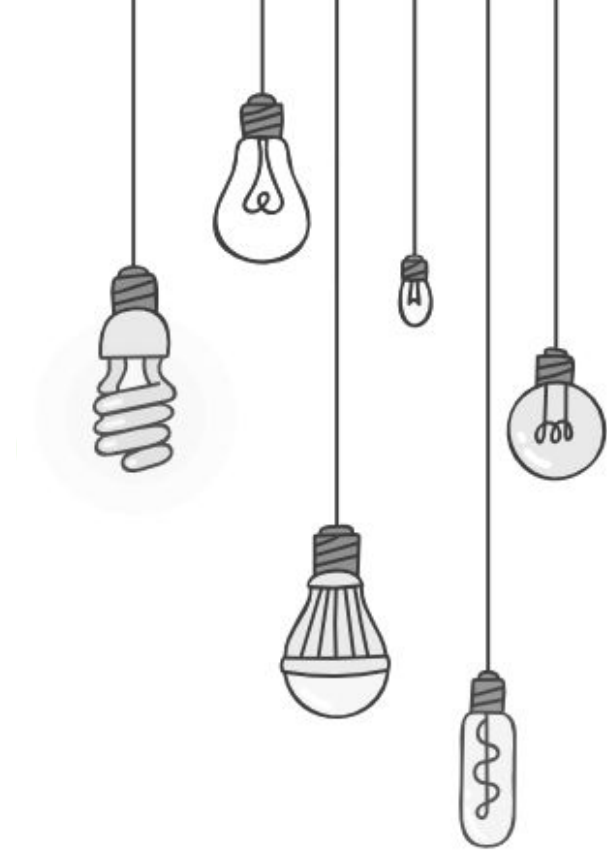
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jip" followed by a simple smiley face "☺".

@DataPlanes



# What is social innovation?

Let's tap into the collective wisdom of our digital crowd.



# Types of innovation

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- ▣ **Product, service, and process** innovation
  - ▣ Product innovation: tangible products (e.g. open source software)
  - ▣ Service innovation: intangible services (e.g. mentoring)
  - ▣ Process innovation: innovating how an organization creates value (e.g. agile frameworks)
- ▣ Degree of innovation: **incremental** vs. **disruptive**
  - ▣ Incremental: gradual, continuous improvement
  - ▣ Disruptive: more radical, i.e. higher risk and uncertainty



***Social innovation*** is the process of developing and deploying effective solutions to challenging and often systemic social and environmental issues in support of social progress.

— Sarah A. Soule, Neil Malhotra, & Bernadette Clavier  
(Stanford Center for Social Innovation)

# Wicked problems

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Societal challenges are so-called *wicked problems*.

- Hard to define the problem: **highly complex and systemic** with dynamic, interconnected requirements
- Hard to design the solution: **no single (or simple) solution**, degrees of better/worse rather than right/wrong
- **No definitive solution**: unclear when problem is successfully solved (“no stopping rule”)
- Examples: climate change, social inequality, or digital transformation



***Design thinking*** is a human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer's toolkit to integrate the needs of ***people***, the possibilities of ***technology***, and the requirements for ***business*** success.

— Tim Brown  
(Executive Chair of IDEO)

# Human(ity)-centered design

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1. **People-centered**: focus on the (ecosystem of) people
2. Understand and **solve the right problems**: identify root causes instead of fixing symptoms (ask “5 Whys”)
3. Everything is **interconnected**: adopt a long-term, systems perspective
4. **Small and simple interventions**: continuously test and refine your proposed solutions
5. **Co-design** with the community: collaborate and serve as a facilitator (design with, not for, people)



# Design Thinking

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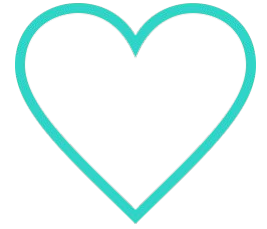


# Designing digital futures

Imagine you're collaborating with New Future, a social organization that wants to get ready for the digital age.

Until recently, New Future's core team largely relied on traditional frameworks and tools.

Now it's up to you, a human-centered designer, to help the team navigate New Future's digital transformation.

