

LISTEN, LEARN, ACT, PIVOT: Disruptive Pedagogies in Entrepreneurship
for Civic Engagement

Maryam Mohiuddin Ahmed

Founder and Co-Director, Social Innovation Lab, Pakistan

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[Rob Glew]

And welcome to today's presentation, my name is Rob Glew. I'm the Associate Dean for Academic Programs in International Studies and Programs. I have the privilege of welcoming you to the second year of the MSU Global Engagement Speaker Series, as well as introducing today's speaker. Organized by International Studies and Programs and University Outreach and Engagement, the Global Engagement Speaker Series invites individuals of distinction from higher education both global organizations and philanthropies to share thoughts research and practice with the MSU community advancing understanding and dialogue about fundamental human rights and meeting basic human needs is at the core of the series and speakers highlight the role of higher education as a collaborator working with civil societies governments and industry to enhance societal well-being. It is not my pleasure to introduce today's speaker. Maryam Mohiuddin Ahmed is founder and director of the Social Innovation Lab which hosts Pakistan's only social enterprise incubator, The Hatchery. the SIL functions as a hub for innovation in Pakistan and beyond with a unique community engagement wing that combines sustainable sustainable development with concepts such as human centered design and appropriate technology. SIL serves as a lot of a kind bridge between academia and the field and with its partner UpEffect, recently launched a joint venture company in London called in InnHive. She is also a founding partner at Daftarkhwan, a unique co-working and community space in Lahore that brings together innovators and changemakers. She serves as the vice secretary-general of the international Muslim Jewish conference a vienna based nonprofit and was previously the co-founder of literary Pakistan a magazine aimed at cultural revival and was a Pakistan fellow with Acumen, a global impact investment fund. She holds BA and LLB degrees from Lahore University of Management Sciences and an LLM degree with a specialization in international law from the University of California Berkeley. Please join me in giving Maryam a warm Spartan welcome.

[Maryam Mohiuddin Ahmed]

Thank you so much for being here and for having me it's been an honor and a privilege to be here the past few days. I've had the chance to meet such fantastic people, in your faculty, in your students, and your staff across the university, across the campus, people who have been doing just phenomenal a

community centered engagement work that puts human beings at the center of their initiatives and their interventions. Something we hold very close to our hearts at the Social Innovation Lab, which is what I will be telling you more about today. So a little bit of context, so the lab's logo and the name of our incubator, The Hatchery, was thought up of in a garden at the Lahore University of Management Sciences. So our team, one day was like okay, we're creating this incubator and we need to have some marketing some branding some strategy around it and so you know what are we going to do and let's look at things online and you know that's I said hey maybe we should just go hang out in the garden. And so that's what we did for a little while and we spoke about the world and we spoke about why something like this is important and we noticed around us nature and trees and an entire ecosystem, which led us to our tree right here and the idea that whatever work we do, we need to put our ecosystems, our larger context in mind right and understand that the different sectors and domains we work in always have moving pieces and are dynamic and hence we've also got to be moving and changing and learning and dynamic. And so eventually the Social Innovation Lab decided to call our incubator, The Hatchery. It's a bunch of these little birdies flying around and you know taking these worms to their little nestlings and you know all the safe space within that nest and that nutrition coming in feeding them and then seeing the young ones grow up and have their first flight. And that's what gave us the idea that you know that's the same kind of nurturing and feeding and mentoring and facilitating and protecting that we need to give the entrepreneurs and the young changemakers that we work with. So the lab was founded about four years ago in Lahore. It's been supported a lot by the MasterCard foundation. It's particularly our incubation program. We're looking to see how we can help change makers and innovators build sustainable solutions to the problems they see around them how we've been doing this is two different projects looking at sustainability design thinking and equity and justice as our visions for this process right so how can we use social innovation and different applications of social innovation to create a more just and equitable world and that's the kind of vision we've been working with. We're able to achieve this mission and this vision through The Hatchery, which is the incubator that I told you about and through our consultancy and research fields. So a little more about The Hatchery like I said you know our little way of imagining this also came out into a very nice infographic we also have an ecosystem where we have you know the worms and the cats and the investors everybody has their own little emoji and infographic attached to it the hatching process here's how it works so we I put our call for applications we go to different universities organizations institutions and we put out a far and wide call for applications what we're looking for is people who are committed to making a difference in the lives of the people around them especially those who are underserved and marginalized we're also looking for how confident these people are in their abilities how willing to change they are how much of a growth mindset they have where they actually believe that they can do anything if they put their minds and hearts to it we're also looking for a grit and for perseverance because this work is not easy and these are a set of metrics that has taken us a very long time to come to write initially when we started The Hatchery and our first incubation cycle the only thing we were looking at was the idea and the quality of the idea and how fantastic it would be and how much it can help the society and the community and it was after the first cycle that we realized that no that's not how it works we also need to be focusing a lot on the individuals behind these ideas and I feel like that shift in the way we were thinking about our program and our teaching methods is what led to us now coming with a set of disruptive pedagogy in teaching and practicing entrepreneurship and with the social and community engagement focus.

