



Call for applications:

International Summer School

“The city and the village: separations, linkages and conflicts over social space in modern India”

Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS), Göttingen, Germany, 15 – 20 July 2012

For its 2012 International Summer School, the Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS) at the University of Göttingen invites applications from PhD students working on modern South Asian societies from the perspectives of history, anthropology, sociology, politics, development studies, cultural studies or other related disciplines.

This one-week course will be jointly taught by an interdisciplinary and international group of senior South Asia scholars including Ravi Ahuja, Henrike Donner, Chitra Joshi, Janaki Nair, Arvind Rajagopal, Anupama Rao, Srirupa Roy, Palagummi Sainath and Rupa Viswanath. The format of the International Summer School combines lectures, reading sessions and discussions based on research papers presented by the participating PhD students.

Applications are to include (a) a cover letter detailing the applicant's specific interest in the International Summer School's thematic as specified below, (b) a detailed CV, (c) an outline of the applicant's PhD project, (d) a writing sample (30 pp. max.). Applications are to be submitted by 24 February 2012 and successful applicants will be informed by 6 March 2012.

The International Summer School is co-funded by the DAAD with support of the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). A limited number of travel bursaries are available for students from India and Germany. For further information contact:

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Two shibboleths about modern India, and to a lesser extent about other South Asian countries, have been dominant: first, the assertion of a new and uncontrollable social and economic dynamism powered by the cities, and second, the old saw that ‘India lives in her villages’. Both assertions have an unmistakable ring of truth: the premise of this summer school, however, is that it is necessary to attend closely to the ways city and countryside have been both linked and separated by economic processes, political decisions and struggles, and ideological projects. We identify, tentatively, six clusters of themes regarding the dynamic relationship of Indian cities and villages since the late eighteenth century that could be explored fruitfully by participants, without, however, seeking to limit the summer school to these clusters alone.

1. *Dynamics of settlement patterns:* While India's enormous and swiftly transforming ‘megacities’ and ‘metros’ have received disproportionate attention from the media and in academia, there has been little sustained discussion of the unevenness and complexity in the overall development of settlement patterns. According to the 2011 Census, a mere 31 per cent of India's population lived in towns and cities despite a considerably faster growth of the urban population. In spite of having 33 cities with more than a million inhabitants, India is the world's least urbanized region by far in quantitative terms. While these disparities date back to the colonial period, how is their persistence into the present to be explained? How have the dynamics of urban change and the forms of urban settlement been affected by successive postcolonial policies of statist planning and ‘liberalization’? How have city-village linkages been transformed; is there a new role for the ‘middle-sized’ regional city; are processes of ‘rurbanization’ observable that have remoulded the social functions of rural settlements?
2. *Changing economies of the urban and rural:* Policy shifts since the 1980s appear to have reconfigured—rather than reduced—economic disparities between city and countryside rather than

their reduction. The de-industrialization of India's older metropolitan mill districts, the rise of new large-scale manufacturing and service centres, especially in formerly middle-sized cities, the increasing competition between Indian states offering tax reduction and cheap land to attract corporate investment, the expansion of rural-based industrial units, the co-existence of formidable economic growth in the cities and deep agricultural crisis in the countryside, the growth of a speculative urban property market with the concomitant rise of powerful estate 'developers' and a massive urban construction boom – these recent developments as well as their historical genesis are appropriate subjects for papers to be presented at the summer school.

3. *Conflicts over land:* Many of South Asia's recent political controversies and social tensions have centred on the acquisition of agricultural land or the redistribution of urban land for the benefit of industry, agri-business, and real estate. In various parts of the subcontinent, the alienation of land for the purposes of various kinds of capitalist investment has taken either consensual or compulsory forms, both of which have yielded a harvest of social changes and conflicts, whether in the form of the upward mobility of rural landholders, the physical transformation of rural landscapes into urban ones, the fierce resistance offered by locally organized movements to acquisition and slum resettlement, or the travails of millions of people who have been displaced from their land, with fatal and largely unrecorded consequences for their lives. The summer school will welcome papers that deal with the many-sided forms and repercussions of land acquisition and concomitant transformations in rural landscapes, livelihoods and ecologies.
4. *Circulation and resettlement:* Circuits of migration have connected villages and cities for a long time in South Asia. This has primarily taken the form of impoverished agriculturists and rural wage-labourers moving to towns and cities in search of alternative or supplementary livelihoods. Sometimes these migrations have been permanent in character; sometimes cyclical; sometimes neither. These patterns have been linked to regimes of 'footlose', informalized labour, have generated specific and often precarious forms of habitation, reinforced gender divisions, promoted new modes of quotidian culture and plebeian political expression. The summer school will welcome papers that seek to map and track the establishment of circuits of migration, their impact upon both urban and rural life, and the social experiences that have attended them.
5. *Transformations of the ruling bloc:* Urban and rural elites, as many sociologists, political economists and historians have pointed out, constitute a powerful but often uneasy ruling bloc in contemporary South Asia. In postcolonial times, in India in particular, there have been massive shifts in the composition of both sets of power-wielders – the 'dominant caste' matrices that have in many parts of rural India replaced older landlord elites, and the discernible growth of a broader-based industrial and finance-capitalist elite in the cities being two prongs of these transformations. How have the relations between dominant classes in city and countryside been reconfigured in the process, to what extent have they been channelled into new hegemonies or provoked plebeian dissent? Looking at this might involve analysing patterns of local electoral politics, the role of rural potentates in central and state-level administration, shifts in patterns of elite consumption and investment in rural areas, and the control of agrarian resources and technologies.
6. *Representations and ideologies:* The summer school will also welcome contributions on cultural representations of the city and the village and the relations between the two – themes bearing on these problems have been a major concern of both literature and cinema in modern South Asia. Linked to this is the way in which the city and the village have shaped ideological imaginaries, both spaces standing in for imagined virtues or vices, aspirations and tragedies, in ways that usually pit the two spaces in Manichean contrast and opposition to each other. Exploring the forms that such practices of representation and ideological positions have taken, the way the structures of feeling that govern them have shifted across time, and the role of various kinds of media – in the broadest sense – in disseminating these structures of feeling, are some of the themes that could be fruitfully explored.

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