Social Innovation today is emerging as an alternate interdisciplinary development pathway of knowledge and practice that aims to understand and address contemporary complexities and multi-dimensional social realities. This side event aims at reimagining social innovation research and practice that aims to center the local communities in processes of social transformation. It attempts to do this through three key presentations as follows.

Global Mapping of Social Innovations – SI Drive Project
Mr. Antonius Schröder, TU Dortmund University - Social Research Centre

This presentation would outline the mapping of Social Innovations across different world regions undertaken as part of the research project Social Innovation – Driving Force of Social Change" (SI-DRIVE) funded by the European Union. This is a research project along with with 25 partners from all over the world and provides for the first time an overview by mapping 1,005 various types of Social Innovation in different world regions and central policy areas (education, employment, environment and climate change, energy supply, transport and mobility, health and social care, and poverty reduction and sustainable development). The results reflect the diversity, broadness and usability of social innovations, proving the variety of actors and their interaction as well as exploring the systemic character and concept of Social Innovation.

Grassroots Innovations for Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities: Perspectives and Experiences from India
Dr. Swati Banerjee, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India

This presentation will bring in an understanding of Grassroots Innovations as an alternate and bottom up approach for community led solutions for sustainability which responds to the local context. Participation, inclusion from an anti-oppressive and gendered perspective and empowerment is a key focus of people centric grassroots innovation which aims towards transformation of lives and livelihoods of the most marginalized communities. Such people centered social Innovation is about transforming the way we see the change strategies and transforming the way we see the world. This understanding would be substantiated with various studies and examples of such alternative initiatives and innovative multi stakeholder partnerships in development practice with varied and extremely marginalized communities. The grassroots experiences of the author in different contexts would further help in understanding the complex challenges in implementation and defining the pathway for sustainable and inclusive practice.

Thailand Social Innovation Platform

Mr. Martin Hart-Hansen, UNDP Thailand Country Office

This presentation will highlight the social innovation experiences in Thailand and the multi stakeholder partnerships for the same. The learnings and the challenges of such initiatives will also demonstrate a way forward for social innovations in other countries.

Scope

This side event thus opens up newer understandings of the multi-dimensional dynamics of social innovation in theory and practice and a critical understanding of the potential of social innovation towards social change and transformation with a specific focus on transforming marginalities.

However, there are no easy answers for social change and transformation. But what we are looking forward through this side event is how do we move towards building a collective agenda through innovative partnerships amongst civil society, State and University (as knowledge hubs) for understanding the processes, impact and relevance of including the most excluded communities in the 2030 Agenda.

The primary focus would be on Goal 11 - Sustainable cities and communities through the understanding of people centered grassroots innovations in building and strengthening of community based institutions and action like women’s collectives and micro enterprises etc., in addressing the multiple marginalities in the region. The iterative processes of participatory pedagogy and direct action in people centered grassroots innovation aims to demonstrate a way forward to translate the dynamic ideas of sustainability and resilience with respect to local communities, especially in the South Asian region.

Key Questions

- How can we look at development alternatives or alternatives to development which is more people centric? Can Social Innovation/Grassroots Innovations provide an answer?
- How to set up supporting ecosystems and governance structure to unfold the potential of the whole society solving societal challenges and social demands through sustainable social innovations?
• How do we understand the challenges, pedagogy and implementation pathway of transforming marginalities in the South Asian region?
• How do we understand and Centre stage the concerns of local and marginalized communities at the grassroots to enable building of resilient and sustainable communities?
• How do we foster an enabling and innovative multi stakeholder partnerships for creating sustainable impact and transformative change with local communities?

Tentative Programme

Presentations on each of the above 3 thematic areas followed by discussion by moderator and participating audience

Panelists/discussants

Dr. Swati Banerjee, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India

Mr. Antonius Schröder, TU Dortmund University - Social Research Centre

Mr. Martin Hart-Hansen, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, Thailand

Moderator

Ms. Aneta Nikolova, D. Eng., Environment Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok

For more details and information contact:

1. Dr. Swati Banerjee: sbanerjee@tiss.edu/ swatibtiss@gmail.com
2. Antonius Schröder: Schroeder@sfs-dortmund.de
3. Martin Hart-Hansen: martin.hart-hansen@undp.org
4. Aneta Nikolova: niko@un.org
5. Sara Libera Zanetti: sara.zanetti@un.org