The Hatchery, here's the kind of things that offers right so there is mentorship and in-house training. We're able to bring in experts from outside from the field who spend you know a couple of hours every week with these entrepreneurs they give them training and mentorship and not and build their knowledge and capacity on subjects like financial modeling have how to make your business canvas how to you know practice adaptive leadership and human centered design in the way we create our projects and our interventions we also give them in-house resources like an in-house designer who can help come up with their logo and their branding an in-house web developer who can help them figure out what platforms to best use to make their websites and in-house legal retainer who can give them some insights on how to register their business legally whether it's a not-for-profit or a for-profit we usually go for the for-profit model because that's what we're ascribing as a value in our entrepreneurs that whatever you do whatever intervention you bring about you need to be thinking about sustainability and a part of that is financial sustainability we also give them business development support so we train them in how to tell their stories how to pitch to different audiences how to go about talking to investors and funders which is a part of access to seed and funding investments right so not only are we teaching them how to go about doing this work we're also then making the connections with these investors and funders for these entrepreneurs and we're in some ways actually doing that investor management and relationship building on the other side of the equation as well we also have our network of partners mentors and alumni and a big piece that we've realized over time which I'll tell you more about is that peer learning there is nothing like peer learning you know you can put as many experts out there and as many industry professionals and they cannot tell you what your peers can which is why we start having quarterly pizza parties now where everybody comes together we all hang out get some pizza I get some cake and you know we go about like little busy bees connecting people and thinking of which dots actually would make the picture even prettier and then something we've done which has been a big question mark to us from a lot of our advisors from a lot of the people that have worked with us is why don't you take any equity and so it's been a hard question and it's been a hard thing to actually think about and wrap our heads around also because we ourselves need to be sustainable right and we need to be thinking of our own business model and yet what we've seen is that in a place like Pakistan where already the risk of doing something like entrepreneurship is super high when you're actually doing social entrepreneurship that risk doubles and with that doubling risk the risk appetite not in the entrepreneurs but in their support systems like their parents like their mentors like their professors it just goes really down and if you try and push an equity requirement are too hard on some kind of financial engagement very often you end up you know completely leaving behind the people who want to do this work the most very often these are young people who are not able to afford giving a training fee and are very scared of giving in equity and since we're an early stage incubator at The Hatchery we decided to have a zero equity requirement on our consultancy research side a bit we've done some really interesting work in measuring and monitoring impact we've looked at feasibility of business models financial and otherwise and that's where we've found some really you know really surprising lessons that I'll tell you more about we've also looked at you know connecting our entrepreneurs with funding and this is in fact where we've thought about our own sustainability right so if you are able to successfully link our entrepreneurs of funding we charge a service fee to the investor and to the entrepreneur at the time of that transaction and then branding marketing for design support not just for entrepreneurs, but corporates, public sector entities, you name it so we've worked with a wide area of people and some of these projects have been with people like the SAARC Development Fund in the World Bank, people like the Aga Khan Foundation with whom we've worked in the mountainous north of Pakistan, with people

like the British Council who want to understand what's happening on the ground and so we've done a lot of landscape research studies in Pakistan right where we've gone across the country and mapped what's going on in this sector with the World bank, specifically, we've done that in particular verticals right so whether it's health care agriculture energy education that's the kind of research work we've been engaged with but as you know and as I said and at the topic of this conversation says we're talking about the ways in which we've disrupted methods of teaching and engaging in entrepreneurship and that's what I want to tell you more about.

And for that we can't miss this right. So when we started our program, something we realized was that this work requires a completely different set of imagination right and when we were thinking of where we place the Social Innovation Lab within a university because we had a university partner where within a university does this fit and so you know a lot of people told us hey you should go to the business school right because well you're an incubator and then someone said well maybe you should go to the science school because that's where a lot of the innovation stuff is going on right and some really fancy things and we said actually no we'd like to be in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences because that's where you find something like this moral imagination right and so this morning we were I was at the hub and we were talking about well what is moral imagination and we said well we don't define it and we don't frame it and we don't box it and we also don't put it in binary such as wrong and right we look at moral imagination more as a choice and the belief that this choice this sense of what we ought to do at a particular moment is something very born with right it's something that and this is and it's not just something that I believe that oh wow you know it must be spirituality you know this is something that we've actually seen so we have carried out moral imagination sessions around the world in different geographies as part of different programs not just incubation also non incubation programs and we found surprisingly that the same content and the same methodology in different geographies has led to very similar results has led to people identifying things like love humanity nature caring fear to be unifying factors across humanity regardless of age ethnicity gender religion geography and so what this led us to believe was that moral imagination is not something we can define it's something we can be and live and breathe right and it's a matter of teasing that out of our entrepreneurs and making them see around themselves all these different choices that they make on a daily basis and where they have the space to actually practice and to actually choose with a moral imagination it's like David Foster Wallace one of his amazing essays where he says you know there's these fish passing by to school of baby fish and there's this you know older fish that passes by and says hey boys how's the water and the fish are like what's he talking about what's water right and he talks about this is water right so his his he threw out his essay he's talking about this is water it's everywhere so you can't even see it right and when I think about moral imagination I think about what Wallace said this is water I can't define water for you but I can show you right and that's what we've tried to do with our entrepreneurs that at the very beginning of the incubation program we would use different tools like documentaries like speakers like the Socratic method to really shock them very jarring images very jarring videos of all the different things that are going on with the world right now and where has that led us as the human race it almost takes a metaphysical approach right because it makes you step outside of your individual self and look as a collective and a collective over time so we're looking at creation and whether that's spiritual whether that's the physics that you want to follow on the Big Bang whatever notion of creation you believe in it seems like human beings have tried to mirror that right and in some ways in that process we

