ASIA AND EUROPE IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Annual workshop of the Cluster project group

Difference, Danger and New Urban Imaginaries of the Public in Asia and Europe (B11)

Date: 19-23 October 2010

Venue: Goethe-Institute Max Mueller Bhavan
      New Delhi

Conveners: Christiane Brosius
          Awadhendra Sharan
          Tina Schilbach
Workshop Theme

Spaces in-between:
from non-place to shared space in developmental cities

This international workshop takes us into the world of gated communities, coffeehouses, spas and public parks in New Delhi and Shanghai. It explores how the two cities’ emerging transnational spaces are not only consumed but are also lived, sensed and shared as “in-between” place of gentrification. Cities, as constituted in time, encapsulate several different modes of habitation. These may speak to a wide range of practices, from spatial organisation to dress and bodily comportment, from modes to speech to that of travel. To dwell in the city, we may argue, is to always be in the process of becoming urban. Ideas of the “desirable” urban form, of aesthetics and beauty, possibilities of ethical life, discipline and urban governmentality too have a situated character, in their borrowings, adaptations and circulation, such that no urban form is simply the copy of another, even when they share a common vocabulary about some of these practices. For this workshop, we have chosen to interrogate Marc Augé’s concept of “non-places” in the context of the developmental dynamics in Asia’s global/globalising cities. While “non-place” provides important analytical tools for understanding mechanisms of displacement, alienation and loneliness, the spatial and social pluralisation in New Delhi and Shanghai provide the impetus for shifting our perspective a little further. Acknowledging changing modes of community life, sensory experience and social interaction, we want to use this workshop for enquiring into the idea of “spaces in-between”, and take it as a point of entry into the local vocabulary of transnational space and its exciting global entanglements, trends and encounters. Sites for exploring such spaces might include gated communities, shopping centres, fitness studios, clubs, parks, riversides, cafés, universities or office environments and also express themselves in changing notions of suburbia. In this, we are particularly interested in the visual and sensual language these spaces speak to the various groups of people who inhabit or traverse the city. We encourage a variety of disciplinary approaches that may help build a more rigorous analysis of how spatial divisions of the public and private, common and exclusive, intimate and trivial, authentic and replicate, or creative and banal, work in these transitioning urban landscapes.

The workshop will include a roundtable on comparative urbanism at the Sarai network as well as public keynote by China specialist Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom from the University of California, Irvine. In his talk on colonial cities, Professor Wasserstrom will discuss Shanghai’s globalisation from the viewpoint of entertainment and leisure venues, thereby exploring the various meanings of global encounters which these spaces have encouraged, barred or regulated over the course of the city’s rich history.
New Delhi, 19-23 October 2010

Organisation:

This event is organised by the University of Heidelberg’s Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context”, in cooperation with the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in New Delhi (Sarai) and the Max Mueller Bhavan. The event brings together guests and members of the Cluster research group “New Urban Imaginaries of the Public”, which is led by Professor Christiane Brosius and explores the interplay of city branding and everyday life in the global cities of Shanghai, Berlin and New Delhi.

http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de
New Delhi, 19-23 October 2010

Schedule

Sunday, October 17

7.10am  Arrival from Munich (LH 762)
         International airport, Terminal 3

8pm     Informal welcome dinner
         India International Center (40 Max Mueller Marg)

Tuesday, October 19

9.15am  Departure from Guesthouse
         Drive to Max Mueller Bhavan (3 Kasturba Gandhi Marg)

10am    Welcome to Workshop
         Christiane Brosius, Awadhendra Sharan, Tina Schilbach

         Venue: Siddhartha Hall

Session I: Dwelling spaces

10.30am-11.30am  Christian Henriot:
                  Straddling three eras: Shanghai’s hutments between rejection and
                  remodelling (1926-1958)

11.30am-12.30pm  Marie Sander:
                  Gated Community Living in Shanghai: Inside, Outside or In-between?
                  The Case of Western Expatriates

