

Panel (IN-ECO): Indian Ecosystem for Inclusive Innovations

Total Papers: 6

Chair: Mr. Harkesh Mittal

Head, National S & T Entrepreneurship Development Board

Co-Chair: Mr. Vipin Kumar

Director, National Innovation Foundation – India (NIF)

Time: 11:30-13:00

Venue: Wing-11, Committee Room

1.

**Exploring the Grassroots Innovation of Bamboo Bicycle in Imphal City of Manipur:
Geography of Sustainability Transitions Perspective**

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This paper starts off with the identification of research problem by arguing the lack of spatial and the regional sensitivity of sustainability transitions theories in the urban context of Imphal city of Manipur. The available literature of transition studies primarily focus on global and national importance. As for example, Frank W. Geels studied the following transitions at national level: from sail to steamships in United Kingdom, from horse-drawn carriage to automobiles and from propeller-aircraft to jetliners in the United States of America. The regionalists and economic geographers recently start reacting against this national emphasis on transition process because of its negligence of the advantages, conflicted and tensions in a particular spatial location in which transition processes are embedded.

Empirically this paper challenges the unsustainable existing regime of urban transport sector in Imphal and discusses the environmental activism and dedication of Manipur Cycle Club (MCC) in the heart of Imphal city for popularizing bicycles with the idea of better environment, economy and health. Since its inception on 23rd January 2011, the members of the MCC have been organizing cycle campaign around the city for spreading the message of low carbon sustainable city. They also support the global cycle movement known as Critical Mass. MCC drafted the state policy for mitigation and action on climate change and also submitted memorandum to the Chief Minister stating the existing condition of urban transport system and suggested means for a better management of the city. Besides, MCC innovates bamboo cycle for the first time in India in collaboration with South Asian Bamboo Foundation in the five day bamboo cycle building workshop.

In the methodology section, Strategic Niche Management has been applied to explore the multi actor analysis in the upscaling of grass root innovations of bamboo bicycle in niches and analyze how the niche innovation of bicycle and activism of the MCC try to break through the existing regime of urban transport system. Qualitative research and content analysis method has been used. This paper is based on secondary literature collected from

MCC, newspapers and reports. Longitudinal research is employed to trace the historical transitions process of cycle in Imphal. It concludes that MCC plays an important role for the promotion of bicycle in the urban areas of Manipur. The grassroots innovation of bamboo cycle makes a historical landmark for enhancing sustainability transitions of cycle in Imphal.

KeyWords: Grassroots Innovation, Sustainability Transitions, Strategic Niche Management, Bicycle, MCC, Imphal City

2.

Phenomenological Approach to Study the Essence of Grassroots Innovations

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Recently, India has demonstrated a huge potential in the innovation landscape, however, grassroots innovation (GI) phenomenon is still undermined and the aspirations of the individual grassroots innovators (GIRs) have been overlooked. Little is understood about the experience of the grassroots innovators (GIRs) and what sense they make about the grassroots innovation phenomenon. The ecosystem for individual innovators at the grassroots level is weak thus adversely impacting the GIRs that may have a commercial future (Gupta, 2013) and aspirations of the individual GIRs have been disregarded by the policymakers and formal sector (Dheeraj, Basant and Gupta, 2003; Gupta, 2013; Pathak, 2008). The voices and the essence of their lived experience are also undermined in the innovation and business management research. Therefore, this paper seeks to fill the existing gap and proffers the use of phenomenological approach to discern the essence of the GI as experienced by the GIRs.

Phenomenology is a mode of qualitative inquiry that helps to gain deeper insights of the experiences of the individuals as it is centered on the individuals' account of their narratives and their own understanding of their circumstances (Creswell 2008). Phenomenological inquiry is based on the use of qualitative and naturalistic approaches to inductively and holistically understand human experience (Robson 2002). This approach to research inquiry provides a description (the what) of the experience rather than explanations (the why) of the experience and also bring to light the meaning individuals derive from their experiences ([Van Manen 1990](#)). Deeper insights into the innovation experiences of the GIRs are sought by taking account of individuals' narratives and exploring their circumstances (Creswell & Miller 2000; Schipper 1999). Lived experience provides a first-hand account of the phenomenon; therefore, it is an integral aspect of the phenomenological study.