became God and yet as we see with the advent of modernity and then post modernity and the internet and technology somehow that God which was us was replaced by technology and money and a host of similar creations of our very own right and so this is the context with which we look at the world that where do we stand what was our role as the human race to bring us here what does this mean for our planet and for the universe and where do we go from here if we know that really seem to be in a downward spiral right with climate change with war with famine with refugees where do we go from here where do we then so coming back from the species of the individual what can I do today to play my part in the cosmos and in making that shift in the ever moving dynamic system that can maybe move the cosmos maybe move the world maybe move the planet towards a more sustainable way of doing and living right so that's one of the key things we focus on when we start second thing so social entrepreneurship it's a lovely thing right you're doing amazing work you're working with communities the interventions that you're making they can really change lives they can give people access to so many opportunities they never had before we've had our entrepreneurs who have worked in tourism and without realizing have led to girls and dick up in schools more often because they ended up providing that particular person enough income to actually think about putting there is a girl child to school and so all these amazing consequences of your work right and all these people in coming and telling you oh wow you've changed my life that's really nice and it's really great to hear but what it often leads to is the savior complex right where you feel like oh my god I'm just I'm amazing and I'm the Messiah and you know people just I just got to do everything I can and you know I'm the only one who can write and so what that ends up doing is right it ends up taking away from our moral imagination where we saw ourselves as a collective and then individuals and then everybody playing their part in a big system the savior complex brings you to a completely different side of things right where you think like oh wow I'm the star here right and so what we do then with our entrepreneurs is we very early on during our mentorship sessions and our interview sessions especially when we're interviewing them to be part of the program that's when we try and tackle this particular issue.

So let me tell you the story about so this picture if you see up left it says to Future(?) Lahore is one of our companies that does walking tours of the old city of Lahore right and in this process they are training young people from the old city to also become tour guides they're also working with local artisans whose crafts are now dying because people don't come to the old city enough to buy them so they're working with those guys to make them part of the tour and give them access to new markets again right so when Tony Hoare the two founders were just amazing right they came to us very bright-eyed they were juniors at college right and they said oh my god we've been to Berlin we've been to Switzerland you know all these places in the world they have walking tours and why is no one doing them in Pakistan and we're going to do it okay that's fantastic yes please that is so exciting please go ahead yeah you know there's so many things and these guys and their arts are dying and we've got to save it yeah well in a manner of speaking and yeah you know we can really do something about this and so they're very bright eyed and then mean really well and they have the best of intentions but if that's the mindset that we're going into the I will write that we are here and you are here then we have a problem right because we feel like we have more to give than we have to take we feel like we're the ones giving whereas very often we end up winning the ones taking right and so we said well hold on a second yes you're right but don't you think in some ways they are saving you well what do you mean we said well you know where you often may go to the field and our assumptions are challenged and we realize all these things about ourselves right all these beliefs that we've held that were completely wrong and we've been so sure of them for so long that we take them for granted and yet when we go and meet these people suddenly

they save us from all the stupid things that were believing in right and all the crazy decisions were about to make based on these things we are so sure about and in so many ways the people that we choose to work with save us they bring out the best in us right and so maybe what you're doing is not saving but maybe what you're doing is serving and in that process being saved and so that's something that we try and inculcate at a very early stage in our entrepreneurs and we've seen that to really bring the shift in the way they think about their work and in the way they approach communities and in the sense of humility with which they go to the communities that they're working with the sense of an open mind where they understand that no one's an expert and we're all here to learn together a big part of this is the golden circle and so gold the golden circle is just a fancy way of saying well we ought to start with the why right and so this fantastic entrepreneur and now author Simon Sinek came up with this terminology where he where he Maps biology and the way our brains work with the way we tell our stories and he explains that the limbic part of the brain which is the emotional part of the brain the older part of the brain is actually the one that makes decisions for us and we don't realize it well because you know we're just when you remember when you say oh I have a gut feeling and that's your limbic brain saying you know I can't I can't put this thing to words but I have a sense that something's up and then you have your neocortex which controls rational thought that's the newer part of the brain and this one short can articulate things really well but the two don't connect right and so your brain and your the way you speak your mouths may not be able to communicate very effectively so you may not be able to tell why you want what you want but actually there is an entire logic and rationale behind it in your limbic brain and so if we were to go with this what Simon Sinek then kind of insists we do is start with the why when we're telling our story we tell the story of why we are doing what we are doing and why us what motivates us to be the people to actually be doing that work and then the next step ought to be the how am I doing it differently from someone else right how am i doing this in a way that connects with my wife and only then once I've built that case should I be team talking about what I actually do my product or my service right and so this way of pitching completely flips what we'd normally learn in you know storytelling but mastoid Allen but like actually pitching a business right so storytelling is actually very close to the Golden Circle method you know it starts with the hook where you hook someone based on some common emotion or some common ground which is very often nestled in our common unified humanity when we teach mission and vision this is part of how we teach it but in fact we don't start with this what we start with is guided meditation so our entrepreneurs come in we go back to that tree in that garden where we made our logo and the name for The Hatchery and we sit in a circle and we close our eyes and in this process breathing deeply relaxing ourselves we go on a journey to meet our future selves and in this journey we ask ourselves you know if we had everything we ever wanted if everything went right what would it look like right where would we be who would be the people around us how did we get there and so in this process these entrepreneurs are able to figure out to step literally step back from life as it is right and they a lot of the men--they told us they've never done this before it's 90 percent of the people who actually attend this session tell us it's changed their lives because they've never taken that step back to reflect and to dream and who so in in so many ways visualize that dream and so what we do then after that guided meditation session is we make them write down what they saw right and then understand that as their own personal vision for their life and then within that vision we explore with them where does your business fit in where is your social enterprise on this map how does it fit with your personal vision with your personal life mission and then together using that framework we work backwards from the life and the entrepreneurial vision how we do this so interestingly we are talking about this at the hub today is that we have we have trained our