12.30pm-1.30pm   Lunch Break

1.30pm-2.30pm    Commentary:
                  A G Krishna Menon
                  Making the city vs. studying the city

2.30pm-3pm       Coffee and Tea Break

Session II: Civilised spaces

3pm-4pm  Melissa Butcher:
         Distinctly Delhi: Affect and Exclusion in a Crowded City

4pm-5pm  Pallavi Mahajan:
         Aestheticized Masculinity: grooming practices in Delhi
New Delhi, 19-23 October 2010

5pm Close

5.30pm Snack (Bengali Market)

7pm-8.30pm Public keynote at Max Mueller Bhavan

Jeffrey Wasserstrom: Spaces of Exclusion, Inclusion, and Encounter in Old and New Shanghai

8.30pm Reception

9.30pm Return to Guesthouse

Wednesday, October 20

9.15am Departure from Guesthouse
Drive to Max Mueller Bhavan

10am Workshop resumes

Session III: Environmental spaces

10am-11am Awadhendra Sharan: Delhi’s Yamuna

Session IV: Creative spaces

11am-12pm Anindita Datta: The Royal Courtesan: Re Imagining Delhi

12pm-1pm Lunch Break

1pm-2pm Ravikant Sharma: The coffeehouse in Delhi

2pm-2.30pm Coffee and Tea break

2.30pm-3.30pm Christiane Brosius: The creative city – art and public spaces in New Delhi

3.30pm-4.30pm Tina Schilbach: Institutional creativity and transnational education space in Shanghai

4.30pm Close

Departure from Max Mueller Bhavan
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Drive to Sarai (29 Rajpur Road)

5.30pm  Tea (Sarai)

6pm-8pm  Public Roundtable at Sarai
Comparative Urbanism: Media, Events and Visuality in Delhi and Shanghai

Panelists:

Shanghai: Christian Henriot, Marie Sander, Tina Schilbach, Jeffrey Wasserstrom

Delhi: Amita Baviskar, Melissa Butcher, Ravi Sundaram, Ravi Vasudevan

8pm-9pm  Reception

9pm  Return to Guesthouse

Thursday, October 21

6.15.am  Airport Transfer from Guesthouse

8.55am  Flight to Munich (LH 763)
International airport, Terminal 3
Abstracts

Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom
Spaces of Exclusion, Inclusion, and Encounter in Old and New Shanghai

This presentation will explore the bracketing off of different sorts of spaces in three periods of Shanghai's history: the treaty-port era (1840s-1940s), the "Post-Mao but Pre-McDonald's" interregnum (my term for the 1980s), and the first two decades of what I refer to as the city's era of "reglobalization" (1990-2010). More specifically, I'm curious about the degree to which Chinese and non-Chinese residents of and visitors to the city were kept apart and able to interact in different locales during those three periods, and will focus on places such as parks, cafes, hotels, restaurants, department stores, universities, and entertainment venues. Over the course of the treaty-port era, segregation rooted in nationality seemed to give way to forms of segregation having more to do with class (the great example being the Public Garden going from having entry rules that referred to nationality to ones that simply referred to the need to pay a fee to get in), and something similar happened between the 1980s (when there were banquet rooms and the like reserved for "foreign guests") and the present (when how much you can afford to pay for a drink is a more significant variable in determining your uses of some bars, for example, than where you were born). There are surely interesting comparative questions that this will raise in an Indian context (e.g., how does Shanghai's quasi-colonial past as a divided city make its experience similar to or different than that of urban centers in formerly colonized parts of South Asia), but I won't take an explicitly comparative approach--except in the sense of comparing eras.

