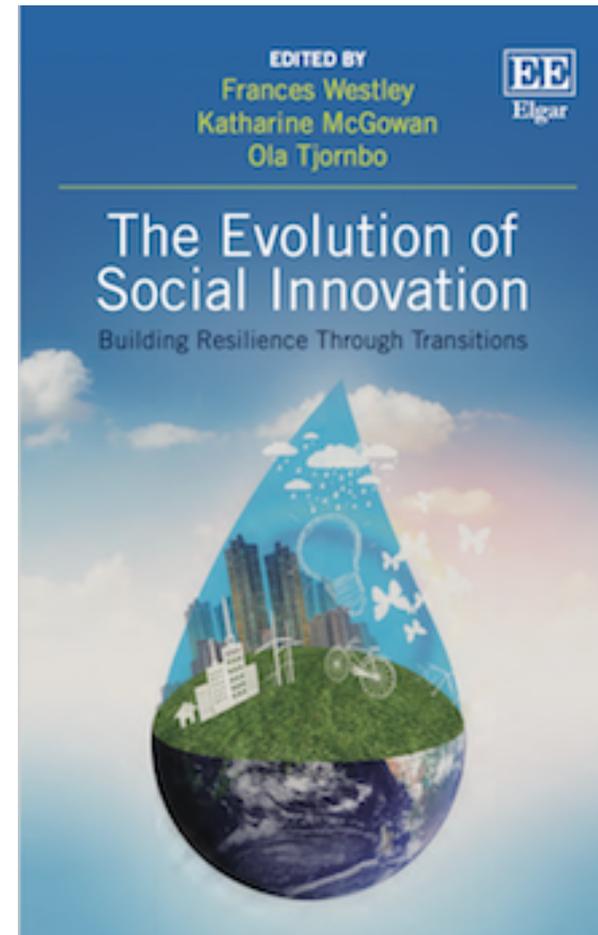# Social Innovation and Resilience: the evolution of social innovation over time

Frances Westley, Katharine McGowan, Nino Antadze, Jaclyn Blacklock, Erin Alexiuk, Ola Tjornbo, Per Olsson, Michele Lee Moore, Dan McCarthy

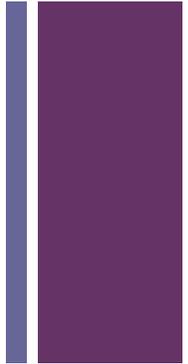**Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience**

Why use historical examples

- The difficulty in determining when an early stage innovation has the potential to change or transform the system that created the problem in the first place.

- The need for more data, and a longer perspective to understand dynamics

- Arthur, *The Nature of Technology* (2009); Johnson *Where Good Ideas come from* (2010)

  - Innovation a result of the discovery of a "phenomenon" – natural (scientific). **To which we add: new ideas (social facts)**

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The Evolution of Social Innovation
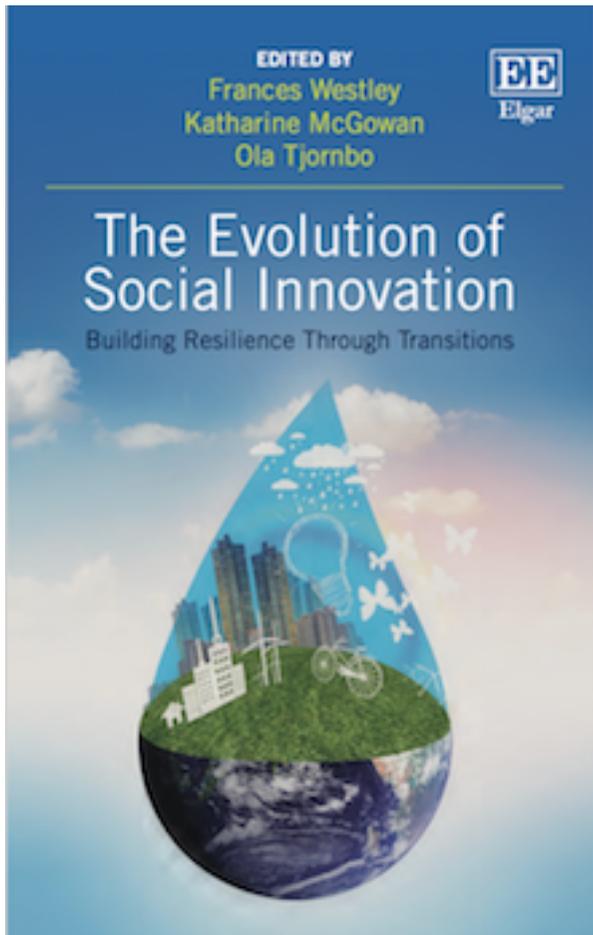
Building Resilience Through Transitions

Case Selection & Methodology

- Look for cases that were clear successes in terms of institutional impacts – *but not necessarily with positive impacts*. Different problem domains, temporal and spatial boundaries
  - "Always considered within the broader concerns of the overarching research question" (Ommer, 2007)

- Work backwards in search of initiating phenomena.