entrepreneurs or at least try really hard to train them to think in circles instead of lines because the linear framework once again is something that's very misguided that's not how nature works and that's not how life works right and so what they do is they actually have a sheet of paper that's like a bull's eye so there's concentric circle and they start with the outermost with their vision on it and they work backwards towards the center to where they are today and that's how they end up charting not only their vision but also their mission and the goals the milestones that lead to that mission and that vision being fulfilled and beyond that of course we use the golden circle to help them pitch it to help them order it and format it so this is one of my favorite parts so that's me along with a bunch of really amazing women up north in the mountains of Hunza. So Hunza is a district which is not even at the foothills it's kind of somewhere in the middle of the Karakorams in Pakistan right and this is where the Himalayas the Karakorams and the Hindu Kush ranges come pretty close to being together. Some of the tallest mountains, the second tallest mountain in the world is somewhere within that mountain range and so these people they live in this very tight-knit community they've also seen a lot of very interesting development work through the alcohol foundation particularly which has taken a very human centered and very appropriate technology way of creating interventions that aid these people right and so this is one of those places where we first went to experiment with our incubation program right so once we had made this incubation model you're right here's hey how do different people respond to it and so we took it to this community and we tried teaching them human centered design and turns out we couldn't and we couldn't because they live it they could teach us you know and so what we did instead then was bring our students there so these guys told us hey if you need some help with bookkeeping and pitching and a little bit of product design and e-commerce and marketing so how about you just tailor your course for that he said okay we can do that but in exchange you take some of our kids and maybe they can you know hang out with you maybe they can go to your companies and your small NGOs maybe they can go with you to the field and know what using your hands looks like beyond the iPhone right and what we realized was that in this deep immersive exercise where entrepreneurs from across even centers in Pakistan had to spend three weeks in the mountains sleep on the floor clean up their rooms and their toilets cook their own meals wake up at six or seven in the morning and go with these guys to the fields and understand what potato cultivation looks like and then in the afternoon work in their small not-for-profits and small village organizations that's when our kids were actually able to understand the people that they claimed to serve the beauty of this is it's a much safer environment right so it's a group of people who have seen this and lived this kind of development and lived this kind of way of doing interventions right so these were amazing people to work with I couldn't take my entrepreneurs and go do it in an urban slum in Lahore you know it would be very it might have been very challenging because it's a it's a very moving dynamic environment once again but here's an environment where we understand that people are open because of their way of life to open that kind of knowledge to others as well and so this is a program we developed with this community to take our entrepreneurs on an immersive journey to learn about what it means to step outside your shoes that's one of the fundamental principles of human centered design and it's very difficult to do unless you're actually living it and so this space and this village this district has given us this immense gift of allowing our entrepreneurs to go and live there and really understand the people that they claim to serve an interesting part within this within the human centered design framework for us has been the all these concepts that we are picking up from you know design-thinking giants like IDEO and Stanford and Chicago and places in Europe a lot of these frameworks actually exist in like I said communities like this one whether it's in their scriptures whether it's in their local literature whether it's in their way of life

and that's the kind of work we then started doing right so we read different scriptures we'd read sub-continental literature and are now trying to see ways in which we can cross fertilize our curriculum with this context specific literature and scripture which says the exact same thing but has been saying it for thousands of years before I do did write so that's something else we're up to like I said in the beginning so something that became really clear to us and then became a part of our teaching method was pure learning we used to have shark tanks and we still do during the incubation program right where we used to call in a lot of experts and industry mentors and all these bigshot characters right to come and judge these guys and tell them hey you know that's really not going to work and hey that's really fantastic and hey how about you do a little more of this and a little more of that and that's great and that's nice and that's helpful but this one time we had this group of participants who were going through their shark tanks and one of our alumni said hey I really want to see you and I said look man I'm in the middle of a shark tank they're like can we come and hang out sure you up to you you've been through it and so they come in and they start observing and they start listening and suddenly when the presentation ends they're the ones who start talking instead of these mentors and experts and people would call in and they're like giving these excellent points right and really like hands-on completely relevant points right and that's because they are they are either still going through or have just gone through what the fresh trainee entrepreneurs are going through right and so they're able to relate much better they're also much younger probably similar demographics yeah speak the same language had the same issues at home and so they're able to relate to particular set of problems much more than you and I would and that's when we actually started you know kind of bringing this in in different structured ways so from then on we started inviting these alumni to shark tanks we also started inviting these alumni to teach some of these modules right so for instance the business model canvas which we would usually have a university professor come and teach this time we decided no we've got to have an entrepreneur come and teach it and use their own model as a case theory and show all the different ways that over the years their business model canvas has changed and it's had fantastic results people are just they feel safer asking questions that they would other files otherwise feel very stupid asking someone who's super high five and very difficult for them to relate to and so peer learning is something we then embedded into the way we teach our materials and our coursework adaptive leadership is what we then focused on after that so type of leadership is something that we wanted to make part of the curriculum from the beginning and it was you know something that I'd picked up during my time at acumen as a fellow I found it really helpful for my own self while designing the lab and then facing all kinds of challenges in the process of you know executing the work and realize that oh my god this is something everybody should know and it's not like your work skill it's a life skill right and so adaptive leadership demands us to think in a different way right so once again think of systems are dynamic it also requires us to think of leadership as not a role but a practice right and the idea that it's not that there's one leader in a group is that everybody in a group can practice leadership right and that kind of leadership requires it demands that we step in and step out so the terms we use are the balcony and the dance floor right so you go in and you're really deep into work and you're dancing you're on the dance floor right and then you're like oh I'm tired I got to take a break go to the balcony and you observe how everybody else is dancing right and you know you put a new move in there and did you know people follow it did it catch on was it a complete fail what's going on right and so adaptive leadership is this framework that enables our entrepreneurs to work within these hyper dynamic rapidly changing systems introduce new dance moves new interventions on a tiny scale and see how this dance floor response rate how this context responds to it right whether they accept that change whether they

