

## Social innovation | Social innovation as a platform or project

**Lastly, you can look** at innovation as a platform or a project. The whole SIG initiative was a platform or project to try to encourage social innovation here in Canada. Another one that I was impressed with was a platform created in the Chicago area called Ohsove, which was really an internet platform that allowed people to find other people who could lend them things that they needed. Again, the assumption behind this was that everybody owns a power drill. How many times do people use a power drill? Well, maybe once a year if you're lucky. Maybe once every two years. Why should every household have a power drill? If you want a power drill for a project, why can't you borrow one?

**What was really innovative** about this though was that the particular program that they created shrunk as more people grew; so, in a particular area of a couple square miles in Chicago, they would create a network where 1,000 people were connecting with each other over a few square miles to try to exchange things. But, as more and more people joined up, they would shrink the geographical area. So, pretty soon you were within several blocks of 1,000 people who

had things that they would lend or services that they would exchange for free.

**That meant that you** began to know, much more intimately, the people who were living around you in an urban environment. It had a social impact in terms of who you knew and who you interacted with. It had an impact on the routines, in terms of how you get hold of things that you need but which you may not use very often; and it had a cultural impact on the notion of consumerism and whether or not you should go out and buy everything.

**It was really**, truly an internet platform with some innovative ideas behind it; but what it became was something that had an impact on the culture, at least in that particular area.

**Now, I want you to** put those ideas to work: project, process, platform, product, and program. What, in particular, is social innovation? I'm going to show you a video of a particular innovation and get you to think about what this innovation exactly is. What kind of mix is it of these kinds of elements?