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Abstract PAPER Submission Form

Submission Deadline: 20 February 2019
You will receive a confirmation upon receipt of your submission.

Title: Nourishing social innovation dialogues with the politicized concept of ‘tecnologia social’

Keywords (5 keywords maximum): social innovation, social technologies, South-North dialogues, social-technologies/third-sector dialogues, political and social change

Related Conference Theme: Social innovation

Abstract (between 500 and 800 words in length, excluding bibliography):

Introducing the main topic (objectives): This critical essay proposes a dialogue between the epistemologies of North and South in terms of social innovation. Despite the existence of a large body of literature that incorporates a variety of approaches, it should be noted that prevailing social innovation concepts/ideas/experiences are essentially European and North American (Moulaert et al., 2013). The academic world that is interested in social innovation reproduces the same pattern of cultural domination and colonization of the imaginary that is condemned to other areas of the so-called ‘science’. In this essay, we defend the value of South-North knowledge sharing by mobilizing a South American tradition of research – ‘tecnologia social’ – often overlooked by northern researchers and practitioners. This research tradition insists on a cultural and political perspective aligned with post-development, post-colonialism and post-scientism, challenging numerous premises of the Western vision of progress and science, including the supremacy of technical/scientific knowledge and emphasizing the importance of local protagonists (Pozzebon and Fontenelle, 2018). Aligned with the challenging of hegemonic ethnocentrism of management knowledge (eg, Alcadipani et al., 2012; Fougere et al., 2017), this essay will help nurture the transformative visions of social innovation, putting emancipation, decolonization, and post-development in the foreground (Islam, 2011).

Theoretical lens: In the international literature on social innovation, two major approaches are identified. According to the first, mostly documented in the management literature, social innovation involves a new idea or combination of ideas that respond to specific social needs.
This approach promotes a more functionalist approach to the social phenomenon, emphasizing the process promoted by social entrepreneurs as well as individual solutions to major social problems through commercial initiatives. From this perspective, social innovation is a tool that gives members of society who are deprived of their rights access to the market and the opportunity to increase consumption or production (Hall et al., 2012). The second perspective sees social innovation as the spark of social transformation processes, providing access to experiences and initiatives that challenge dominant economic systems. In this perspective, social innovation concerns the implementation of new social and institutional arrangements, new forms of resource mobilization, new answers to problems for which available solutions have been inadequate, or new social aspirations (Klein et al., 2012, p. 11). The two perspectives described above are prolific and recognized by promoting theoretical advances and avenues for a more just and sustainable society (Moulaert et al., 2013).

From the point of view of the non-profit sector, social innovation is considered as an emerging field of research (Taylor et al., 2018). Despite this emerging status, social innovation represents a promising avenue for finding NPO-based practice-based mechanisms (Von Schnurbein et al., 2018). Efforts to promote social change by tackling poverty, exclusion and inequality are among the most critical issues facing social actors operating within the social, economic and social sectors. non-profit organizations (NPOs) are trying to cope.

By mobilizing the politicized concept of ‘tecnologia social’, we are nourishing dialogues, not only regarding South-North ways of seeing social innovation, but also among disciplinary areas. We think that the public sector literature might benefit from the Latin America focus on social technologies.

Methodology: This critical essay is based on a theoretical literature review. For reasons of length, more details will be provided in the oral presentation and in the final manuscript. For a brief overview, we anticipate that more than 200 articles were reviewed, both in the international data bases like Scopus and ABI Inform, but also in South American data bases like Scielo.

Results: The main contributions of this essay are: (a) to provide an updated view of the most important perspectives of social innovation produced in the Western context; (b) present the most expressive research on social innovation produced in the ‘Global-South’, particularly the South American concept of ‘tecnologia social’; c) carry out a critical analysis of the two bodies of literature and promote a dialogue between studies on social innovation produced in southern and northern countries, and also among different literatures, like social management and third-sector.

Bibliography