completely reject that change whether they are somewhere in the middle about it and there's still room to you know add another little jive to the dive dance move right so another little maybe handshake or something like that right so and so it allows them to have that experimental approach and realize that everybody can do this not just the CEO not just the CFO not just the coordinator anyone and everyone on the team can't only just do it really ought to do it right and this is particularly something we use for non technical challenges right so technical challenges will be something like the projector isn't working and suddenly shuts down and then you turn it on and turn it off again and unplug it and replug it and that's a technical solution to a technical problem but when you're working with communities where it's so much is changing so fast the nature of the problem is evolving even before you start solving it and while you solve it and hence an approach like this is necessary not just for just someone who's you know leading the organization but for everyone within it especially when it comes to managing relations an expectation is in fact this has turned out to be an extraordinary tool right where you can check how your boss is feeling one day you know you have a little experiment and see if they smile about it or a business kid or completely flower and then you know okay I'm going to step back and not ask for that vacation right so that's also adaptive leadership right and so hence when we teach this to our entrepreneurs we explain this to them that hey this is not just going to help you in your social enterprise this is going to help you in your life and that's you know connecting this back to our early lesson it's not just the idea an incubator is supposed to invest in it's the individual and this is part of that individual growth right so the next thing then which then happens as a result right so sometimes you're really excited and you just you know dance too hard right and suddenly the system doesn't accept it and you know it gets awkward and you step back you're in the balcony here they go wow I really messed up huh and so what we teach our entrepreneurs is that it's great you really ought to mess up because if you haven't messed up you haven't done anything different you haven't innovated and you surely haven't disrupted what's already out there and from our very first module right we know for a fact that that's that what's already out there is clearly not working right and so if it's not working we can't keep doing it and if you can't keep doing it we must take risk and if you take risks somewhere along the line we are going to fail and so if you're failing feel fast but then pivot faster and so the name of the way that I framed when I when I was thinking about this listen learn act pivot that's a cycle that's almost become like a mantra to us right where we have used these tools and pedagogics that I just told you about right that we the first thing we start with is listening and really actively listening right listening to learn listening to understand listening not because we want to respond right because that's also something that we were just so used to doing now I'm going to listen to you and I'm going to say something back to you and it's going to be really awesome I'm going to feel amazing about myself no listening because I'm actually very interested in what you have to say right and so within this mantra the first phase requires active listening right and stepping into the shoes of the other the human centered design approach the second part is learning right and so different parts of what I just told you help people learn whether it's by peer learning whether it's through your balcony where you're looking at your dance move and the impact it's had whether it's through your partners whether it's through our mentor networks whether it's through deep immersion right so everything we are seeing everything we're listening to what are we learning from it what is the information that we're getting out of it what does that tell us about our assumptions right because a lot of us and everyone it's not about a lot everyone whether we like it or not we go into a new place we have certain expectations and sometimes those are like right spot-on but you know many times they are not spot-on right they're a little they're a little here and so what are we learning from what we are seeing and then once we know once we've learned something right so the human centered

design method that we teach it actually helps these guys download the insights download the learnings that they've had and in this process they're able document those learnings and then come to trends from it right so they should they see trends they see where they were right they see where this intervention how it can be designed in a human centered way so once you've done that process right so once you've listened you've learned based on your learning you've created something some interventions some pilot right you take that pilot right so that's the acting part of it so you act you take your work into the market you take it to your consumer you put that dance move out right and once you've acted once you've done what you had to do that's when you step back and that's when it's time to do the first two again listen and learn again what happened when you acted how did it impact the people that you were claiming to help or claiming you serve or claiming to work with right did they accept it did they like it did they love it did they completely hate it did they think there was something that could be better about it right and this is where the co-creation process comes in right so you keep getting feedback and keep learning and you keep working around your idea and that's what leads you to pivot right so your first prototype didn't work out so well it's fine got a lot of feedback pivot make it better right hey community Here I am tell me how to do it better how can we do it together what do you recommend what raw materials should I be using what way should I be telling you the story what particular demographic should I be focusing on what do you think right and then based on that learning based on those answers you change your model and this can be a drastic shift or this can be an incremental shift but it's a pivot Lundell s it's the movement in a different direction nonetheless and once this process starts you're back again right so you're learning again listening again acting again then a pivoting then you're learning again listening again acting and you're pivoting and that's how you fail fast and pivot faster and so in a lot of terminology you'd call that rapid prototyping right so rapid prototyping would be the same method or the same science really where you quickly keep coming up with ways of addressing the same problems quickly keep getting that feedback in a low-cost efficient way right and so that's something we inculcate in our startups all the time the guy in here this is Qasim so Qasim is one of the cofounders of risk which is a food waste management and early childhood nutrition tackling social enterprise right so what they do is initially they came to us and they said look there is way too much waste food in Pakistan and that's not just Pakistan it's the world and we want to do something about this I said wow that's amazing where did you get the idea and turns out customs friend who's ephah who's a co-founder his mom used to give free meals to everyone and anyone under the Sun every Friday and seeing this phenomenal role model they wanted to do something very similar right in the same spirit of generosity of giving of serving and so they said well we can also do that but actually instead of making food like she does we could just go around to all these places that have so much leftover food and use that right and then cater to a much larger set of people I said yes you're right absolutely and so they went to restaurants and he said hey guys you have excess food can we take it they said okay cool what you want to do with it and I said you know we want to give it to people who don't have food and say excellent and so when they're developing this idea right they're like well what's going to be our business model and I'm like exactly what's going to be our business model right you can't keep doing this as volunteers right you've got a graduate at some point you'll have to find a job at some point you'd have a family what about this then right it can't just be a hobby because people are hungry every day and once you feed them you're going to build an expectation so what are you going to do right and so they said no we're going to find a business model great so what's your business model and so their first business model was going to the restaurants and saying hey if you're going to give us excess food and if you're going to give us money to go around distributing it we're going to make a

