

The 'New Right' as Radical Social Innovation

Dr. Richard T. Marcy (UVic, School of Public Administration)

Dr. Valerie J. D'Erman (UVic, Political Science)

Theory building on what constitutes social innovation has grown in the past few years, in a number of different disciplines. This paper builds on this research literature by way of examining the potential for *radical* social innovation in normative principles, through a focus on the 'New Right' philosophical movement. This movement situates its position as a fundamental critique of liberal values, to include democratic norms, minority rights, and egalitarianism. Although the New Right has been a visible, if loosely conjoined, group of fringe intellectual thinkers since roughly the 1960s, the twin forces of the global financial crisis and the refugee crisis have galvanized New Right philosophy out of the fringe and increasingly into mainstream ideological debates. This paper argues from a cross-disciplinary perspective that the rise of New Right philosophical discourse represents a modern-day example of radical social innovation through its creation of a new 'epistemic community', one that has intentionally adopted a Gramscian metapolitical emphasis on the need for cultural change. This change is emblematic of radical social innovation in two ways: the 'sense-breaking' of standard liberal norms in Western societies as being the commonly accepted default, and the introduction of new ideas that challenge some of the essential tenets of liberalism. Evidence of radical social innovation comes from the political (the growth of popularity among European far-right political parties), the social (increasing attention to identity politics and freedom of association in mainstream mass media), and the ideological (the rise of illiberalism as a philosophy). Taken together, the arguable success of the New Right's radical social innovation imply the potential for a central un-mooring of the existing political spectrum.