The GIRs perceptions cannot be grounded in positivist thinking only, where reality is considered fundamental and not reliant on individual meaning (Creswell & Miller 2000). Rather, it should be gathered through the exploration of the intentionality and subjective reality of the GIRs who have had firsthand experience of the phenomena. Though, economic and objective reality of GI phenomena is usually gained from examining the contracts, transaction records and archived notes on innovations; the moral, social and emotional aspects that constitute the lived experiences of GI phenomena cannot be discerned through

such records. These records also fail to provide insights into the intentionality of the innovators and their world view. Intentionality refers to the internal experience of being conscious of something (Moustakas 1994). According to Morgan & Smircich (1980), the realities are not concrete, but are the projection of human imagination, and it requires naturalistic approach that allows understanding of the phenomena within their own context specific setting. Hence, this human science approach draws attention to the structures of experience, role, perceptions and expectations of the GIr.

The epistemological, ontological and methodological issues within phenomenological research have led to variety of different methodological applications of phenomenology. Despite these diversities within phenomenological forms of inquiry (Crotty 1998; Seidman 1998; Thévenaz & Edie 1962), all forms converge in their goal to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon at hand (Van Manen 1990){Williams, 2008 #373;Van Manen, 1990 #369;Larkin, 2006 #385}. One of the major points of difference in each of the varied phenomenological traditions relates to the manner in which lived experience is explored. For instance, classical phenomenology, stresses the objective aspects of the lived experience and new phenomenology, emphasises the subjective aspects of the lived experience (Crotty 1998). Unlike Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, stresses the understanding of lived experience through its interpretation. Here, the latter stresses the utilisation of hermeneutics as a research method based on the ontological view that lived experience in an interpretive process.

Echoing the Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology of ‘Being-in-the-world’, Van Manen (1990) posits that to ask for the being of something is to ask for the nature or meaning of that phenomenon. Hence, being in the world, refers to the way human beings exist, act or are involved in the world (Van Manen 1990). Furthermore, Heidegger's existentialist philosophy suits the exploration of innovation phenomenon, because innovation embodies human endeavor that is unique, unconventional and cooperative and not just intellectual scientific pursuit (Steiner 1995). Here the focus is not to find “new facts” but to generate enriched interpretations of the familiar in the “real world”, which are usually taken for granted (Steiner 1995). Interpretation of the phenomena in terms of the meanings the GIrs bring to their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln 2011) unfold the underpinning meaning and essence of the phenomena as experienced by the GIrs. The sources for the essence of GI are the everyday experiences of innovators, their background and their interaction with the environment for opportunity recognition, ideation and scaling of GI. Furthermore, this phenomenological approach fits with the Indian culture, which is very much attuned to storytelling.

In summary, this study proposes a constructivist episteme and interpretive stance, to explore the GI phenomenon. The *in situ* revelation of the essence of the GI phenomena aids the sui-generis conceptualization of grassroots innovation which can serve as a useful guide for development agencies, policymakers, activists, and researchers.

3.

Understanding Modes of Creativity for Effective Innovation at Grassroots

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Creativity is defined by the author (2010) as “the result of a playfully exploratory process, by a person/group, who/which is open, curious and imaginative in a conducive environment whose result is novel and useful”. Burkus (2014) states that “the “novel is easily recognised, but the useful is just as important”. Innovation, on the other hand, is defined by Barnett (1952) as, “any thought, behaviour or thing that is new because it is qualitatively different from existing forms”. Qualitative differences do not appear all of a sudden in any system, company or society unless creativity is synthesized properly. Moreover, qualitative differences alone will not qualify for innovation unless a value proposition of some order is realised.

The value propositions of innovations at grassroots level, in many ways, are different from innovation of the urban centric world. Smith et al (2012) in an article titled Supporting Grassroots Innovation: Facts and Figures state one defining characteristic, “grassroots innovation must emerge from, or be directed towards, local development”. What this usually translates into are projects such as; developing drivers and gear trains for their cycle rickshaws or low cost water pump or rainwater harvesting, etc. The value propositions in such development directed grassroots innovations are rather obvious, though they may or may not be accepted by the local community till such value proposition is translated into money or other tangible benefits. Listening to the pundits of the “bottom of the pyramid (BOP) innovation”, such as C.K. Prahalad, R.A. Mashalkar and others, one gets carried by the urge to translate a global innovation process with the assumption that all grassroots innovation needs to be development directed and will lead to some form of monetary benefits. Is this all there is. To grassroots innovation?

Countries in Asia such as India, Indonesia, Thailand and Cambodia have rich heritage of arts and crafts culture that has been a source of livelihood and income for many. The same is true for countries in Africa, the Americas, Europe and Australia, where native cultures exist. Innovation at grassroots level has become a means to revive, modernize and contemporize the surviving art and culture heritage in meaningful ways that benefit the people, culture, heritage and the society. The value propositions in such innovations, nearly all the time, do not amount to tangible benefits immediately, but bring about qualitative differences that eventually lead to benefits.

