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Centre de recherche sur les innovations sociales

CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY THE  
CENTER FOR RESEARCH  
ON SOCIAL INNOVATIONS

## **Creating and Diffusing Social Innovation: from Initiative to Institutionalization**

November 8 - 9, 2007  
Montréal (Québec)  
Canada

**CALL for PAPERS**

### **Conference theme**

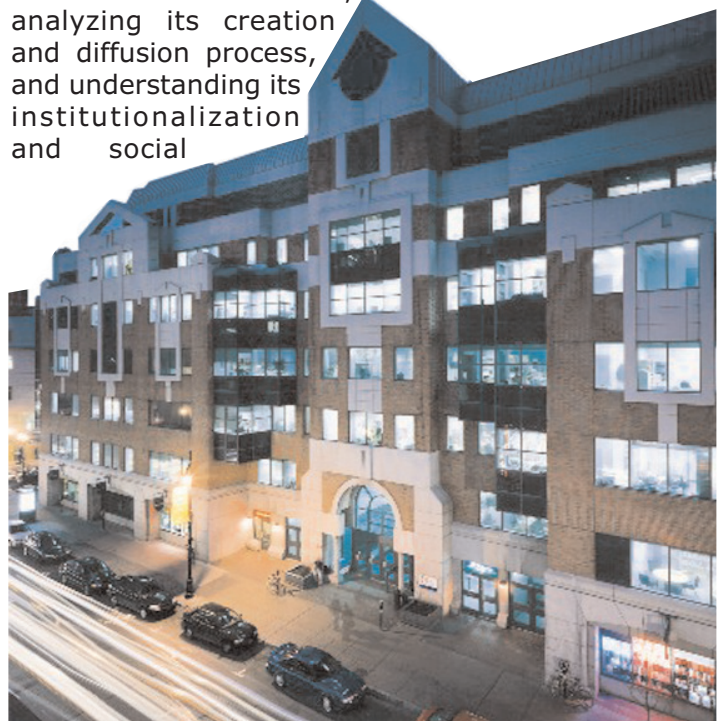
While social innovation and its importance for the growth and well-being of communities is increasingly being recognized by Western societies, our knowledge of the conditions conducive to its emergence, its creation process and widespread diffusion and its results, expressed in terms of improved living conditions for social agents, remains partial.

Social innovation brings to light the initiatives taken by social actors who produce goods and services while creating new social arrangements. Social innovation represents new practices or approaches introduced in order to enhance economic and social performance, to solve an important problem for the social actors, to fill in where there is a lack of regulation and coordination or to satisfy new aspirations. Although many societies are affected by this trend, they have nevertheless developed highly diversified capacities for social

innovation which lend paramount importance to the role of institutions and the social links which are built up in the system of innovations. Trajectories of innovation thus differ according to market structures or to the institutional characteristics in which organizations evolve.

While some argue that civil society should take action in view of social innovation since it plays the primary role and can sometimes act in alliance with the state, others maintain that the company is the principal agent of social innovation even though the innovations associated with it are often viewed as negative. Civil society takes initiatives, develops a service, and acts jointly with other actors in order to solve a social or economic problem. Civil society reveals its complex relations which attest to the great diversity of interests, needs and values of heterogeneous actors fighting over a share of the resources. Links must thus be created, activities must be carried out, and meeting places must be invented. The social innovation process, i.e., the way in which actors intervene in order to create an innovative project, attaches a great deal of importance to the social network which is formed but which only really exists because it is also deeply rooted in other social networks. What role do the state and private companies play in the creation and diffusion of social innovations? Do social innovations, their diffusion and institutionalization differ according to the social group which is its principal carrier?

There are several theoretical approaches to understanding social innovation, explaining the conditions conducive to its emergence, demonstrating its effectiveness translated into measurable results, analyzing its creation and diffusion process, and understanding its institutionalization and social





transformation. Cultural aspects, policies, networks and cooperation, social entrepreneurship, creativity, evaluation and the innovation process are notions which are taken into consideration to enhance our understanding of innovations in the areas of work, employment and organizations; living conditions and services to individuals; the socio-territorial environment and sustainable development. Social transformation must be understood through contributions which deal with this issue in the market economy, public economy and social economy.

The concept of social innovation thus calls for an in-depth examination and refers to numerous dimensions which must be brought out. Papers should therefore address the following questions:

- How can social innovation processes be analyzed?
- What means are used to diffuse them in the community from which they stem and from this community, into other communities? How can the fragile nature of many social innovations be explained?
- How do institutions interact with each other when taking initiatives and how are they transformed following the inclusion of an innovation in the social fabric?
- Social innovation is often associated with the terms partnership and collaboration. But what role do power relations and conflicts play?
- What is the role of social research and academic research?
- Can we refer to a national system of social innovations?
- How does social innovation contribute to transforming society?

Researchers in the academic community, organizations and associations from civil society are invited to submit a proposal.

## **Paper proposal and conditions of submission**

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All proposals should be submitted by **5:00 p.m.** on **January 31, 2007** and will be subject to an evaluation by the Scientific Committee of their relevance to the issues and their scientific value. To be considered, paper proposals should include the author's full address, the title, a 500-word abstract outlining the subject of the paper, the theoretical framework, the methodological approach and a brief description of the main lines of argument. English and French are the official languages of the Conference.

Therefore, proposals and communications should be presented either in French or English. The selected authors are requested to submit the full version of their paper (50 000 characters) and a PowerPoint presentation by October 2007. A volume of selected proceedings is planned for publication after the conference.

**The paper proposal should be sent by e-mail to:** Mélanie Fontaine, Center for Research on Social Innovations : fontaine.melanie@uqam.ca

**CRISES Web site:** [www.crisis.uqam.ca](http://www.crisis.uqam.ca)

## **Organization Committee**

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The conference is being organized by the Center for Research on Social innovations (CRISES) and will be held at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)

Denis Harrisson, (UQAM)  
Paul Leduc Browne (UQO)  
Guy Bellemare (UQO)  
Judith Lapierre (UQO)  
Marguerite Mendell (Concordia University)  
Pierre-Joseph Ulysse (Université de Montréal)

## **Scientific Committee**

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Université du Québec à Montréal  
Benoît Lévesque  
Université du Québec à Montréal  
Frank Moulart  
University of Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom  
Jack Quarter  
University of Toronto

## **Schedule**

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- Call for papers : november 2006
- **Paper proposals (500 words) : January 31, 2007**
- Acceptance of papers : March 2007
- Full version of paper(50 000 characters) and PowerPoint : October 2007
- **Conference : November 8-9, 2007**
- Publication of a volume : March 2008