Christiane Brosius
The creative city – art and public spaces in New Delhi

This paper explores, still at a very early stage, the ways in which parts of the city are shaped, if not “branded” by public art events. I shall explore one case in particular: 48°C Public.Art.Ecology, a 3-week long festival and experiment organised by the Goethe Institute (MMB), the GTZ, and supported by the Delhi Government in 2008. Through a number of art interventions and panel discussions in various public spaces around Delhi, “the festival attempted to draw a diverse public into the world of this critical imaginary” (http://www.48c.org). A number of local agents, such as architects, curators and art consultants were part of the team that generated a web of 8 sites, all well-connected and meaningful to the urban imaginary and everyday politics of Delhi in several ways. Indian and international artists created art works and installations at those sites, engaging with collective memories, the notion of public space and environment, attempting to facilitate discussions and participation with respect to climate change. To me, this event, spatially manifest as well as intangible, and a collaboration of a series of glocal agents and organisations, is an in-between space through which globalised concepts like responsibility for the environment, or “the public” are examined, contested and negotiated. Questions will also address issues such as “creative cities” and “city branding” since these notions are part of a larger practice of localising transcultural concepts. Research is largely based on conversations with organisers and artists involved in the event.
Melissa Butcher  
**Distinctly Delhi: Affect and Exclusion in a Crowded City**  

Affective accounts of urban space argue for a reflexive, habitual relationship between inhabitants and the city. However, there has been a tendency to neglect the role of the subjective and the cultural in this relationship. Data from a qualitative study with twenty three young people from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds living in Delhi, found that their sensory experience of public spaces did lead to the affective dissecting of the city into spaces of pleasure and comfort, order and disorder, inclusion and exclusion. But rather than diminishing the subjective, the findings suggested that socio-economic, religious and gendered distinctions were created in this embodied process, particularly through the association of sensory experience with judgements of civil and uncivil behaviour rooted in accumulated cultural knowledge and an understanding of their subjective place in Delhi. The paper concludes by suggesting that the ‘cleaning’ up of Delhi, the attempts to remove the sights, smells and sounds of poverty as part of the aesthetics of global living, reinforced social distinctions as existing cultural hierarchies were transposed onto a gentrifying city.

Anindita Datta  
**The Royal Courtesan: Re Imagining Delhi**  

This paper is a gendered comment on the cityscape of Delhi from a postcolonial perspective. Breaking from stereotypical ways of understanding the city, a more dynamic and original way of perceiving is invoked by visualizing Delhi as a kingmaker’s concubine and royal courtesan. Courtesans unlike the common prostitute enjoyed much power and influence in the royal courts and corridors of power. Their way of life could actually be read as an active resistance to dominant patriarchal mores. Yet a superficial understanding of their contexts interpreted through a predominantly western gaze, rendered this vibrant group penurious and marginalized. In a similar fashion, I argue that the “scientific” and dominant ways of understanding cities, robs them of their many layers reducing them to flat unidimensional distributions. A feminist alternative in re imagining cities (and other spaces) as presented here is long overdue, particularly in the Indian context. Using the courtesan- concubine analogy, allows for exploration into the questions of identity, exclusion, gender, politics of urban space, personal cartographies and the relational spaces of cities with greater ease. Such readings and understandings of city space draw from the realm of psychogeography and are deeply personalized, experiential and in line with the postcolonial and feminist thinking on (city) space. Based on a post modern perspective, the study is part of the author’s larger preoccupation with the issues of social exclusion within the city. While most works by geographers, particularly in the Indian context, have tended to map the city and highlight urban social problems using statistical tools, this study breaks from the long established tradition and offers a fresh perspective. While most research on the city space is concerned with distributions, this study taps into the question of relationship that city dwellers have with their spaces. In doing so the study contributes its own to a more nuanced understanding of urban spaces and social problems, particularly those pertaining to exclusion.
Christian Henriot  
**Straddling three eras: Shanghai’s hutments between rejection and remodeling (1926-1958)**

Hutments – one of the least used terms to designate “beggars’ villages”, “straw-house villages” or more bluntly “slums” – became a standard feature of Shanghai’s urban landscape in the early 1920s. Located in peripheral areas, they became a central object of concern by the authorities that governed the foreign settlements in the city. The variety of terms applied to these communities reflected the wide range of perceptions and misrepresentations held not just by officials, but by a growing circle of economic and social actors. Over time, due to economic crisis and above all wars, “hutments” slowly colonized the whole urban space. The Chinese civil war (1945-1949) eventually turned “penghu” settlements into a massive housing issue and a problematic historical legacy. This paper will examine hutments from the angle of perceptions and policies over three major periods through the discursive constructions (and distorting lenses) of nuisance, public health and city beautification. Power-holders in each era carried over the concerns and/or prejudices of their predecessors. Yet, each also brought in new cultural and political postures that changed the overall discourse and treatment of hutment dwellers substantially, even if it improved their actual condition only very slowly.