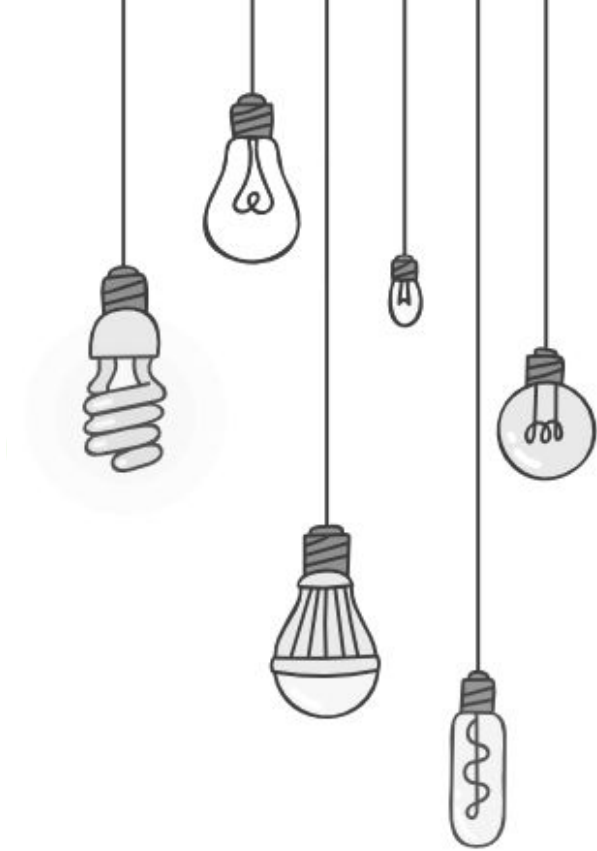


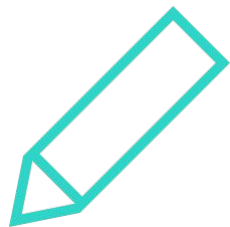
# Empathize

Understanding the problem we're trying to solve by observing, engaging, and empathizing with people

# How might we empathize?

Let's brainstorm ideas and thoughts on how to better understand the team's needs.






# Define

Synthesizing our findings and leveraging insights to reframe the core problems in human-centered ways

# Role-based **persona**

Nataliya, Impact Manager, 33

*“ I’m responsible for coordinating our impact activities and for monitoring our progress. ”* 



# Empathy map



What Nataliya **says**

*"I'm not sure if everyone is ready for change"; "This feels chaotic"; "There's a digital skills gap"*



What Nataliya **does**

Coordinates people; sits in meetings; relies on spreadsheets and emails



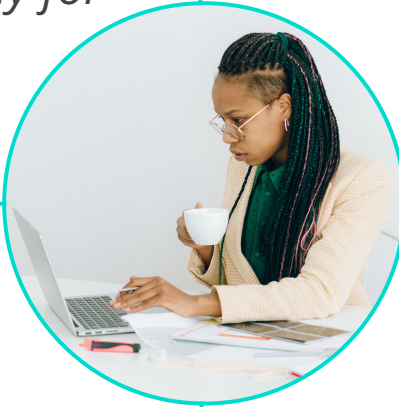
What Nataliya **thinks**

*"This is too much information"; "I'm wasting time in meetings"; "How can we digitalize our impact?"*



What Nataliya **feels**

Accountable; overwhelmed; unsure; excited; hopeful



01

### Pain point

Some team members (might) resist organizational change

02

### Pain point

Managers miss relevant information due to inefficient processes & outdated tools

03

### Pain point

Team members partially lack digital skills to create impact in the digital world

04

### Pain point

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# How might we...

**01**

inspire team  
members to  
embrace change?

**02**

support the  
team's current  
processes with  
digital methods  
and tools?

**03**

upskill team  
members to  
create impact in  
the digital age?