website and give you like three stars on it and the restaurants were like huh okay and like well then you're going to get a lot of popularity it's going to be a CSR thing for you and look everybody's going to love you and you'll get more customers and they're like well we don't have a problem getting customers our Foods quite nice huh but you know maybe you could sell feeling me they said look here's what we'll do we'll give you the food and we'll give you a little over to cover your food cost but that's about it you know we don't think this is a CSR activity beyond as giving you the food and you know covering your transport cost me said cool you know what we'll take it so the first business model in this sense was a half failure half success they come back to us and they said look we can scale this up maybe instead of five restaurants if we had 50 we'd probably making enough money to maybe cover some of our coordination and salary costs right I said yes but is that going to be enough I said no you know we're not sure we really don't want to charge the poorer that sounds like a horrific thing oh my god how can we ever do that we'll be terrible people I said well you ought to think about it maybe there could be a cross-subsidy model maybe you could do share a meal or pass on a meal there's some way there must be some way to monetize this so they go away and they disappear for a month and a half and they come back and they're like you know what this one time who's F I just went to the you know the stall and he said hey this is for 10 rupees and you know what people paid I'm like yeah of course no but people paid it I'm like yes and he said look this is our model and I said yes exactly and this is when they realized that actually by not charging the poor they were in fact taking away their dignity right that it is when they were not charging that the idea in the mind of the consumer was oh my god this is a third-rate meal and I'm only getting it because some rich person didn't need it and this pivot that they made this failure that they learned from was that no this is a meal that is clean it is edible it is safe we will package it again we will brand it with our logo and make it look nice because it really ought to be a product and a product is going to sell and so they will pay for it and feel happy about the fact that they were able to pay for it and so now risk runs is starting to run a food bank network in Pakistan they have moved that food stall that used to be in locations across you know the city into one location one community which is their starting point around this community what they realized the more that they the more work they did right they realized that you know there were sometimes people who were exploiting their food bank or their food stall right they'd be people who had really high incomes send their drivers and their cooks to pick up that amazing lobster and steak and lemon tarts because it was so super cheap and they would rather just get that food here than go to restaurant right and so what these guys did was they founded community they went around doing demographical survey work they gave each of them risk cards that you know that were able to tell these guys who's actually buying the food and where it's being consumed and then after establishing this food bank they realized this is not the end this community needs health care it needs education it needs access to loans and finance it needs skill development right and a bunch of these other things that risk is not at an expert at giving and so what they did was they partnered with other social enterprises and brought them to the community so they brought the largest interest free microfinance Bank to come and start giving micro loans there they brought in the Punjab provincial government to start giving training in freelancing and online earning in that community they in the second room of their food bank which is a two-room kind of entity to room building they started they asked an NGO school to come and set up a Center where children could be then you know brought into the schooling system and then prepared to join a low-cost private or government school and then they also brought in a healthcare NGO that now does regular screenings of the community population with the risk cards every six months and so they fail and they feel really fast but they pivoted even faster and they learned from all their mistakes at a tremendous pace and they

were then able to build on these other lessons of peer learning of collaborating of thinking of things in a system not just healthcare or food security as an intervention but of the very different things within that system that were required and how best they could mobilize resources around them to address those needs in that system and something that all of this results in is us not just as entrepreneurs and the social innovation lab but as human beings and as experts in different fields realizing that we need to really challenge normative metrics of what it means to be successful of what it means to actually have attained impact of what it means to be sustainable right so something we were talking about yesterday with the Hubert Humphrey fellows here at MSU was about scalability right and a bunch of them are associated with different social enterprises or NGOs and they they've been you know working there for four years five years three years and you know the question was you know we don't know how to scale and it made me realize actually you know even we don't know how to scale and you know we've been trying to frankly we've been going to different universities we've been asking different people we've been partnering with different organizations and it's been very similar for entrepreneurs right so we've been introducing them to the government and the corporate sector and the CSR guys and saying hey guys come on scale this up this is so fantastic and then realizing that that's not happening and then saying okay well seems like we're failing it's okay we'll pivot it's okay we'll get around it don't worry about it human centered pivot adapted right we're trying to live all our own teaching methods and then you know we realized hold on a second what about that first part where everything is moving and changing and then and what about that part where we said oh hold on a second no one's an expert because you know every two years or so whatever we know becomes outdated and so yeah pure learning and so why are we seeing that scaling up is a good measure of success so why do we need to scale up exactly and where does that come from right so who's asking us to scale up and what does that mean and that's led us to really think about you know what we're teaching and how we're teaching and where the content of that is coming from right and that's led us to also realize that a lot of these demands all right top-down often by a donor driven and in so many ways imperialistic right in so many ways culturally and contextually insensitive and can be wrong you know and so and an excellent example of this is this lady Mallika Suraj she just passed away this year from cancer but my god what a woman this woman for the last 17 years had been running a carpet weaving Center in Hunza right and that's her on that on her stall weaving that carpet right there and she'd been doing this for 17 years with between 20 to 13 other women right so the number of women varied over time but the center remained and so the Allentown Dacian guys when we went up there they said hey do you want to do a feasibility kind of study for us you know you do consultancy work and research work you know can you help us figure out what's going on with this center because you know sometimes it's made you know tremendous profit and other times you know it's just kind of round it's just you know kind of dull and you know maybe 9/11 has really impacted tourism in Pakistan everybody thinks it's a bunch of terrorists and nobody comes here and so you know people don't buy their stuff so what do we do we said okay don't worry and I'm sure there's other things and of course there's local tourism and you know things will get better but hey let's take a look at it so we went out there we hung out with these ladies and three weeks in we realized okay they don't work 9:00 to 5:00 they take very long coffee breaks and very long lunch breaks this stall that they work on can very easily fit in their own homes and yet they're all working from one space that you know is rented and so that's a cost the thread you see here is sourced from all different parts of Pakistan why you may ask because they have cousins studying in different cities in different universities across Pakistan and those cousins send that thread over right and then we ask them okay where are your books show us your finances man we open their books and the books are