Pallavi Mahajan  
**Aestheticized Masculinity: grooming practices in Delhi**

A decade ago, India’s grooming habits for men and women followed the prevalent aesthetic norms of society. Women frequented parlors and salons exclusively catering to them and providing all kinds of beauty treatments, while men had the options of “barber shops” and “Gents parlor” where indulgence was limited to a haircut, shave or a facial. For special events such as an Indian wedding, parlors and salons offered women longer-duration beauty treatment packages, e.g. the full month “bridal treatment” in advance of the actual event. Men conscious of their body appearance spent their efforts on body building by frequenting “gyms” similar to traditional “Akharas”. Global or multinational corporate culture has brought in consumption practices associated with the “new urban middle classes”. Along with active representation of highly aestheticized images of well-sculpted, groomed male bodies in Indian films and advertisements, a booming beauty industry led to the emergence of what Connel has termed as “the transnational business masculinity” and global popular media has dubbed as “metrosexuals” in India. As a result, in cities like Delhi, unisex health and beauty centers are emerging everywhere. Depending upon the class of clientele entertained, the centers are differentiated as “parlors”, “salons”, “spas” and “lounges”. These sprouting non-places within the city provide beauty services ranging from laser hair removal and liposuction to all forms of body enhancements and grooming techniques for men and women. Men frequenting these places for grooming and body sculpting consider such places to be sites for consumption and communication of health and beauty-related messages but also sites for the accumulation of social and cultural capital in a certain form. However their varied statuses in different social fields in urban Delhi make their strategies for acquiring such capital highly amorphous, contingent and often antithetical. Through interviews and conversations with men frequenting these non-places of the city, as well as
with owners and managers running them, the paper explores the making of “metrosexual habits” of urban men in Delhi.

Marie Sander
Gated Community Living in Shanghai: Inside, Outside or In-between?
The Case of Western Expatriates

The global spread and rise of gated communities in metropolitan areas around the globe has caught scholarly attention within the last years. Glasze, Webster and Frantz’s volume *Private Cities* (2006) for example analyzes the emergence of gated communities and the related effects on society in different countries, mainly associated with diminishing feelings of solidarity. Whereas the phenomenon of gated communities has usually been regarded as an American invention, it has been argued in the same volume that in the Chinese context this concept of living can also be traced back to Chinese traditions of urban space, e.g. the forbidden city or the work unit territories (*dan wei*). No matter what the origin, today the thriving metropolis Shanghai has numerous gated communities, catering to citizens with different incomes, preferences and needs. One particular target group seems to be clearly distinguishable: ‘Western’ expatriates. With flows of transnational capital, global enterprises have settled in Shanghai, not only hiring local staff, but drawing along managers, engineers, accountants etc. from Europe and the US. These migrants, who move with their families to Shanghai, enjoy a privileged status with high financial benefits and packages. These packages usually include generous housing allowances and the majority of ‘Western’ expatriates decide to move into a gated community in Shanghai’s outskirts. To understand what these communities that strangely sit in-between two worlds are like, I am drawing on materials accumulated during six months of fieldwork conducted in Shanghai in 2007. A total of 30 interviews with ‘Westerners’, especially German, so called ‘trailing spouses’ shed light on the reasons to move into such a community. Further observations to be made in September 2010 and visual materials, such as advertisements for gated communities, will give insights into the appealing aspects and practices of compound living. Are these communities of transients themselves an in-between space of cultural encounter? Or does living in a suburban enclave simply mean keeping the ‘other’ outside?

