

ABSTRACTS

Friday, May 15, 2009

Amita Baviskar, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi

“Spectacular Events, City Spaces, and Citizenship: The Commonwealth Games in Delhi”

Since the adoption of economic liberalization policies in the 1990s, successive governments have instituted spatial and social changes that converge around a common vision: making Delhi a world-class city. From building facilities for the Commonwealth Games 2010 (CWG 2010) on the ecologically sensitive floodplain of the Yamuna River in central Delhi to demolishing the homes and workplaces of hundreds of thousands of urban squatters and migrants to curb air and water pollution, the project of making Delhi world-class is radically restructuring the city's landscapes and livelihoods. This paper focuses on one particular juncture in the life of the city, when processes of economic and political transformation have become crystallized around a spectacular event such as the games. Baviskar makes the case for the CWG 2010 as one such spectacular event by looking at similar events in Delhi's post-Independence history, in particular the Emergency in the 1970s and the Asian Games in 1982. She discusses how attempts to galvanize action around the CWG 2010—securing capital and consent across the city—have fared on the ground, encountering resistance at a variety of levels.

Craig Jeffrey, University of Washington, Seattle

“Middle Class Youth Politics: A Worm's Eye View”

Jeffrey considers how lower-middle classes in provincial north India are responding to liberalization and the threat to their power posed by lower castes. Focusing on student leaders in two colleges in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, he argues that lower-middle classes are both joining with the poor to protest corruption and colluding with university and government officials to make money from their political influence. Jeffrey's research points to the resilience of an Indian lower-middle class, the importance of unemployed youth as political actors, and the manner in which politics is practiced within various micropolitical fields at the local level.

D. Asher Ghertner, University of California, Berkeley

“Inscribed on the Landscape, Hung on the Wall: Picturing Private Property in the Poster Art of Delhi's Slums”

Ghertner explores how residents of slum settlements—considered by most to be obstacles to India's world-class pursuits—imagine the world-class city. What are their visions of this future, and how are they formed? Based on twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork in a slum in West Delhi, Ghertner examines this question through an analysis of the poster art slum residents hang in their homes. Devotional posters depicting deities have been longstanding decorative and functional fixtures of slum huts. However, in recent years, *house posters*—which replace the central figure of a deity with a private, bungalow-style house—have become increasingly popular. Ghertner uses the stories told through these posters to show how slum residents have begun to incorporate private property into their personal aesthetic and how, through this aesthetic, they are produced as world-class subjects: desirous of a world-class and privatized city, even if it means their own displacement. Specifically, through the fetishization of the resettlement plots given after a slum demolition, residents read demolition as a process of urban improvement, a necessary step toward a world-class future.

Mona Bhan, DePauw University, Greencastle

“Water has the Right of Way: The Cultural Politics of Conservation in Kashmir, India”

In 2002, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed in the Kashmir High Court spurred a citywide movement to conserve the Dal Lake, a twelve square kilometer water-body in the heart of Srinagar city which had allegedly shrunk because of increasing human encroachments. The PIL marked a new phase in environmental governmentality through which the High Court assumed a more robust role in creating and implementing conservation policies. Since then, mainstream representations of the lake as diseased and cancerous have exhorted Srinagar residents to act as environmental stewards. In addition, the High Court and local authorities have been evicting Hanjis, a population of lake-dwellers, most of whom claim proprietary rights on the lake. Bhan analyzes the ensuing struggles between Hanjis and government authorities in Kashmir over the rightful ownership of water-bodies and questions how the state privileges tourism over local use. Bhan also interrogates how conservation creates new modes of disciplinary power that bureaucratize nature in addition to forging newer alliances between states and civil society that are predicated on a vision of restoration.

Arif Hasan, Urban Resource Center, Karachi

“From Architecture to the Built Environment: A Personal Journey”

In this presentation, Hasan describes the Karachi Mass Transit Project, the Lyari Expressway Project, the gentrification of Karachi Parks, and the attempted privatization of the Karachi beaches and civic society opposition to them. The lessons from these cases have a direct bearing on architecture, professional education, advocacy, and negotiations between different stakeholders in the urban drama. These will be discussed in the context of Karachi and are relevant for any multi-class, multi-ethnic mega city.

