

Session Proposal

Anything New against the Crisis?

Actors, Dynamics, Outcomes of Bottom-Up Processes in EU and USA Social Innovation

The term “social innovation” is spreading quickly both amongst scholars and in supra-national actors discourse and programs, as well as in the activities of policy advisors, think-tanks and professionals. Social innovation is considered to have great potential in the search for acceptable solutions for a whole range of problems, especially in times of crisis.

However social innovation is all but taken-for-granted. Indeed, social, political, economic features make the processes of social innovation complicated and path-dependent. Its small scale generation has to deal with cognitive routines, consensus and cooperation dynamics between different actors, unavailability of resources for experimentation... Moreover the scaling-up of social innovation is particularly difficult in times of crisis and austerity: public policies seem too weak to ‘institutionalize’ small scale innovation and other instruments (such as market and new technologies) risk to generate exclusion.

This makes social innovation both desirable and uncertain. A deep and accurate comprehension of how it works is urgent both amongst scholars and professionals. Within the Conference “The Crisis in EU and USA”, the Session aims to promote a vibrant discussion on EU and USA traditions of social innovation. Since the relationships between citizens, markets and public policies are supposed to be different in these contexts, the Session is especially focused on bottom-up social innovation processes where self-organized active citizens, grassroots associations, voluntary organizations or local communities and authorities play a crucial role to generate (or not), spread (or not) and scale-up (or not) social innovation.

We especially encourage theoretical and empirical papers that deal with questions such as:

- how socially innovative changes happen from the bottom-up in various fields, such as the environment, social welfare, health, economic development...
- which obstacles social innovators meet, how they can be overcome and which components enable/discourage social innovation
- what are the overall results of bottom-up social innovation processes (feed-back, trade-off, outcomes...)
- how social experimentations at small-scale can spread and scale-up.

While comparative approaches are warmly welcome, they are not strictly requested.

Abstracts (maximum 300 words) must be sent to Riccardo Guidi (riccardo.guidi@sp.unipi.it) and Marta Bonetti (marta.bonetti@sp.unipi.it) by 21 April 2014. Abstracts should contain a description of the main argument, the key question(s) driving the Paper, and the kind of evidence analyzed.

The session will be held on 13 June 2014.

After a second cycle of blind peer-review, selected papers will be published in proceedings book. Conference Proceedings Book will be published by a EU or USA publisher, in a ISBN coded book.

Important dates

- 21st April 2014: Last date for submission of abstracts
- 30th April 2014: Announcement of selected abstracts
- 07th May 2014: Registration deadline for presenters
- 07th June 2014: Final date for paper submission

Chair and Discussants: TBA