While both development directed and culture focused innovations require creativity, the types of creative abilities required are not the same, with the former starting from idea creativity and the latter starting from artistic creativity. Bruton (2011) states that, “As usual one of the big problems facing creativity is the inability of language to distinguish between artistic

creativity and idea creativity “. This paper highlights the need to understand this difference in creativity in order to affect a paradigm shift in thinking about grassroots innovation through definitions, literature studies and case studies. Through this paper, the author intends to highlight the need to re-align our thinking on grassroots innovation and points to possible innovation processes that effectively harness the outcomes of idea creativity and artistic creativity in an effective manner at grassroots level.

4.

Identification and Acceleration of Farmer Innovativeness in Upper East Ghana

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Global change demands farmers to adapt more rapidly to changing conditions than ever before. Innovation can be part of the adaptation portfolio. While the generation of innovations has traditionally been attributed to research organizations the farmer’s own potential for the development of innovative solutions has largely been neglected. In this study we explore the innovativeness of farmers in Upper East Ghana. We employ a farmer innovation contest for the identification of local innovations and for the stimulation of innovative behavior. Awards such as motorcycles function as an incentive for farmers to share innovations and develop new practices. We use an experimental set up to test the potential of the contest as a policy tool for the fostering of innovative behavior. Farmer innovativeness is measured as an index which we generate from various innovative behavioral patterns. Two contest rounds have already been completed in 2012 and 2013, with two more rounds foreseen for 2014 and 2015. We have so far received a total of 92 applications, many of which presenting highly innovative practices. Baseline data for the impact assessment of the contest were collected but final results will only become available in 2016, after the last round of the contest. Nevertheless, the results so far indicate that farmers do actively generate and test innovative practices to address prevalent problems. These local solutions can help overcome some of today’s global challenges and justify the use of an innovation contest for their identification.

Keywords: Innovation policy, innovation incentives, Award, Contest, Upper East Ghana

5.

Empowering Rural Lives – A Success Stories from Agri-Business Incubation Program, ICRISAT

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In India and around the globe the demand for the agriculture produce is on peaks with higher rates in the markets and as mostly the agriculture families are diverting from agriculture and allied sectors to non agriculture sectors though India has a highest investment levels and the strongest human resource competence in agriculture and agricultural research in South Asia. To bridge in gaps the price differences between consumer and producer and to give boost to the agriculture community by increasing the profit margins the **Agri-Business Incubation program (ABI), of Agribusiness and Innovation Platform, ICRISAT** is supporting the small and marginal farmers by directly linking to markets to sell their produces and incubating the individual entrepreneurs to start up the new business ventures. ABI has initiated a number of reforms such as funding, mentoring, commercialization of technologies, business consultancy, intellectual property rights and legal supports, with large no of networks with an objective to earn more profit margins to the farmers and further by diversifying the profit margins to increase research efficiency in production. This paper explores the success stories of BR Cooking spray pvt ltd, Eruvaka Technologies and KKFF at grassroots incubated at **Agri-Business Incubation program (ABI)**, and role played by ABI, ICRISAT in successfully mentoring, commercializing the product.

Keywords: Innovative technology, Environment, Farmers, mentoring.

6.

Innovative Service Delivery Model to Serve the Rural People: The VLE Model

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Innovative last-mile service delivery model by promoting rural entrepreneurship, namely the VLE (Village Level Entrepreneur) model is becoming increasing popular in Indian context. The promotion of rural entrepreneurship will provide jobs to many people especially rural youth and women. This will also lead to better utilization of all resources in rural areas including human resource. When a company decides to sell its products and services in rural markets, one of the most important decisions it will make is the design of its distribution network. The existing model of using redistribution stockists to distribute in small villages would be very expensive and unviable. The role of VLE in effective rural distribution is critical. The paper discusses the challenges of rural distribution for marketing organizations and the role of VLE development. The innovative VLE models adopted by few pioneering organizations in the Indian rural markets are examined to get an insight into the benefits of the VLE model for all stakeholders. Analysis of the existing models has enabled the development of a generic VLE model which can be adopted by other organizations interested in empowering rural people through entrepreneurship. The paper also introduces the concept of 'partsumer' which is closely linked to VLE. The ethical aspects of the rural supply chain are also highlighted.

Key Words: Service innovation, rural entrepreneurship, VLE model, Rural marketing channel, Partsumer