not inventory style each page is for a different producer for a different person so one is for Mallika Suraj when I saw Perry Sultana - for Aziza - photo Kela and so on so forth everyone has their page and everybody has their carpet where they've written only you know red carpet with the camel with this and you know here's how long how much time it took me to make this and here's how much I sold it for and we've seen huh well this one you spend a lot of time making but it's but you sold it for far less why right and so all these different ways that their books were very different from a corporate or a company or even a small medium Emperor enterprise you'll see in an urban center and you're shocked okay all right we know what I do we can fix this right and so we go back to the our kind folks who are like okay look we have some recommendations we're going to sit with the ladies and try run it by them and you know don't worry we'll fix this right savior complex and so we go back you say hey ladies you don't work 9:00 to 5:00 yeah we don't I said well why don't you well we also work in the fields and we also have children and we also have families and you want to hang out with them well that's pretty fair okay cool okay but why do you take such long coffee and D breaks yeah but when will we talk yeah that's a good question you're right okay you need a dog valid sure okay why don't you work from home it'll save you time it'll be right in front of you can go to it whenever you have extra time maybe even at night so you can do anything the rest of the day like yeah but how will we meet each other right huh okay and then they say I said okay what about this thread right you could get it in bulk from one guy and Lahore I can hook you up and they're like no okay why well every time my cousin sends me the thread from Peshawar or Lahore Karachi your apt Abad we give them pocket money and it makes them really happy and that makes us really happy so why and by now you know are all our ideas of efficiency supply had value jane's feasibility are like really shaking up right we're like oh gosh this is this is something else and by the time we come to their books we said okay great so you have different books this is something we understand you know I don't know where my water is coming from hyper capitalism is you know commodified everything and you know the producer and the consumer are completely detached and we totally get why you're doing this excellent guys and they're like yeah thank you sir okay so but you know some of you are earning more than others how are you spending this and they're like who told you were earning more than others I said well it says here on your books right no we divide everything equally no one earns more we all earn the same we're family and so at this juncture we had to go back and tell the akka guys and I said hey there is something very different going on here right and it seems like we really need to ask our sells these questions instead of imposing something else on them because what they've taught us about feasibility and efficiency and what they've taught us about sustainability and longevity is very different from what any basic economic 101 book will tell you it's the exact opposite right and so what we're realizing here is the things you and I might think of as costs I in fact profits for these women that in fact when they come together and hang out and talk it's a social structure that allows these women a space to vent a space to just breathe a space to get away from the emotional labor of being at home and raising kids and the physical labor of being in the field and all this stuff right it's actually their safe haven and that when they're getting this high cost read it's actually maintaining and strengthening the fabric of their relationship with their families even when they're far away so it's in so many senses eradicating that distance and that when they're looking at this and sharing equally it is showing you something far bigger than the profit motive far bigger than the I it's what we've seen in Africa of some have you been this term called Ubuntu I am because you are right something that Hegel would have a seat right that in the master-slave dialectic both are equal you make me who I am without you I wouldn't even know where my hand and then the world begins I would be I'd be everything and nothing and these women right here that's what made us challenge all our assumptions about what it means to

be successful it made us expand our definitions of what it means to have actually created impact and fostered sustainability seven years we haven't seen companies last 17 years in the big city and here in a mountain where the league freezes over in the winter and you can't get to the village they have managed to run this for 17 years that's changed the way we teach entrepreneurship a big piece of this that has resulted from this way of learning and teaching and that has also kind of inspired us to inculcate and encourage the same in our entrepreneurs is to find your tribe you know because this journey is lonely it's very difficult it's extremely exhausting at times some days you don't want to wake up in the morning and my husband knows that really well because he's like why am I shut up and go to work and you know at that point it's people like him and my family and other social entrepreneurs that I've encountered in my life who are telling me hey you know what we're very exhausted too and you remember that time you told us hey you're going to get through well this is that time for you and you will get through and we'll see to it and we will push and shove you there if we have to right and so I've been very blessed to find tribes like these all over the world some people you may know in here and so and they're from across the world and yet they carry that light within them right something my mentor tells me he says you know there are people of the heart and you will find them everywhere you go and you know first time he said what does it even mean and then I started seeing them everywhere out of nowhere you know speaking the same language despite so many differences and realizing oh wow we have a tribe and my tribe is the people of the heart and that's what we then started encouraging our entrepreneurs to also find to become part of that tribe and to keep expanding it and looking for it wherever they went and in that process this is what I realized just yesterday we've started this movement to decolonize our minds to decolonize the way we think of understand and teach concepts the way we think of the content of what we teach right sustainability feasibility scalability all these terms right the way we approach power structures right and identifying the different constructed false power structures within our own lives and we think of the savior complex but also imposed upon us from the outside from donors funders partners whoever else right and then understanding that in this work that we're doing in so many ways we're decolonizing social enterprise and that's and that's something just framing it like this is something that I just came across yesterday right talking to the Africa fellows that that's the work that we've been doing so this is the photograph actually from the in hive program right where we went to London and took a Pakistani curriculum and taught it there and I remember you know the first day when I walked in with my hijab and I'm brown and you know I'm a woman so all these different intersectionalities of marginalization and there's a bunch of people and there's a gentleman there who's older and you know of a majority race and he says hey who are you I said hey I'm your trainer and I really what are you going to teach me I said well how about you wait and learn and so we went through our first training on what is social innovation and how is it different from regular innovation and all those things and the session ends and he really scurries up to me after it's like hey can I get your card of course sure absolutely like yeah are you like a trainer like are you know some kind of consulting with McKinsey or something no I just do the social enterprise and that's very reflective of the kind of exchange we're looking to create in the world that countries like Pakistan and regions like the global South have so much wisdom and knowledge and phenomenally disruptive and innovative methodologies and ways of thinking doing and being to give to the rest of the world and unless we leave behind our savior complex, despite our super good intentions, and unless we take off expert hats and start thinking in terms of human centeredness, and unless we move beyond the dynamic of you know teacher-student master/slave whatever else and look at peer learning and each one of us having some

really perennial wisdom and knowledge inside our hearts and minds and spirits unless we do that we're failing and it's timed we pivoted and period fast. Thank you.