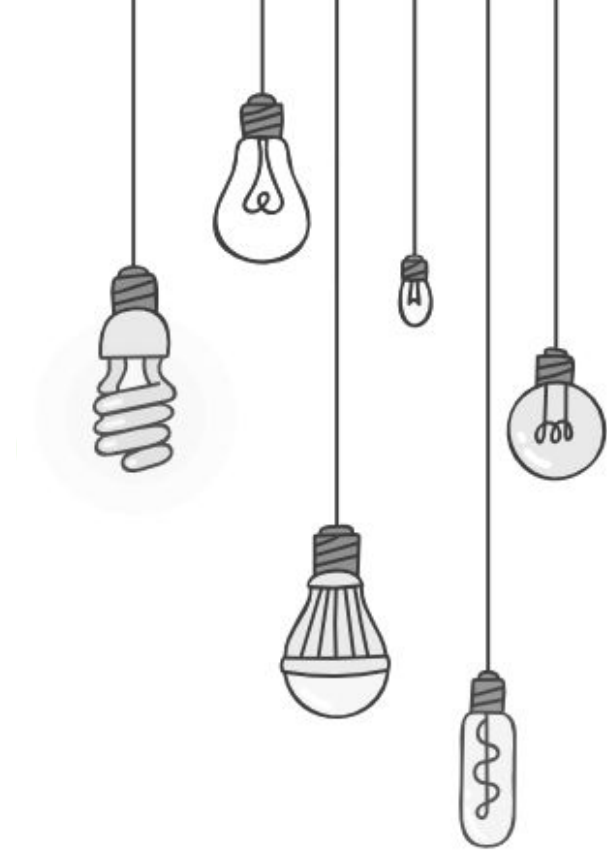


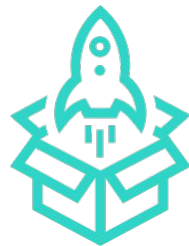
# Ideate

Generating ideas to find innovative solutions to the core challenges we identified

# How might we inspire the team to embrace change?

Let's ideate potential solutions.

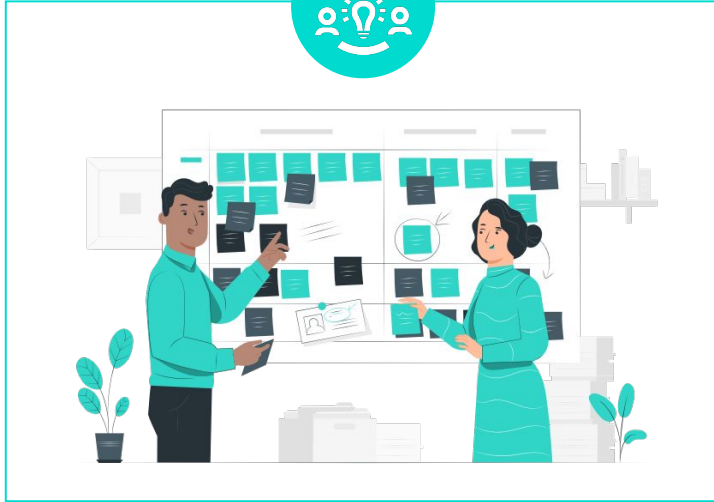


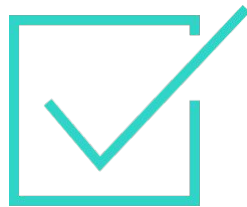


# Prototype

Designing and building interactive prototypes for the solutions we co-created in the ideation phase

# Mocking up digital solutions





# Test

Collecting (timely) feedback on our  
prototyped solutions to learn and iterate



## Test and refine our problem statement(s)

Did we frame the problem correctly?



## Learn more about the people who are affected

Did we fully understand their pain points and needs?



## Improve our prototypes and solutions

Did we get the solution “right”?



## Learn more about designing with people

IxDF's resources, [Design Justice](#), and [Lean Impact](#) are good starting points.

# Best practices

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- Think like a designer: **focus on people** and their specific needs
- Build a **diverse, multidisciplinary team**: bring together people from various backgrounds (break down silos)
- Beware of overgeneralizing problems and solutions: **people, culture, history, and environments matter**
- Empower people to solve their own problems: **facilitate** and implement **community-led solutions** to build alignment and increase agency, acceptance, and adoption
- Embrace VUCA, welcome failure, and value progress over perfection: **engage, build, test, and learn!**



# Thank you!

Any questions?



# Credits

Thanks for openly  
sharing your work!



Design inspired by **Jimena Catalina**.



Persona photo by **Nataliya Voitkevich**.



Vector art designed by **stories / Freepik**. Icons from **iconmonstr**.