- Look for agency, combination and recombination, pattern shifts and chart across institutional/landscape; problem domain/regime; niche/ innovation.

- Deep dives at critical transition points.

+ Cases covered

The Evolution of Social Innovation
Building Resilience Through Transitions

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- Internet,

. Financial derivatives

- National parks system (US),

- Indian (Indigenous) Residential Schools,

- Dutch East India trading company,

- Legalizing women's birth control (North American)

- Intelligence test,

- Duty to consult

- **RESULT:**

- **7 CROSS-CUTTING PATTERNS**

- **6 SIGNS OF RESILIENT SOCIAL INNOVATION**

1. The importance of meaning/purpose in social innovation:

The Duty to Consult and a vision of harmonious co-existence

- *Treaty of Niagara -1874*

- Among the numerous exchanges of presents, promises, and wampum belts (a common diplomatic tool used by Aboriginal Peoples), perhaps the most notable exchange was that of a Two-Row Wampum Belt that represented a relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and the British Empire built on peace, friendship, and respect, and a promise to uphold the integrity of each nation by promising non-interference with each other's internal affairs (Borrows 1998, 2005)
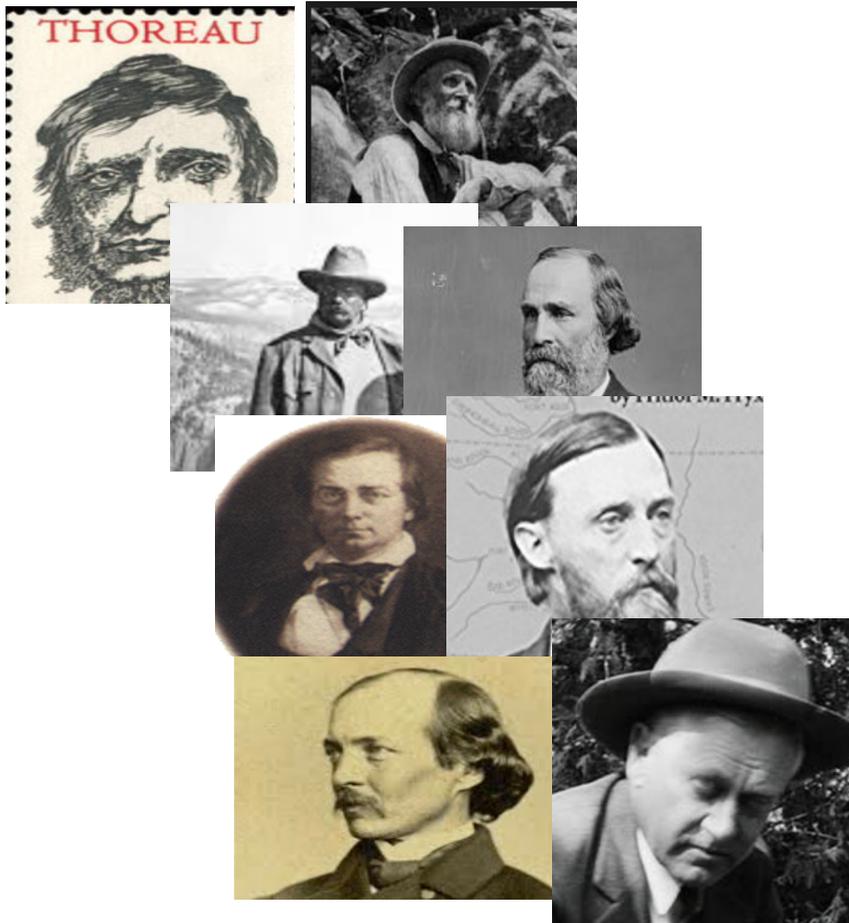
- **The Duty to Consult**

Two Row Wampum Belt

+ 2. Takes time to unfold and therefore is not dependent on single individuals

■ *National Park Case*

■ *The Winnipeg Boldness Project:*

■ *"It's a sprint, not a relay"- Diane Roussin*

+ 3. Sensitivity to initial conditions- essence of purpose/principals remains the same:

The Internet and ARPANET

"Facebook, Google, and Yahoo are allowing the CIA to access user data via a specially designed interface."