Curt Gambetta, Rice University, Houston

“Concrete and the Technical Imagination: The Politics of Architectural Making in Post-Independence Bangalore”

In the decades surrounding Independence, concrete gradually ushered in a new image of urban life in South Asia. It was associated with both a new economy of expert knowledge and new ideas about the use of urban space, but its material qualities and technical dispositions facilitated unintended consequences that unsettled and reorganized the hierarchy of knowledge anticipated by its introduction. Discussing the city of Bangalore in the decades following Independence, Gambetta examines the micrological negotiations at work in both the building site and the larger circulation of architectural typologies or surficial motifs: contestations over authorial and material provenance, technical adaptations and material contingencies, compensations, mistakes, and imitations. Gambetta will map out these dilemmas of technology and architectural production in relation to emerging forms of public space in Bangalore in the 1950s and '60s—including streets, cinema halls, and hotels—arguing that the design of these new public spaces and the non-professional practices that both referenced and reshaped them projected discrepant visions of the city as a cosmopolitan space.

Sanjeev Vidyarthi, University of Illinois, Chicago

“Planned Neighborhoods and Adjacent Slums: Disparate Urban Forms or Conjoined Twins?”

Vidyarthi describes the development of formally planned neighborhoods and the abutting Kachhi Bastis (informal settlements) in the city of Jaipur. In doing so, he both demonstrates that the origin and development of the two spatial entities is interrelated and explains how the informality of Kachhi Basti has penetrated the formality of the planned neighborhood as much as can be stated the other way around. His strategy to narrate the story of informalization of the formally planned settlement and formalization of the informally planned settlement centers upon highlighting the role and micropolitics of plebian characters that straddle the realms of both the subaltern and elite. Vidyarthi explain the everyday strategies of these plebian characters in order to underline the gradual city-building processes that transform the urban form of both the Kachhi Basti and the planned neighborhood over time. This presentation is based on doctoral research conducted during 2006 and 2007.

Gavin Shatkin, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

“The Politics of Privatopolis: For-Profit New Towns in Indian Cities”

In India, recent national legislation and urban funding programs (most notably the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission) have provided opportunities and incentives for private developers to build for-profit integrated townships containing residential, commercial, office, and industrial space. Shatkin examines the meaning of such projects for urban politics and citizenship. Eschewing the conventional view of these projects as a simple westernization of urban form or neoliberalization of space, he focuses attention on the ways such projects are contested, reshaped, and sometimes rejected at the grassroots level through local agency based in electoral politics and claims to land. Shatkin examines the Calcutta Riverside project, a new town planned for 20,000 residents, focusing on changes to the project's design brought about through a process of negotiation between public officials, the developer, and surrounding communities. He argues that these changes have the potential to significantly shift the implications of the project for local economic development, social relations, and access to public space.

Saturday, May 16, 2009

Leela Fernandes, Rutgers University, New Brunswick

“Class, Space, and State-Led Development in India”

In the wake of successive waves of economic reforms implemented in India since the 1990s, cities have emerged as central sites of the changes associated with liberalization. Fernandes seeks to dislodge this hegemonic understanding of the city as a bounded, distinctive space that is juxtaposed with rural or small town India. Such an understanding produces a false opposition between two economies in India: the first a middle class-oriented liberalizing economy and the second a state-led developmentalist regime, usually targeting rural areas. Fernandes argues that narratives of middle-class consumption and sustainable development are part of a singular set of state developmentalist strategies in the post-liberalization period. Examining this underlying set of development strategies enables a clearer understanding of the ways structural inequalities are built into current economic policies of reform. She also discusses emerging patterns of class conflict that arise from these policies and the possibilities for cross-class alliances between subaltern groups and sections of the middle classes.

Karen Coelho, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai

“Civilizing Political Society? Observations on Collective Action of the Urban Poor in Chennai”

Coelho traces the state's attempts since around the 1970s to *civilize* the urban poor into stable associations based on residential proximity, whether RWA or Self Help Group (SHG). Autonomous collective action by the urban poor to resist evictions and demand housing rights has been in decline since the late 1980s and has been replaced by forms of civic associationism that work through negotiations and political patronage but are increasingly presented on authorized, legal (or at least paralegal) bases in contrast to claims made predominantly on political grounds. This study, thus, highlights overlaps and convergences between Deen Chatterjee's contrasting categories of *political society* and *civil society*, partly achieved through the state's production of civil associational forms among the poor. Evidence from this study also suggested that the putative new politics of middle class

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neighborhood-based civic associationism is imbricated in different ways and to varying extents in the old politics of party and election.

