

Objective

This scientific forum has two objectives. First, through the Forum, CRISES wishes to affirm its leading scientific position concerning innovations, including the social innovation. Second, the Forum aims to discuss the reactions to the growing influence of neoliberal policies which threaten the social and democratic achievements of our societies.

The issue at stake

The various communities of the world are facing a major crisis manifesting itself in many different forms. The scope of the recent financial crisis, the decline of democratic participation, the growing inequalities at the social and territorial levels and the exclusion of large segments of the society from the networks driving development indicate the failure of a society concept based on a model of development having little concern for social and environmental responsibilities. In place since the 1980s, this model of development has led to the globalization of markets, the erosion of governmental powers, the questioning of social protection measures, and the weakening of the social society action capacities. This model of development promotes flexibility and mobility thus establishing the market as the principal social and economic regulatory mechanism controlled by private powers at all the society levels and scales. A critical issue of such a model of development concerns the transfer of functions formerly assumed exclusively by the nation-state.

The instances of power at the international levels have multiplied at the expense of the regulatory powers of national governments, many of whose responsibilities have been transferred to organizations operating above the democratically elected public powers. Some of these organizations have a certain international accountability, such as *Bretton Woods* institutions, while others have no accountability at all, such as financial rating agencies. Though these organizations, from which only some are accountable, can be held responsible for triggering in various respects the financial crisis, their powers remain intact. Their explicit mandate is on the economic and financial levels, but their functions are also political, social as well as territorial.

Some organizations and actors operating at the local levels have been conferred different powers as a result of decentralization processes. While this decentralization is often desired and requested by the local instances, it also results from the privatization of the provision of public services. Will this “rescaling” have major effects on the societies capacity to make appropriate decisions for responding to the factors which provoked the crisis?

The model of development, first questioned in the early 1980s, was built and applied in response to the overproduction crisis of 1929. In response, the nation-state reached its maturity by merging economic development with governmental accountability and responsibility. According to Keynes, the two main capitalist economy vices of the 1930s were unensured employment and arbitrary and equity lacking distribution of wealth and income. Inspired by Keynes, the nation-states implemented a development model based on consumption and developed intervention tools as well as a notion of citizenship integrating social solidarity. The model incorporated as well as the social movements’ compromises already fighting to maximize citizens’ civil, social, and economic rights, especially with regard to job security, income protection and social services characterizing the various forms of social democracy.

The shake-up of the world system based on nation-states —resulting from the actions of the national governments themselves — introduced at the same time a new model of development based on power networks controlled by financial and urban centres interrelated and thus influencing each other. The nation-states though remaining important are progressively losing their sovereignty. Their role since reduced to sanctioning body thus ultimately legitimizing their own dispossession. *Bourdieu* did express quite well that the nation-states were paradoxically at the origin of the economic measures of deregulation which led to their economic dispossession and despite supporters or critics of ‘globalization’ politics would say, they continue to play a role by sanctioning the same politics which dispossess them.

Governments have thus retained an often prominent position with regard to social politics; however, they are progressively losing their capacity to well represent the citizens, and above all to be guarantors of the public interest and the common good. Having lost the leadership required to define the economic and political agenda and the development objectives of their societies in an autonomous way, the public powers are progressively subjecting national economic and social policies to the market forces; which results in an effective loss of sovereignty. Pushed by the main economic forces (i.e., big business, principal assets, institutions representative of the big international holdings), the nation-states are thus engaging in a process that will ultimately render their exercise of sovereignty impossible which questions the very concept of citizenship.

The weakening of the powers that could protect the rights of citizens allows financial capital to act without territorial boundaries and in real time. New financial and manufacturing spaces thus emerge that destabilize national sovereignty. This constitutes a major transformation, with consequences on democracy and the cohesion of societies.

The crisis of 2008 served to reveal the absurdity of this model. Contained within the financial domain at first, the crisis eventually expanded to the social, political, and geopolitical levels. Ultimately, it accelerated the encroachment of citizens' rights. At the same time, the crisis called on social movements and society at large to mobilize. As such, it revitalized various forms of citizens' action ranging from claims and protest to social and economic creativity. These activities lead to another form of globalization, more inclusive, that calls on the innovative capacity of populations, organizations, and social actors.

The social mobilization spawned by the crisis then evolved to formulate a new model of society. This new model adapts to the new social configurations created by globalization, yet grants citizens the recognition and the real capacity to exercise their rights and responsibilities. In fact, many people view the current process of globalization as an historic opportunity for transformation toward a way of living together that is inclusive, solidarity-based, and ecological. This perspective is at the basis of the claims made by citizens' movements and the alterglobalist movement.

The current conjuncture thus gives rise to, as did the crash of 1929, social movements and new forms of collective action. These experiments take place across the globe in fields as varied as governance, finance, environmental protection, culture, social inclusion, and the fight against poverty. .

It is important to recognize and study the wide range of proposals that emerge from civil society organizations in this day and age. The next step would then be to develop and propose a theoretical as well as action-based research program with the aim of contributing to the building of new modalities for living together that are coherent with the new demands, values, and aspirations of citizens. The CRISES Forum sees itself as an innovative opportunity for building an inclusive, solidarity-based, and ecological globalization and for facilitating networking among knowledge producers working to meet the challenges and the social actors involved in innovative social transformation processes.

The Conference will bring together academic researchers, representatives from civil society organizations, and representatives from citizens' organizations. It will offer large-audience presentations as well as workshops on themes related to the main research areas of CRISES (work and employment, quality of life, and territorial development) and allow for collective reflection on multidisciplinary questions. In all, the Forum will allow to address the following questions:

What are the principal issues at the stake and the challenges in terms of social innovation posed to the social, political and economic actors by the building of a pluralist and inclusive globalization?

Which are the innovations in various fields, such as economy, culture, territory, governance and the civil society, which lead to an inclusive citizenship, the democracy, as well as a broad participation in the definition of the Common Good and the implementation of the solutions to the social inequalities?

Which are the conditions so that the institutionalization of the innovations is done in the respect of the values, the principles and needs of the actors who generated them?

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For additional information

For any additional information on the
Research Centre on Social Innovation (CRISES)
please visit our web site at:

<http://www.cris.es.uqam.ca>

or email Mrs. Christine Champagne, Professional of research, CRISES
at: champagne.christine@uqam.ca