Tina Schilbach
Institutional creativity and transnational education space in Shanghai

The official idea of Shanghai’s globalisation remains above all an economic one. In recent years, however, visions of the global city have sought to complement economic competitiveness with more attention to cultural cosmopolitanism. While the efforts at rescaling the city as a spatial unit emulate Saskia Sassen’s model of the urban as the core unit of transnational capitalist space, partially emancipated from the nation-state, they also entail possibilities for new spatial configurations in cultural practice. The prominence, resources and the very scope of Shanghai’s global ambitions have encouraged a cultural rescaling for addressing the challenges of local governance. A more diverse, open and experimental educational landscape, for example, is closely in line with government strategies of cultivating Shanghai’s future knowledge workers. Promoting attractive domestic opportunities for transnational education has also become an important policy tool to discourage the “brain drain” of student emigration. At the same time, what signifies
opportunities for cultural urbanity also informs official desire to draw the conceptual boundaries of urban culture. Although Shanghai’s globalisation has increased the scope for local power, it has also reconfirmed its status as a national city with responsibilities for national Chinese reform directions. This paper discusses efforts to negotiate the in-between spaces of transnational locality in the education sector. I draw upon the case studies of two important educational providers in the city: the Goethe-Institute in Shanghai and the German Chinese University College at Tongji University. It will be shown how Shanghai’s official claim to cosmopolitan urbanity encounters the compromises of the city’s parallel attempt to orientate itself within the contradictions of local, national and global city visions.

Awadhendra Sharan
Delhi’s Yamuna

This paper focuses on the multiple dimensions of the relationship between the city of Delhi and the river Yamuna that flows by it, structured through an intermeshing of global and local meaning making practices. Discursively, Delhi’s Yamuna is most widely situated in the domain of science, dead as measured through standards of biological oxygen demand (BOD levels) and polluted through organic and inorganic matter that are beyond its assimilative capacity - the ability of natural waters to absorb, dilute and disperse wastes – a concept that has been developed since the end of the 19thc as part of the calculation of risk. Pollution and death, in turn, have invited other ways of looking at and conserving natural bodies in the city, through the principle of precaution, which is a more recent innovation in the domain international customary law. Science alone, however, does not exhaust the river, as other life forms and practices lay simultaneous claim to it, celebrating its mythological purity. This is most evident in the celebration of ‘chath’, a festival largely of migrant workers from east India who have moved to Delhi in large numbers over the last decade, attracted by its booming construction sector and service industry and which involves prayers to the sun-God while being partially immersed in river water (or any other water body). Through this and other festivals, these migrant workers are constructing a new religious iconography of the city and seek to rebuild the city in their own image. There is another riverfront project, the dream of the urban boosters who are keen to develop Delhi into a global city and who imagine the flat riverbed as an ideal and relatively cheap space for the construction of large temples (already built), modern ‘villages’ (the village for athletes being built in connection with the Commonwealth games), helipads (an idea shot down for the moment), parks and leisure complexes (yet on paper) etc. Intersecting these various conceptions of the river, its qualities, uses and potentials are various civic campaigns that too aim to ‘clean’ the river and the spaces adjoining it, inspired by a notion of civic liberalism. The paper shall examine these various intersecting and contestary practices around the river and urban space, as these are being mediated through fantasies of globalization, cautionary tales of science and law and local practices of civic improvement and public religiosity.

Ravikant Sharma
The coffeehouse in Delhi

Those who fought wars understand belligerence
Those who ever loved understand that special ache
And only the people who have lost a coffeehouse
Would understand displacement.

