

**Panel 1**  
**XV IRSPM Conference**  
**Value, Innovation and Partnership**  
**11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

**Panel Title:**

Accounting for innovation or innovating for accounting? When past and future come into play

**Chair(s):**

Mariannunziata Liguori, Queen's University Belfast,  
Ileana Steccolini, Bocconi University Milan

**Panel Description:**

Accounting innovation has been often heralded as playing a central role in the modernization of the public sector. However, its actual impacts have often fallen short of expectations, probably due to a simplistic view of accounting as a neutral and technical tool, rather than a bundle of structures, systems, but also underlying principles, beliefs and values.

On the one hand, there is the need to go beyond a merely rational and functional view of accounting by considering it as a social practice. Change and innovation, indeed, are the result of the interaction among different coalitions and interests, where the symbolic meaning of the new accounting tools affects the final result of the change itself.

On the other hand, public sector reforms have also highlighted the need for accounting for such innovations and their reciprocal impact on management, environment and other institutions. Strategies for achieving change are required to take into consideration not only internal and external factors which might affect the final result of a change, but also the reciprocal influences.

As a consequence, our panel aims at fostering a debate on the following issues:

- Which are the factors affecting the adoption of accounting innovations in the public sector?
- Which are the factors affecting the successful implementation of accounting innovations in the public sector?
- How do we measure "success" in innovating accounting systems?
- Can accounting (and accountants) make a (positive) difference in accounting for public sector reforms?
- Which are the new directions and challenges in accounting for innovation in the public sector?

Our panel calls for contributions on both the factors affecting the introduction of new accounting practices, and the ways to account for such innovations both internally (to management and administrators) and externally (to citizens and other stakeholders).