

[SE03-HUM]

Travelling Models of Innovation and Open Spaces: Beneficiary Engagement and Cross-Case Comparisons across Contexts

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Brief Bio

Session Leader(s)

A PhD candidate at Stanford University, **Michelle Reddy's** research interests center on innovation in peacebuilding, development and humanitarian aid, as well as organizations, entrepreneurship, and civil society networks. Prior to Stanford, she co-launched the Paris School of International Affairs at Sciences Po Paris, and served as assistant dean. Michelle has worked on research, communications and program design and management for universities, NGOs, and the United Nations for 7 years in Paris, Dakar, and New York.

Lana Awad is a Jordanian architect, researcher and maker interested in digital fabrication and the application of new technologies in interdisciplinary environments. For the past year, Awad has been working with an organization named Refugee Open Ware, whose mission is to employ disruptive technology to improve human rights fulfillment for both refugees and host communities within conflict zones.

Abstract

Short description, including alignment with conference themes and objectives

How can we best conceptualize, and co-create, the physical and virtual innovation spaces that provide the best environment for refugee innovation to flourish? This panel aims to examine how organizations use and solicit feedback in the design and implementation of innovation spaces across contexts, observing travelling models of innovation spaces.

While some innovation spaces are virtual, and others physical – each model is unique according to context. Yet, refugees are increasingly mobile, connected, and changing context, moving from one country to the next. How do organizations construct new models of innovation spaces for various migrating constituencies, and in different emergency contexts and degrees of emergency? By ensuring beneficiary engagement, we can improve upon, and facilitate, travelling models of innovation spaces, particularly for mobile refugee populations. What are some existing models of innovation spaces that can bring self-reliance within this fluid environment, not only between the users and the traveling space, but also by accommodating for the many inherent logistical challenges? We hope to solicit a cross-case comparison of the use of innovation spaces and innovation labs by various organizations, as well as a discussion on how to best facilitate the co-creation and use of these spaces by beneficiaries.

Description

Proposed discussion focus

Organizations are increasingly adopting innovation spaces and innovation labs as a means to operationalize innovation in humanitarian situations, utilizing techniques of design thinking whether through entrepreneurship, product design, peacebuilding, and more. Yet, how do they determine “what works” for diverse, mobile, refugee populations?

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Description (Cont.)

This panel focuses on beneficiary engagement, innovation spaces, and knowledge exchange in a hyper-connected world, particularly as refugees are diverse, and their movements (at times) are fluid as they move from camps, into host communities, and hopefully, experience repatriation. Refugees originate and move through a variety of experiences and contexts, and have various degrees of mobility and engagement with other communities as well as a diversity of skills and talents facilitated by the innovation spaces. Yet, organizations implementing innovation spaces and hubs oftentimes have limited time and resources to adopt flexible models for different beneficiary constituencies, to solicit stakeholder feedback in design and implementation, or to look comparatively at models across organizations and contexts. Oftentimes host communities are ill-equipped and under-resourced to welcome them, therefore a travelling model of innovation spaces, adaptable to local contexts and diverse populations, is warranted, whether for refugees in protracted living situations in camps or those who are resettled or repatriated.

Objectives

Justification and expected impact during and after the conference

Overall, we wish to investigate the types of innovation spaces currently in use across organizations, and best practices in engaging beneficiaries. How do organizations conceptualize and use innovation labs differently, what are some existing models, and are these models mobile? How can we solicit feedback from refugees about the impact of these interventions, and how can refugees assist in the design of innovation spaces? The notion of an innovation space should not be limited to the bounds of a refugee camp; indeed, open-source approaches and innovation spaces should accompany refugees on their journey. Contexts vary widely and refugees themselves are diverse. How might organizations working on innovation spaces, and refugees themselves, exchange and co-create knowledge on the design and use of these spaces? This panel aims at developing tools for beneficiary engagement across a variety of contexts, and is particularly relevant, given the refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe, as well as other more longstanding crises. It will examine existing ways organizations and stakeholders solicit feedback from refugees in the design and use of innovation labs and open source technologies, and propose ways forward to better incorporate and empower refugees.

Target Audience

Practitioners, NGOs, Academics, Refugees. The panel, a collaboration between an NGO working directly in refugee camps, and a political sociologist based at Stanford University, aims to investigate how various organizations conceptualize and use innovation spaces and labs, how models of innovation spaces and labs “travel” and are adapted across organizations, and how they can be adapted by better methods of soliciting stakeholder feedback from refugees themselves, across contexts.