



Colloquium Series: What one Indian NGO can tell us about social innovation, civil society and nonprofit management?

Speaker:

Nidhi Srinivas, The New School of Social Research, New York

Date / Time:

January 17, 2012 - 2:00pm - 3:30pm

Venue:

Room 307, Third Floor, Pixel B, APU

Abstract:

Discussions of contemporary development policy in India and globally have increasingly been framed within registers of social, political and ecological crisis. A key question raised has been in terms of a credible response: what are citizens doing in tackling the development related problems within their localities? The manner of such response has been framed predominantly within the United States in terms of *social innovation*, a holistic, contextual response focused on efficacy and efficiency, and *nonprofit management*, a specialized, technocratic response focused on organizational functioning and sustainability.

This presentation fleshes out some of the claims of these literatures through a description of how civil society groups have responded to the particular problems of an ecosystem in Udaipur, Rajasthan, a setting characterized by prolonged droughts, severe but short rainfalls, dispersed catchment areas and modest irrigation capacity, the steep dry Aravali hill ranges, and surrounding scrubland forests. The speaker studies some of the practices through which these civil society groups accomplish their key tasks, thus attaining their organizational goals, and some of the ends associated with social innovation. She links these practices to the organizations' history, cultural claims, and shared understanding of their locality.

Nidhi concludes the presentation with a discussion of what such a description can tell us in terms of assessing the value of US-centric concepts in terms of social innovation and nonprofit management. I also discuss the manner in which our understanding of professional competence is challenged and expanded by the multi-pronged and complex negotiations through which tasks are achieved in terms of benefiting local communities, and ameliorating local-level ecological costs.

A Note on the Speaker:

Nidhi Srinivas is Associate Professor of Non-profit Management at The New School of Social Research, New York City in its School of International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy. His research interests center on critical theory, in particular global civil society and post colonial management knowledge. Specifically he studies the management of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the transfer and transformation of management knowledge to, and within, organizations in formerly colonized countries. He teaches courses in the areas of Nonprofit/NGO management, International Development, and Organization Theory.

Srinivas' doctoral study, at McGill University, Canada, was on the strategic management practices of three civil society organizations in South India. Before pursuing studies abroad he worked in Wipro's Corporate HRD office on Brunton Road as a Senior HRD Executive during the early 1990s.

Srinivas is an India-China Institute Fellow 2010-2012. He was part of the Rockefeller foundation funded research group, "Amplifying creative communities", which studied social innovation in New York City. His research has appeared in Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, Organization, Critical Perspectives on International Business, and the Community Development Journal. He has taught as a visiting professor at the EBAPE (Escola Brasileira de Administração Pública e de Empresas) at the Fundação Getulio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and at the Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore, India. The speaker has submitted a published paper of his for the audience, attached to this mail.