[Rob Glew]

Well thank you very much. We're going to take questions, so in addition to those of you present with us in the room, I understand those participating online should also be able to submit questions, so we encourage you to do so and we will try to get to some of those as well. So the floor is open for those who might have a question or comment.

Q&A

[Stephanie Light]

My name is Stephanie Light. I'm working for the Global Center for Food Systems Innovation. I think it may be more of a comment than a question but I just really enjoyed your presentation and I guess the I was just so happy to hear you talk about this idea of scaling, because it's an issue that has bothered me for a long time because it seems like a lot of and I've started to think of it in terms of the language of innovation, strong innovation and weak innovation, because it seems like a lot of what we're talking about here what my work is weak innovation, because you're really talking about technological fixes within the existing structure so it's we're talking about when we talk a lot of times when we're talking about innovation it's only innovation to further the existing system and so when you're really idea of social innovation it's like it's not working you know like we're creating we're reproducing inequity and so I just really appreciated you addressing that issue and I don't know if you want to talk anything more about it, but thanks.

[Maryam Mohiuddin Ahmed]

Thank you. Actually you know something we've learned about scalability is that it doesn't have to happen vertically right so once again questioning whether something needs to be scalable and then also questioning what are the ways in which it can be scalable right so instead of thinking like this can we think like this right and what are we trying to scale are we trying to scale one intervention or are we trying to scale impact right and so the story of risk actually tells us that instead of scaling like this they scaled like this and they didn't scale risk they scaled impact within a community and now that's a model you can take like this but once again when you take it like this you'll have to you know be very cautious of context you wouldn't know where to start first you have to experiment start slow start little but basically that even the way we're going about scaling or understanding scaling needs to be more complex.

[Audience Member]

Thank you for your presentation I absolutely loved it and I learned a lot from it. My question has to do with I know there's a lot of importance set on mentorship but this of the tribe I've also seen developing around me so how would you place both of these concepts and how much importance is there more in the tribe setting and versus the mentor setting. Thanks.

[Maryam Mohiuddin Ahmed]

That's an excellent question because I've been dealing with that a lot lately and I think at least a decade now in fact right that we often go to our friends and our tribe for support and for feedback and for this and that and sometimes we get the feedback or the support that we required and sometimes we just get the emotional support we require but we don't get the sort of direction that we're looking for right or more knowledge and that's often because our tribe is you know very similar to us you know maybe they share demographic maybe should they share an age group something or the other right maybe they share experiences and so very often our immediate tribe and so the tribe can be huge but your immediate tribe is you know those close really close people who you meet very often or who may be you know really deeply right and so very often your tribe is playing the part of giving emotional support and are pushing you when you need it the most whereas a mentor is well sometimes doing both but for the most part helping you think clearly right and even though a part of that happens when you talk out things with your tribe right so your closest friends when you're talking to them you're also in so many ways disentangling the way you're thinking about something right and so you're getting clarity there too but with the mentor and especially with the domain expert mentor right you're getting insights into a field you may not know at all and so no matter how much you disentangle the problem, you still don't have the insights that you require to make your decision and that's where an expert mentor industry mentor or a senior mentor will come and help you in a much better way right because they would just no more which one to prioritize I don't think you should prioritize them at all I think it depends on the circumstance here in right so where you need an expert and you need direction and you know your friends can't give you that you go to the mentor and where you need the kind of support the help in pushing you make a decision the help in holding you accountable that's where you go your tribe and so I think it's a mix really.

[Rob Glew]

Julie, is anything coming in? Other Questions? Once again, I'd like to thank our speaker in addition to the presentation today I think from about 10 minutes after she got off the plane now she has been engaged in addition to trying to prepare for this also visiting classes, meeting with faculty, students, staff, other stakeholders on campus, and I believe in a few minutes when we go to the reception that might be her first break. Maybe if we could please give her one more round of applause. I will invite you to join Maryam for the reception in a minute. There's two more things I need to say the beginning sponsorships for the series from university outreach and engagement as well as International Studies and programs we do have very good co-sponsorship from other units so I just want to go down that list quickly so please bear with me we also received support from the Academy for global engagement the MasterCard foundation Scholars Program. Here at MSU, the African Studies Center, Eli Broad College of Business, the Residential College in Arts and Humanities, the College of Social Science through the

Center for Advanced Study of International Development, the Muslim Studies Program, the Asian Study Center, the Center for Gender and Global Context, the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement, the Hub for Innovation and Learning and Technology, MSU Usability Accessibility Research and Consulting, the Social Science Scholars Program, the Pakistani Student Association, and the National Collaborative for the Study of University Engagement. And I think she met all of them. Finally, I'd just like to remind you that this is the first of this year's speakers and if you could on your way out if you didn't pick up one of our flyers that has additional information, but I would like to highlight next month in November, on November 8th, we will have the Honorable Thelma Awori, who's the founding chair and co-president of the Sustainable Market Women's Fund Liberia as well as the former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and director of the regional bureau for Africa of the UN Development Program so we hope you'll attend that and tell others about it her topic will be African Women Post-independence Economic Empowerment Peace and Security, so without further ado, I'd like to thank everyone for attending also invite you to walk all the way over there for our reception which begins now.