Sapana Doshi, University of California, Berkeley

“The Nation and its Displaced: Redevelopment, Politics, and Citizenship in Global Mumbai”

Doshi examines an anti-displacement movement emerging in response to one of the largest slum clearances in Mumbai's history, where thirty- to fifty-thousand homes were demolished within a month during the winter of 2004-05. Situating the demolition sweep in a series of neoliberal interventions in redevelopment and displacement policy and practice, she ethnographically presents the case of one neighborhood that was evicted and subsequently earmarked as a resettlement colony for displaced slum dwellers from another part of the city. Highlighting the lived experiences of displacement and exclusion based on class, region of origin, and Muslim identity, this neighborhood study stresses the importance of a relational view of popular mobilization. Finally, Doshi considers political implications of the movement's leadership and linkage to the National Alliance of People's Movements, a Gandhian anti-displacement movement connected to transnational activist networks.

Neha Sami, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

“Who Develops? The Changing Urban Politics of Real Estate Development in Post-Liberalization India”

The liberalization of the Indian economy has introduced new players to the field of real estate development in cities—international investors, foreign architects and designers, and members of civic and non-governmental organizations. This new breed of emerging players aims to make the working of the city more transparent: they advocate for “good urban governance” and “transparency” in land transactions. However, in smaller Indian cities, this does not seem to be the case. Based on initial fieldwork in Pune, Maharashtra, it seems that despite the presence of international and multinational companies, the newer players visible in cities like Bangalore and Mumbai are conspicuous by their absence in Pune. Sami presents initial results that show how land development politics are localized. Focusing on farmers located on the outskirts of the city, Sami also shows how traditional power groups in the city are adapting to changing urban situations in an attempt to maintain their control and reinvent themselves as a group.

Zarin Ahmad, Centre de Sciences, New Delhi

“Resistance in Contemporary Urban India: The Delhi Abattoir and the Politics of Relocation”

Ahmad explores the politics of urban renewal, which shapes not only the landscape of the city but also the lives of its people in the specific context of the relocation of the Idgah abattoir in Delhi. Beginning in the early 1990s, the Supreme Court of India ordered the closure of the traditional abattoir and the construction of a modern, mechanized abattoir in Ghazipur, twenty-two kilometers away. This decision directly affects a whole range of people involved at various levels and stages of production in the meat industry and includes Khatik Hindus, Sikhs, and mainly Muslims from the Qureshi biradri (an endogamous occupational group which slaughters animals and sells meat). Ahmad focuses on the politics around relocation, how the stakeholders have addressed and are addressing the issue: who takes the lead in mobilization and their forms of protest, resistance, and channels used to influence policy. Beyond the issue itself, is there a larger impact on democratic processes and institutionalization of participation in contemporary urban India?

Jan Breman, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam

“The Great Transformation”

We are in the midst of a major civilizational switch from a rural-agrarian to an urban-industrial mode of life and work. The long era of more than two-thousand years during which the march of mankind was dominated by peasant economies and peasant societies has ended. While intra-rural mobility is still very significant, the main emphasis is now on the trek from rural to urban destinations. Although the pace of urbanization has accelerated, it is generally not accompanied by a rapid expansion of industrial employment. Migrants who are settling down in the urban fringe zones often fail to become absorbed in steady jobs in factories, mills, or even small-scale workshops but find a niche in the service sector as waged workers or remain self-employed. They get stuck in the informal sector of the economy of which the defining features are low and piece-rated wages, lack of skill, casual and intermittent employment, irregular hours of work, and absence of labor contracts, as well as institutional representation. These features dominate in the slum habitat, where most of the newly arrived urban settlers congregate. Instead of a gradual trend towards more security, dignity, and protection, the drift is towards increasing not decreasing informality in the labor market. This talk is based on more than forty years of fieldwork in India, Indonesia, and, more recently, China.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Amita Baviskar is Associate Professor at the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. Her research focuses on the cultural politics of environment and development. Her first book, *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts over Development in the Narmada Valley* (2005), discussed the struggle for survival by adivasis in central India against a large dam. Her subsequent work explores the themes of resource rights, subaltern resistance, and cultural identity. She has edited *Waterlines: The Penguin Book of River Writings* (2003), *Waterscapes: The Cultural Politics of a Natural Resource* (2007), and *Contested Grounds: Essays on Nature, Culture and Power* (2008). She is currently writing about bourgeois environmentalism and spatial restructuring in the context of economic liberalization in Delhi. She has taught at the University of Delhi and has been a visiting professor at Stanford, Cornell, and the University of California, Berkeley. She is co-editor of the journal *Contributions to Indian Sociology* and was awarded the 2005 Malcolm Adiseshiah Award for distinguished contributions to development studies.

