



**Social Movements
and Civil Society
Research Group
(@SMCSRGCity)**

Inaugural Event, 18 February 2015, 18.00-21.00

“The Past and Future of Civil Society Studies”

**Speakers: Prof. David Horton Smith (Boston College)
and Prof. Jenny Harrow (Cass Business School)**

Chair: Dr Thomas R. Davies

EVENT REPORT

The Social Movements and Civil Society Research Group at City University London (@SMCSRGCity), which brings together academics from across the University's Schools of Business, Law, and Arts and Social Sciences, held its launch event on 18 February 2015: a roundtable discussion on the general theme of the past and future of civil society studies.

After an introduction to the research group by Dr Holly Eva Ryan, the discussion began with presentations from Professor David Horton Smith, founder of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), and Professor Jenny Harrow, founder of the Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy (CGAP). Professor Smith introduced the evolution of the field internationally since the 1970s, including the development of research organizations, journals and university departments, and the growing recognition of the field's status as an academic discipline. Professor Harrow explored the wide range of interpretations of civil society studies in the British context, under three broad headings: a 'tumult of books', a 'horse race' of competing approaches, and a specialised jigsaw.

The presentations were followed by lively discussion including contributions from, in addition to the speakers: Professors Bobby Banerjee and Peter Willetts (City University London), Dr Armine Ishkanian (London School of Economics and Political Science), Meta Zimmeck (Voluntary Action History Society and Voluntary Sector Studies Network), Sahra Taylor (City University London), and Dr Ryan. The Chair concluded by highlighting how the contrasting interpretive perspectives represented by the speakers reflected the healthy diversity of the discipline. The debate continued over a subsequent drinks reception.

The event, which took place in the Rhind Building on St John Street, attracted approximately forty participants from the academic and civil society sectors, and was made possible by a grant from the Department of International Politics at City University London. Live Tweeting of the event took place using #CitySocMovts. Copies of Professor Harrow's presentation are available on request.

