Insights into Complex Social Transformation Processes,

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Abstract

Successful social innovation is by nature something that unfolds through time and is best understood in retrospect. In order to better grasp the dynamics of such transformation this paper will present a synthesis of work done by a team engaged in historical research on such transformations. In this paper we will draw on the insights and patterns emerging from longitudinal historical studies of social innovation such as the development of the internet, derivatives, female contraceptives and the national park system to illuminate such concepts as the role of agency, the role of "big ideas"/social philosophy, the role of starting conditions and the adjacent possible, the role of conflict in forming and developing ideas. The paper will also touch on the methodological constraints and opportunities inherent in this kind of research.

Keywords: Histories of Innovation and Transformation in Complex Systems

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sciencesconf.org:resilience2014:24855