

Delhi Workshop on Grassroots Innovation Movement

Centre for Studies in Science Policy (Jawaharlal Nehru University)
STEPS Centre (University of Sussex)

Saturday 8th February 2014,

Venue: Centre for Studies in Science Policy, Jawahar Lal Nehru University, Delhi

Background

This workshop aims to bring participants together to discuss and share lessons from a variety of grassroots innovation movements in the context of discussions taking place among the academics on the theme of how to promote inclusive and sustainable development. Developments occurring in the policymaking circles indicate at both national and international level a major spurt in the attention to the role of grassroots innovation activities. Social movements promoting grassroots innovation have long histories. There exists a wealth of experience to draw upon as the topic returns once again up on the agenda of policymakers and scholars.

In this workshop we plan to meet as a small group of practitioners (10-12), policymakers (3-5) and researchers (3-5) as participants in order to generate discussion, debate and reflect on the potential and contribution of grassroots innovation movements to the processes of economic, social and cultural development. This workshop will be held on Saturday, Feb 8, 2014 in the committee room of the Centre of Studies in Science Policy, Jawahar Lal Nehru University New Delhi.

We already have the confirmation of participation of scholars from Argentina, United Kingdom and United States in this workshop. These scholars will be feeding back from some of their own research on a wide variety of grassroots innovation movements active in Argentina, Brazil, United Kingdom and India. The results of their own research work on social movements whose wider variety of contexts permits discussion about both the generality and limitations of lessons sharing will be shared with the participants.

Participants confirming their participation in the workshop will benefit in the form of an opportunity to step back from day-to-day activities and share reflections and gain access to some of the latest research on grassroots innovation movements. Participants will have a plenty of opportunity to network with each other. Since the benefit of exposure to ideas and experiences from an audience interested in their own movement can be wonderful and refreshing for everyone participants will be able to energize themselves.

During the forenoon sessions of the workshop we will have about eight to ten presentations of 15 minutes each to give an opportunity to the invited participants to share their experience and reflect on a common set of broad questions identified by the organizers. After each presentation plenary discussion of fifteen minutes will be allowed to the fellow participants to

give them an opportunity to contribute to the dialogue on the identified theme of potential and contribution of grassroots innovation movements active in India, Latin America and United Kingdom. Finally in the afternoon session of the workshop on grassroots innovation we will discuss the outcomes of smaller group discussion on the common challenges identified by the organizers, followed by the feedback to plenary discussion, which will be discussed after hearing the scholars from Latin America and United Kingdom on the movements of their own regions. In the closing reflections session we will have an opportunity to reflect on the scope for learning across movements rooted in different contexts.

You are requested to go through the proposed outline of the programme given below. We welcome suggestions from you on the programme.

Questions and themes

We would like the practitioners and researchers of each movement to consider the following questions:

1. Why did the grassroots innovation movement emerge and what was the aim?
2. How have activists mobilised support and activity, and what have been the major achievements?
3. What challenges have confronted the movement, and how has it addressed them?

We would like policy-makers to explain why they value grassroots innovation activity, and how policy support for that activity has developed over time.

As far as our analytical focus is concerned, in the course of plenary discussions we expect the participants to shape their own interventions with the aim to reflect on the following aspects of the approach as well, that is how the social movements and policymakers involved have been framing their own role with regard to the promotion of grassroots innovation making processes, what kind of strategies have been used by the social movements to expand the space for innovation making at the grassroots and what is their own assessment of the challenges facing the pathways under construction through the initiatives of grassroots innovation movements active in India.

Some further themes that the participants might also consider touching in the discussions:

- Relationships between informal and formal expertise in grassroots innovation
- How does grassroots innovation viewed as the development of objects/techniques intersect with views of grassroots innovation as mobilisation processes?
- The economic development of grassroots innovations
- Knowledge politics in grassroots innovation (common knowledge and intellectual property)
- Indicators required for measuring the outcomes and impact of the ongoing initiatives of the grassroots innovation movements

During the smaller group discussions, we want participants to reflect across all the movement presentations, and consider the following challenges:

- a) Scaling-up whilst remaining context sensitive
- b) Remaining appropriate whilst bringing about change
- c) Connecting with broader and deeper processes of development