13th International Social Innovation Research Conference

"Enabling the change! Social innovation and enterprises for a better future"
ALTIS-Graduate School Business & Society, E4Impact Foundation
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milan)
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Conference stream: Call for Papers & Panels

Social Innovation & Complexity

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Description:

Social innovation is fundamentally intertwined with managing complexity (Westley et al, 2011), social innovators must grapple with and navigate the unpredictable landscape of complex adaptive systems (Moore et al, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed power dynamics and unstable elements in a variety of problem domains, placing social innovation thinking at or near the center of post-pandemic resilience planning far beyond public health. While this is a once-in-a century pandemic, recent historically-informed studies have underlined the importance of major world events as system disruptors and drivers of social innovation (Geobey & McGowan, 2019; Westley, McGowan & Tjornbo, 2017; McGowan & Westley, 2015). Even after the pandemic has been brought under control the social, ecological and economic consequences of this shock will continue to be felt in multiple domains.

These shocks open a unique opportunity to explore the intersection between social innovation and complexity theory. Generally the analysis of innovation, including social innovation, focuses on the exploration and exploitation of opportunities in a system, what is often referred to as the "front loop" of adaptive cycle (Holling & Gunderson, 2002). Alongside this understanding, tools and processes to help navigate this part of the adaptive cycle have been developed such as incubators for social enterprise, social financing strategies to scale impact, and innovation labs to ideate and scale solutions.

As the world grapples with the challenges of life in and post COVID-19, it is clear we need to adjust to living in and responding to the challenges of life in the "back loop" of release and reorganization through system collapse. Previous studies of complexity have acknowledged the importance of the back loop, but largely as something to be prepared for and endured (Geobey & McGowan, 2019), rather than as the landscape from which deep generative innovations can arise. Exploring the back loop across the community of social innovation - methodology and pedagogy, research and practice - can reveal deeper understanding about the language and logic of social innovation. We need, as a collective, to move back loop thinking beyond the conceptual and into the here and now.

In this call for papers, we invite papers that explore this moment of living in the back loop, challenges and opportunities it provides. Particular interest will be given to papers that explore:
  ○ Methodological and procedural experimentation in a range of contexts, including:

- social innovation labs;
- social innovation education;
- social innovation-related policy making;
  ○ Community-driven social enterprise and social movements
  ○ Case studies, particularly ones that embrace the failures and emergence associated with complexity, will be welcome as critical data of life in the back loop.

References

Geobey, S. and McGowan, K., 2019. Panarchy, ontological and epistemological phenomena, and the Plague. *Ecology and Society*, *24*(4).

Holling, C.S. and Gunderson, L.H., 2002. *Panarchy: understanding transformations in human and natural systems*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

McGowan, K. and Westley, F., 2015. At the root of change: The history of social innovation. In *New frontiers in social innovation research* (pp. 52-68). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Moore, M.L., Olsson, P., Nilsson, W., Rose, L. and Westley, F.R., 2018. Navigating emergence and system reflexivity as key transformative capacities. *Ecology and Society*, *23*(2).

Westley, F. McGowan, K. and Tjonrbo, O. eds., 2017. *The evolution of social innovation: building resilience through transitions*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Westley, F., Olsson, P., Folke, C., Homer-Dixon, T., Vredenburg, H., Loorbach, D., Thompson, J., Nilsson, M., Lambin, E., Sendzimir, J. and Banerjee, B., 2011. Tipping toward sustainability: emerging pathways of transformation. *Ambio*, *40*(7), p.762.

Guidelines for submission

To contribute to the conference, it is possible to submit both paper abstracts or proposals for panel sessions. Following details about the submission:

A. Paper abstracts

Must be maximum 400 words, excluding references (Font: Times New Roman 12-pt, double spaced, 2.5 cm margin all around).

They should articulate: (1) the research objectives or questions being addressed; (2) the conceptual or theoretical perspectives informing the work; (3) where appropriate, the methodology utilised; and (4) the contribution of the paper to knowledge in light of the conference themes.

A maximum of two abstracts may be submitted per presenter (joint papers to be presented by co-authors will also be considered).

To enable anonymity, the authors' names should not appear. Instead, a cover page giving the title of the paper and full identifying information of the author(s) (name, address, telephone and e-mail address) should be included as a separate Word or PDF document.

On abstract submission please ensure you advise the conference stream.

B. Panel session proposals

Must be maximum 400 words, excluding references.

They should include: (1) the panel purpose and its relationship to the nominated conference stream; (2) details of (minimum) three and (maximum) four papers and paper presenters to be included in the panel; and the expected contribution to the panel.

On panel submission please ensure you advise the conference stream.

Process and deadlines

All paper abstracts and panel proposals must be submitted by email to:	www.isirc2021milano.com
Abstract and panel proposals submission due:	28th February 2021
Notification of decision on submissions:	31st March 2021
Optional full paper submission for consideration in best paper awards:	15th July 2021

Enquiries about conference administration and technical issues related to online submission should be directed to the conference administration team at isirc2021@unicatt.it

Guidelines for full paper submissions:

Papers must be written in English and should be sent in Microsoft Word or PDF format.

Papers should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length including tables, figures and references.

Tables and figures should be incorporated into the paper. Each table and figure should be given a title.

Please include an abstract and four to six key words.

To enable anonymity, the authors' names should not appear. Instead, a cover page giving the title of the paper and full identifying information of the author(s) (name, address, telephone and e-mail address) should be included as a separate Word or PDF document.

Harvard is the preferred referencing style.