Steve Davis’s *Undercurrents* examines five trends that are affecting the direction of social innovation. To Davis, social innovation comes largely from within the dominant socio-economic system through technological advancements.

He notes how technology has improved our lives by offering conveniences our ancestors didn’t have. Of course, this technology also has unintentionally given rise to productivity pressures, a widening socio-economic gap, and a hollowing out of the middle class. To call technological inventions by themselves social innovations arguably supports existing inequities.

Still, Davis makes many useful observations about current trends. For example, wholesale aid to nations is being replaced by interventions to the communities most in need. Access to technology in these communities is the low-hanging fruit triggering rapid improvement in community well-being. However, targeting aid in such a precise way risks shifting nationalist colonialism toward a neo-colonialism of under-represented populations, such as those in rural areas. This may further widen the gap in well-being between the extractor class and those being exploited.

As long as culturally based adaptations to new technology are disregarded, technological fixes alone won’t create sustainable change. Likewise, social media have brought great changes in how we communicate; but, with little social control, the frame of that communication can be set by a minority and used to divide us.

Davis believes tweaking the dominant system with technology is the way to reform it. While this is necessary and is the tale preferred by those with privilege, it’s not the only story that needs telling. Meaningful social innovation rejects the either/or debate between providing technological advances and social empowerment.

To create meaningful change, we need those inside the system to work for technical reform and those outside the system to critique and disrupt it. This means there’s plenty of space for nonprofit organizations – and for people within each nonprofit – to value both perspectives and relearn the work of cooperation. By developing ways to blend technical improvements with social behavior, we increase opportunities for building community and egalitarianism.