



The Convergent Innovation Webinar Series:

Inventing "One-World" Solutions for Lifelong Wellness and Sustainable Economic Growth

The Power of the Inconsequential in Opening Pathways to Convergence Economy: Interstitial Spaces and the Genesis of Innovation between Sectors



Dr. Santi Furnari is Professor of Strategy at the Business School of City, University of London. He studies how new fields, industries and practices emerge, particularly in the context of creative industries and creative projects. He is also an expert of organization design, business models and configurational thinking. His research has been published in leading academic journals, such as the Academy of Management Review, Journal of Management, Organization Studies, Industrial and Corporate Change, Human Relations, and Strategic Organization (among others). His paper titled "Interstitial Spaces" has received the AMR Best Paper Award for the best paper published in the Academy of Management Review in 2014.

May 11, 2021

11:00 am EST

(2 hrs in length)

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Chair: Laurette Dubé (Scientific Director of MCCHE)

Co-Chair & Moderator: John G. Keogh (Managing Principal, Shantalla Inc. Toronto)

ABSTRACT: As governments, non-profits and business organizations increasingly rely on cross-sector collaborations to tackle the world's grand challenges, the need to understand what makes cross-sector relationships work has never been so urgent. Yet, the emphasis has mostly been on "big spend" projects and formal interorganizational collaborations, rather than on what I call "interstitial spaces" -i.e. the small spaces where people from different sectors interact informally and occasionally, such as clubs, workshops, events, fab-labs, makerspaces and the like. Based on his work and an emerging stream of research on these spaces, including examples from a variety of sectors, Prof. Furnari will argue that interstitial spaces can be nurtured to facilitate innovation, which can eventually scale up into system-level change or the emergence of whole new sectors. While interstitial spaces are sometimes dismissed as inconsequential, their initially inconsequential nature may be the very reason why these spaces are important: since there is less at stake, the different people inhabiting these in-between areas feel free to experiment and try out new solutions. He will highlight the enabling conditions and mechanisms facilitating the genesis of innovation in interstitial spaces, including the activities of catalyst actors sustaining others' interactions in the presence of cultural difference. He also unpacks reasons why interstitial spaces can fail to generate innovation and fade away, including the power imbalance between the sectors that are to be involved in moving toward convergence economy. Finally, he will provide insights on whether and how the digital transformation of science and society can accelerate and sustain the creation of sufficient interstitial spaces for such convergence economy, where an ecosystems of platforms engage scientists, entrepreneurs, investors, and policy makers around achievable and time-bound real-world solutions placing human and environmental health and their preservation/remediation/care systems at the core of its wealth and social wellbeing creation engines.

PANEL DISCUSSION: A panel of scientists and action leaders will build upon this cutting edge management research to advance next-step strategy, institutional change and digital architecture needed to reach societal scale in the person-centered and solution-oriented approach that bridged organizations and systems across sectors and jurisdictions around convergence goals, while fully acknowledging that developed and developing worlds share the same planet and harnessing the full power of entrepreneurship and innovation around the globe. The farm, food, education, health, healthcare and digital sectors are taken as contexts for discussion.

ABOUT THE SERIES: The Convergent Innovation Webinar Series features cutting edge science, technology and innovation in agriculture, food, environment, education, medicine and other domains of everyday life where grand challenges lie at the convergence of health and economics. Powered by data science, artificial intelligence, and other digital technologies, this disciplinary knowledge bridges with behavioural, social, humanities, business, economics, social, engineering, and complexity sciences to accelerate real-world solution at scale, be it in digital or physical contexts. Initiated in the agri-food domain, the series is now encompassing other grand challenges facing modern and traditional economies and societies, such as ensuring lifelong wellness and resilience at both the individual and population levels.

Global Pulse Innovation Platform:



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