

**1<sup>st</sup> NOVATION FORUM (2021)**

NOvation – Critical Studies of Innovation was founded by the late Benoît Godin. As written by our colleague Dominique Vinck, "Benoît Godin loved to bring together researchers from different backgrounds to embark on intellectual adventures that often aimed to shake up what he considered to be the mainstream of research" (Vinck 2021, p. 6). It was in this spirit, that the first NOvation Online Forum was organised.

On September 15<sup>th</sup> till 17<sup>th</sup> 2021, scholars from all over the world met digitally to critically discuss various aspects of innovation, innovation research and innovation governance. The online forum was built up around three keynote speeches, a method lab led by Philippe Zittoun, and a paper and a theory lab, in which researchers presented their own research. The overarching theme of the online forum was Governance(s) of Innovation, which was discussed from various angles.

Dr. Ngai-Ling Sum of Lancaster University opened the conference with a keynote titled "From Panoptic Knowledge Brand on Competitiveness to Synoptic Knowledge Platform on Innovation Imaginaries: The Case of the World Economic Forum in the Fourth Industrial Revolution". Building on her 2009 paper on hegemonic policy discourse (Sum 2009), she introduced the participants to what she calls the emerging fourth stage in the development of 'competitiveness' discourses, providing insights into her deliberations to enhance and compliment the 2009 paper. In this emerging fourth stage, competitiveness knowledge brand becomes a 'nodal discourse,' in which innovation imaginaries are clustered to produce new meaning.

Dr. Gonzalo Ordóñez-Matamoros of the University of Twente and the Universidad Externado de Colombia focused his talk on the Colombian innovation governance, and on the institutional constraints faced for transformative innovation policy. Building upon recent publications and discussions on Science, Technology and Education Policy in Latin America (Ordóñez-Matamoros et al. Forthcoming 2021; Orozco et al. Forthcoming 2021), he highlighted the complexity of the policy and governance process of innovation and underlined this with the examples of the "STI Social Appropriation (SASTI) Policy" in Colombia.

The final keynote was offered by Dr. Lee Vinsel of Virginia Tech. Vinsel discussed how his research was influenced by the work of Benoît Godin. Building upon the critical stance towards innovation-speak, as outlined for instance in his recent book 'The Innovation Delusion' (Vinsel & Russell 2020), Vinsel invited the participants along in his ongoing research towards his new book project, called 'A Good History of Sh\*t Jobs.' Vinsel

critically assesses the role of innovation as opposed to innovation speak in U.S. economic development, especially over the last decades.

In a similar vein, Dr. Philippe Zittoun presented fascinating insights into his work, with a specific focus on methods and the importance of diligent and proper discursive practice analysis. Building upon his rich experience (see for instance the recently published Zittoun et al. 2021), Zittoun offered a 'method lab' educating the participants about critical discourse analysis for (innovation) policy studies.

The keynotes presentations, as well as the method lab, were open to the public. In a rather intimate online setting, participants had the opportunity to engage in a discussion with the presenters, allowing for in-depth exchanges of knowledge and ideas. Recordings of the keynotes and the method lab have been made available on the NOvation YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC21M1YF-drldkr4KM2ls7GQ>.

Besides these open debates, the first NOvation Online Forum featured two closed labs (a theory lab and a paper lab), in which only presenters and organizers took part, discussing in a 'protected space' ongoing research of the participants. In total we had eight interesting and thought-provoking presentations and discussions. We hope, as organisers and editorial board members, that we will one day see the final results published, either in NOvation or in other critical journals and encourage the participants to further develop their work into full papers.

We look back at a successful first edition of the NOvation Online Forum. We learned a lot, both about critical studies of innovation and about the organisation of a global online forum and aim to organise a second (online) forum next year. COVID-19 has introduced all of us to a world in which online meetings have become even more common and effective than they already were before, nonetheless, we are hopeful to be able to organise a NOvation Forum in real-life one day too. We thank all presenters and participants for their engagement in the first NOvation Online Forum, and look forward to continuing the debates on the critical study of innovation.

In sum, as a balance of these three days journeys, we can envisage that today, critical studies of innovation appear as a 'niche' that falls beyond the economic imperatives of innovation, involving other analytical dimensions – such as power relations and the bond between policy and politics, for example. Additionally, the critical studies of innovation agenda also seek to enlarge the methodological scope of innovation studies, as well as the field of STS studies, embracing other perspectives and different means of scholarly practices, such as intellectual and conceptual histories (one of Godin's legacies) and discourse / policy narrative analysis. Ideology, power relations and discursive practices

are very much entangled. We understand that Critical innovation studies thus emerge as an interdisciplinary field, broad in scope, that seeks to search beyond the hype. The trends and fads of our techno globalism should be traced back to their historical roots, contextualizing and framing the actual innovations and the innovation-speak of our times, their frameworks, interests, and ideologies. Certainly, there are various challenges to building an identity in this critical studies field. For instance, deepening the dialectic between discursive cultural studies and the more materialist approaches represents one of the main future challenges for critical studies of innovation. However, in our view, it seems certain that critical studies of innovation return findings of great value to innovation research and STS scholars worldwide.

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