This is how a Hindi poet Rajkumar Kumbhaj closes his part nostalgic, part critical account of the disappearance of coffeehouses from the physical map of some of the prominent cities in India of the early 2000s. He describes the post-independence coffee houses of his memory also as places of dissent, where people agreed to disagree. One coffee or tea house would typically house many diverse and shifting corners and would offer the combined functions of an *adda*, a fair where migrant people sold off their literary fares and scout for writings for the next issue or collection. A city like Delhi would have many other private *addas* in far flung locations but the coffeehouses would emerge as the biggest hubs where the various little streams flowing from the city and beyond would form a veritable confluence of ideas, ideologies, people and practices. It was a place for public posturing and private intimacies. Drinking alcohol is not something that came easy to most of these middle class people who carried their villages in their minds while working away for radio stations, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses and universities. They were all committed to and believed in the idea of change by the power of writing. This is one article of faith that made them keep coming back to the coffee house which could also sometimes become a site of struggle, as it did in the 1970s, against inflation and authoritarianism. Using the abundance of written testimonies and oral narratives of the regular coffee/teahouse goers, this paper will try to unravel the workings and transformations of this public space in the second half of the 20th century. It will also try to suggest that it was not merely an intellectual island of disgruntled intellectuals but the very lifeline of a part of the city that was immersed in creativity and forged solidarities with those who suffered. Situated very much here and nurtured by the opportunities offered by Delhi, it was at the same time wired with the urban imaginaries elsewhere, whether Indian or global.
New Delhi, 19-23 October 2010

Readings

Literature for the Workshop

Non-places


Session I: Dwelling spaces

Christian Henriot


Marie Sander


Session II: Civilised spaces

Pallavi Mahajan


Melissa Butcher


Session III: Environmental spaces

Awadhendra Sharan


Session IV: Creative spaces

Ravikant Sharma


Christiane Brosius


Tina Schilbach

Lothar Spree and Davide Quadrio (2008): Is there really space for creativity? Available online at Arthub Asia: [http://arthubasia.org/archives/is-there-really-space-for-creativity/](http://arthubasia.org/archives/is-there-really-space-for-creativity/)
New Delhi, 19-23 October 2010

Literature for the Public Roundtable

Comparative urbanism


EXPO and Commonwealth Games


Maura Elizabeth Cunningham and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (2010): China Discovers World Expo Is No Olympics. YaleGlobal Online, 17.08.2010. Available online at: http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/china-discovers-world-expo-no-olympics


NB: All readings can be downloaded as pdf-documents in the “participants’ area” on the Workshop website: http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/b-public-spheres/b11/workshops/delhi-2010.html

Username: delhi2010 Password: workshop!
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Workshop participants

Invited guests:

Amita Baviskar (Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi)
Anindita Datta (Delhi School of Economics)
Pallavi Mahajan (University of Heidelberg)
A G Krishna Menon (Architect, Urban planner and Conservation consultant, New Delhi)
Katharina Paterok (HU Berlin)
Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (University of California, Irvine)

Participants:

Christiane Brosius (University of Heidelberg)
Melissa Butcher (Open University)
Christian Henriot (Université Lumière Lyon 2)
Marie Sander (University of Heidelberg)
Tina Schilbach (University of Heidelberg)
Awadhendra Sharan (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi)
Ravikant Sharma (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi)
Contacts

Guesthouse in New Delhi

Merkha Lutyens
F 35 South Extension Part I
New Delhi - 110049

Contact: Mary Tirkey
Phone: +91 (0) 11 24640031
Mobile: +91 (0) 9810717694

Goethe-Institute New Delhi

Max Mueller Bhavan
3 Kasturba Gandhi Marg
New Delhi-110001
Tel.: +91 (0) 11 2347 1100

Sarai / Centre for the Study of Developing Societies

29 Rajpur Road
Civil Lines
Delhi - 110054
India
Tel.: +91 (0) 11 23928391

Christiane Brosius (in Delhi)

Mobile phone: +91 9717437280

Local emergency contact

Delhi Branch Office, University of Heidelberg (South Asia Institute)
Mr Gabar Singh Chauhan
Phone +91 (0) 11 2332 6001

Organisation (Heidelberg)

Tina Schilbach
Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context"
Karl Jaspers Centre
University of Heidelberg
Phone: +49 (0) 160 92235411
Email: schilbach@asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de