Jan Breman is Professor of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam and director of the Centre for Asian Studies, Amsterdam. He has conducted anthropological fieldwork in India since the early 1960s, focusing on rural and urban labor relations and especially the informal sector. His recent publications include *Wage Hunters and Gatherers in the Landscape of Labour in India* (1994), *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy* (1996), *Expulsion of Labour from the Formal Sector* (2003), and *From Working Class Neighborhood to Slum Localities* (2004).

Karen Coelho is Assistant Professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, India, focusing on urban governance and reforms. She earned her doctorate in sociocultural anthropology (2004) from the University of Arizona, Tucson. Her dissertation is titled *Of Engineers, Rationalities and Rule: An Ethnography of Neoliberal Reform in An Urban Water Utility in South India*. She holds an M.Phil in Development Studies (1993) from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton, U.K. Her areas of focus were the political economy of structural adjustment, public administration, and institutional change in India. Her research interests include anthropology of the state, neo-liberalism, urban governance, international development, and gender.

Leela Fernandes is Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, with a joint appointment in Women's Studies. Her primary interests include culture and politics, theories of political economy, labor studies, the politics of globalization, South Asian studies, feminist theory, and comparative women's movements. She is the author of *Producing Workers: The Politics of Gender, Class and Culture in the Calcutta Jute Mills* (1997), *Transforming Feminist Practice* (2003), and *India's New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reform* (2006), which examines the political implications of the rise of the Indian middle class upon Indian democracy and the politics of globalization. She has received fellowships from the MacArthur Foundation, the American Institute for Indian Studies, the Center for Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture, Rutgers University, and the American Council for Learned Societies.

Arif Hasan, an architect and planner, is Founding Chairman of the Urban Resource Centre in Karachi. He studied architecture at the Oxford Polytechnic in England and established a successful architectural practice in Karachi in 1968. The nature of the practice changed as a result of his involvement against evictions and his providing support to hawkers and fishing communities between 1973 and 1975. His work with the Orangi Pilot Project and the Urban Resource Centre took the lessons learnt further. His publications include *Squatter Settlements in Karachi* (1991) and *Pragmatism and the Built Environment* (1998), in addition to various articles and monographs.

Manit Rastogi is an architect and Managing Director of Morphogenesis, an association of architects, designers, urbanists, and environmentalists of which he was a founding member in 1996. He holds an AA Diploma, for which he was awarded Honours, and the Graduate Diploma in Sustainable Energy Design, for which he was awarded distinction at the Architectural Association. He has taught at the Architectural Association, London; School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi; and the Hong Kong Polytechnic Institute; and has also served as a juror on several design and award juries. He is a member of the Technical Advisory Committee to the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India.

Kalyan Krishnan (Shivi) Sivaramakrishnan is Professor of Anthropology, Professor of Forestry & Environmental Studies, Co-Director of the Program in Agrarian Studies, and Chair of the South Asian Studies Council in the MacMillan Center for International & Area Studies at Yale University. He is co-coordinator of the PhD Program in Anthropology and Forestry & Environmental Studies. Sivaramakrishnan's research interests span environmental history, political anthropology, cultural geography, development studies, and science studies. He is the author of *Modern Forests: Statemaking and Environmental Change in Colonial Eastern India* (1999 & 2002) and the co-editor of *Agrarian Environments: Resources, Representations, and Rule in India* (2000), *Regional Modernities: The Cultural Politics of Development in India* (2003), and *Ecological Nationalisms: Nature, Livelihoods, and Identities in South Asia* (2006). His current projects include the interdisciplinary study of the Indian state and new research on law, civil society, and environmental sustainability in India.