

# La transformation sociale par l'innovation sociale *Social Transformation through Social Innovation*

4<sup>ème</sup> colloque international / 4<sup>th</sup> international conference  
Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales (CRISES)  
(Research Centre on Social Innovation)

**Date:** April 3 and 4, 2014

**Place:** Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Montreal, Quebec, Canada

**Languages:** French and English

**Opening address:** Enzo Mingione, University of Milan-Bicocca

**Confirmed keynote speakers:** Gar Alperovitz, Luiz Inácio Gaiger, Florence Jany-Catrice, Jean-Louis Laville, Benoît Lévesque, Frank Moulaert, Marthe Nyssens and Bernard Pecqueur.



## CALL FOR PAPERS

There is a common consensus that we are currently undergoing an unprecedented period of rapid changes that are affecting our relation to time, space and society as a whole. Economic, social and institutional crises, along with political disinterest, growing inequalities and loss of meaning are combining to create a toxic climate marked by a loss of reference points and overall disenchantment. However, many people see in this a period of transition and an opportunity for renewal. For them, the crises give rise to a second modernity and a dynamic of innovation and transformation. From that perspective, the current disruptions, far from pushing civil society toward apathy, are taken as an opportunity to introduce social transformations that aim to redefine society on more solidarity-based, equitable, ethical, ecological and civic-minded terms.

In that context, the challenge for the social sciences consists of identifying not only the failures but also the new avenues and opportunities that are emerging. Through its research on social innovation, aligned with this perspective, the CRISES research centre seeks to understand the social reconstruction driven by the emergence of socially innovative developments at the micro and macro levels, including the impacts of these experiences on the social transformations taking shape. By investigating the actors, structures, subjects and impacts of these developments at once, the analysis of social innovation will help to determine the capacity for initiative on the part of individuals, organizations, collectivities and social movements. These investigations will also shed light on the process of innovation transfer and the role of public policy in the dynamics of institutionalization that arise from this transfer. However, to meet these challenges, which are both social and scientific in nature, research on social innovation would have to adopt a cross-disciplinary perspective and specify its epistemological and methodological stance. Only in this way can it produce action-oriented knowledge and ensure that the normative and ideological foundations of innovation are made explicit. Such a process will allow to go beyond the discourse of those creating innovation in order to address the political issues that accompany the emergence of any social innovation, and which have a determining influence on its durability and potential for social transformation.

Social innovation is, by definition, a transgression of rules and standards that may lead to a transformation of the prevailing order. There thus exists a constant dialectic between innovation and institution. In that context, the state is called on to provide the necessary support to innovation by relaxing or adjusting its public policies and by offering increased access to financial and informational resources. In addition, it must give the actors greater autonomy to let them unfold their transformative potential and provide the latitude necessary for engagement in the innovation process. Further, for social innovation to become a carrier of social transformation, it must engage in two types of

processes: one, a collective learning and creation process that allows individuals and communities to (re)empower themselves, and, two, an interaction between the actors concerned that makes room for dialogue and compromise, so that innovation can evolve in a dynamic of path building. Under these conditions, social innovation can then become the key ingredient of an alternative development strategy that gives rise to new values (solidarity, equity, social justice). The many references to social innovation that are currently made—to the point where social innovation has become a widely used concept—demonstrate that social innovation is not simply a fleeting reflection of a transition, but very much a constituent part of a new model that promotes a culture of change. However, this evolution raises questions about the orientation of that change: Who (or what) will it benefit? How will it be implemented?

The proliferation of social innovations alone is not sufficient to generate a new development model. Rather, it is by the embeddedness of these innovations within a new way of seeing and solving problems that social innovations can eventually embody the *emerging paradigm*, providing it with experiences that reflect new societal concepts. The spinoffs from social innovations vary depending on the specific institutional frameworks prevailing in the different sectors and territories, and on the period concerned. All of these aspects are likely to be of interest to research and to drive the development of knowledge about social innovation and its place in the process of social transformation.

Authors wishing to submit a paper to this conference are invited to investigate the diverse aspects discussed above. In particular, we invite them to address the following questions:

1. In the current stage of capitalism, how are the new aspirations and collective imaginaries prefiguring new social relations?
2. What are the theoretical and epistemological foundations of social innovations that have been created to respond to the different crises evoked (socio-ecological, political, economic)?
3. What are the conditions allowing social innovation to contribute to social transformation processes that seek to redefine society on more solidarity-based, equitable, ethical, ecological and civic-minded terms?
4. How do social innovations integrate into systems of innovations?
5. How can we move from a dynamic of path dependency to one of path building?
6. What role can the co-construction of knowledge (in academia and practice) play in getting social innovation processes underway?
7. How might we grasp the political stakes and processes that accompany the trajectory (emergence, experimentation, appropriation, spread) of social innovations? Who are its actors and coalitions of actors? What political projects do they promote? Do these projects lead to a rupture with the prevailing order or to an adaptation of its components?

## How to submit a paper

Proposals must include an abstract of 3,000 characters (including spaces) as well as a short bio of the author. They must be submitted by email in Word or RTF format to Christine Champagne ([champagne.christine@uqam.ca](mailto:champagne.christine@uqam.ca)) and must indicate which of the above-mentioned question they address. Contributors should specify whether they prefer an oral or poster presentation. Proposals will be evaluated by a peer-review committee.

## Important dates

- Final date to propose a paper: **September 30, 2013**
- Announcement of decision concerning the acceptance of a proposal: **October 31, 2013**
- Submission of final text of the paper (maximum 35,000 characters (including spaces) including the bibliography, notes and tables): **March 3, 2014**

The texts will be made available to all conference participants. Following an evaluation of the texts submitted, a book will be published in the *Innovation sociale* series of the Presses de l'Université du Québec.

For more information about CRISES, visit: <http://www.cris.es.uqam.ca>