"Facebook is the most appalling spying machine that has ever been invented"

--Julian Assange (Russia Today)

THE INTERNET REVOLUTION

"Any interested person can participate in the work, know what is being decided, and make his or her voice heard on the issue" (Alvestrand, 2004).

2. "We reject kings, presidents and voting. We believe in rough consensus and running code." (Clark, 1992).

■ "The Internet is for everyone – but it won't be if Governments restrict access to it, so we mustdedicate ourselves to keeping the network unrestricted, unfettered andunregulated. We must have the freedom to speak and the freedom to hear."

4. Combinations and re-combinations with initiatives in the "adjacent possible" maintains momentum: Legalization of Birth Control

- 1789-1869 – Enlightenment thinkers and early feminists fight for "human rights" and equal rights for women

- During this period, contraception largely market driven

- 1873 Comstack Act makes all contraception illegal

- 1910-1930 Margaret Sanger makes contraception a women's right issue: "birth control"

- Outbreak of venereal disease provides for contraception for disease prevention. Doctors can distribute

- Depression in 1930's – Family planning becomes an issue

- Growing demand: Manufacturers overturn obscenity ruling 1939

- Birth Control legalized 1965 (Canada)

- *We hold that children should be (1) Conceived in love; (2) Born of the mother's conscious desire; (3) And only begotten under conditions which render possible the heritage of health. Therefore we hold that every woman must possess the power and freedom to prevent conception except when these conditions can be satisfied.*

5. As a result social innovations over time are characterized by paradox and tensions.

National Parks

- First protected area – 1864 -Yosemite; Gatlin and the Romantic Tradition

- First National Park- 1872

- Gained support from early conservation science, the expanding railroad and numerous famous activists (Muir, Adams, Omstead, Marshall, Hayden)

- In order to gain resources it partnered with the railroads, the "public park" movement and the emerging discipline of conservation science (the great expeditions)

- Today: 2,607,131 Km2 protected

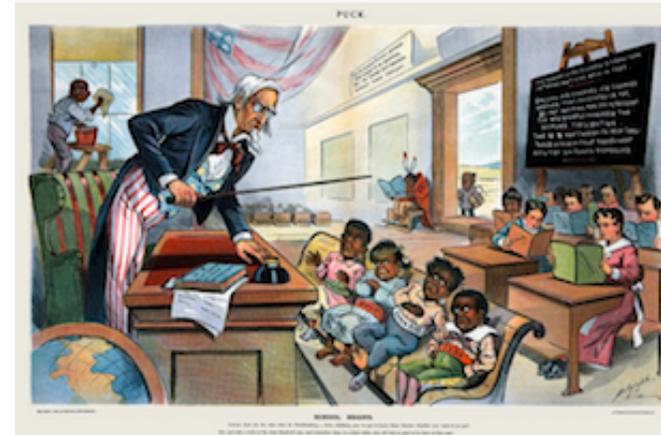- Horns of dilemma: Wilderness vs Park, Science vs. Tourism, Nature vs Culture

- God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools

6. Conflict and opposition as well as opportunity, stimulate the combinations and re-combinations critical for movement forward; key to revealing the shadow side of social innovation: The Intelligence Test

- Theory of Evolution

- Social Evolution

Eugenics

Residential Schools

The curse of Feebleminded-ness

The Final Solution

Intelligence Tests: Multiple Intelligences

Customized education programs

- Evolution: "*as it works solely for the good of each being, all corporal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection*"- Charles Darwin

7. Supportive policies create stable plateaus where SI flourishes; suppressive policies stimulate shadow networks and conflict

- *Supportive: The National Park Service Act- 1916*

- *Suppressive: The Comstock Act of 1873*

What to look for in a transformative social innovation

- *1. Does the innovation contain a* **radical and appealing counter truth** *– a seed that will be carried over time?*

- *2. Is the founder or originator of the idea prepared to make the necessary compromises to see the idea grow and expand, securing more resources? (working with* **emergence and adjacent possible***)*

- *3. Are those associated with the innovation, even in the earliest stages, aware of the need for* **cross scale** *change in the broader institutional structures (values, laws, routines, policies)? Are they* **opportunistic** *(prepared to take advantage of opportunities even at some risk)?*

- *4. Can those associated with the innovation tolerate* **paradox** *(the inevitable contradictions resulting from emergence and opportunity)?*

- *5. Is there evidence of the possibility of* **push back, of conflict** *with those who control the status quo? Can that conflict be managed or sidestepped?*

- *6. Are those associated with the innovation aware of its* **shadow?** *(often revealed by conflict)*