Partners and Collaborators

M. S. Merian – R. Tagore International Centre for Advanced Studies ‘Metamorphoses of the Political’ (ICAS:MP)

German Historical Institute London (GHIL)

Project Image Vehicles / Bilderfahrzeuge:
- The Warburg Institute, London
- Institut für Kunst und Bildgeschichte der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
- Kunstgeschichtliches Seminar/ Warburg-Haus der Universität Hamburg
- Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz/ Max-Planck-Institut
- Kunsthistorisches Seminar der Universität Basel

School of Education, University of Glasgow

Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (IIMC)

German Centre for Research and Innovation (DWIH) New Delhi

German Historical Institute (DHI) Rome

Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS), University of Göttingen

Collaborative Research Centre/Transregio 294 “Structural change of property”:
- Friedrich Schiller University Jena
- University of Erfurt
- Free University Berlin
- Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg
- Technical University of Darmstadt

NFDI Text+ Consortium

NFDI4memory Consortium
Table of Contents

Foreword
Harald Rosenbach ................................................................. 4

I  General Report
Sebastian Schwecke ............................................................... 6

II  Project Reports
1. Debt, Trust, and Reputation: Extra-legal Finance in Northern India
   Sebastian Schwecke .............................................................. 14

2. Work in the Bazaar - The Organisation of Work in a Social Milieu beyond State Regulation: India, 1930s to 2000s
   Sebastian Schwecke .............................................................. 17

3. Property as Contested Claims: Moral Negotiations over (alleged) Theft, Embezzlement, and Encroachment in Contemporary Northern India
   Sebastian Schwecke .............................................................. 20

4. Education Hubs and the Changing Rural-Urban Interface: The Emergence of an ‘Education City’ in the National Capital Region, India
   Debarati Bagchi ................................................................. 23

5. Gender, Education, and Covid-19: Impacts of the Pandemic in a Marginalized Neighbourhood in Delhi
   Yamini Agarwal ................................................................. 25

   Samprati Pani ................................................................. 29

7. Migration of Images, Texts, Ideas and Objects from Timurid Central Asia to Mughal India, 16th – 18th Centuries
   Dipanwita Donde ................................................................. 32

III  Conference and Workshop Reports ................................................................. 37

IV  Events .................................................................................. 42

V  Publications ........................................................................ 45

VI  People ................................................................................ 47
Annual reports usually give evidence of a research institution’s activities throughout the year. Institutes give evidence of their public lectures, conferences and publications. Quite often, this news is enriched by personal matters such as promotions or new appointments, which is – let us be honest – always a matter of special interest. Sometimes the news even is embedded in a general context of research politics. This is what makes them interesting for a broader readership as well. The present annual report offers a bit of everything and so much more.

From the Max Weber Stiftung’s point of view the year 2021 was a time full of decisions and major changes. Amidst our major issues, Delhi played a prominent role. Beginning the year 2021 as India Branch Office (IBO) and ending it as the “Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies” (MWF Delhi) suggests a development that is both exciting and eventful: As of 1 July 2021, Max Weber Stiftung implemented the recommendation of an external committee consisting of German and Indian scholars and transformed the IBO into an independent institute. The decision was the logical step with regard to the great impact Indian scholarship has had on international scholarship in general, and on German humanities and social sciences in particular. From this perspective, the institutionalization of a German humanities institute in India may even be considered an overdue step.

Today, the MWF Delhi joins 10 highly esteemed institutes abroad in capitals such as Beirut, Istanbul, London, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Tokyo,
Warsaw and Washington D.C. The new institute will be an asset and enlarge the Foundation’s worldwide network by an Indian or rather South Asian view. By collaborating with our Indian partners and developing its own research agenda on the ground, it will gain new insights for the German research community. At the same time, it will act as an international meeting place and as a window into German humanities for our Indian partners. By placing emphasis on Indo-German collaborations the MWF Delhi will give its best to international academia.

Throughout the past year, the MWF Delhi has run a whole range of important activities as can be seen on the following pages. The result is impressive as the young institute – like all of us – had to face the ongoing Covid-19 crisis with its numerous burdening effects. In addition to this, the MWF Delhi needed to adjust to a new environment as it moved to new premises by the end of the previous year. All this required enormous efforts and was mastered excellently. Fortunately, the move also had simplifying effects for the administration as it was accompanied by a reunification with our colleagues at the M.S. Merian – R. Tagore International Centre of Advanced Studies (ICAS:MP). We are confident that we as well as our Indian partners will benefit from the coming synergy effects.

The Max Weber Stiftung is proud of its new institute in Delhi and very much looks forward to its promising future.
The year 2021 was an eventful time for Max Weber Stiftung in South Asia. The word “eventful,” here, however needs to be qualified as it refers both to the consolidation of the Foundation’s activities in the subcontinent as well as substantial change, notwithstanding periods in which the on-going Covid-19 pandemic curtailed the possibilities of organizing publicly visible events. In Delhi, the year began with the incremental loosening of pandemic-related precautions after the stringent lockdown conditions in India had been withdrawn, followed by the devastating “second wave” from April to June that led to human tragedy at an unimaginable scale. It ended with premonitions of another wave of infections, this time driven by the Omicron variant, and continuing uncertainty for our work and – much more importantly – for the health and livelihoods of our employees, their friends, and their families. I wish to use this space to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the members of our team who continued to put in outstanding efforts in our work despite the events that unfolded beyond the confines of MWS.

Consolidation and change remained the main themes of our work throughout 2021. With the curtailing of publicly visible events, much of our time was consumed by preparations and future planning, by administrative change within the institution, and the restructuring of our research agenda. We had shifted our office complex to its present location at the heart of Lutyen’s Delhi in December 2020, and took up work from there in January 2021. After major renovations between October and December 2021 – funded with the aid of MWS – our new office comprises sufficient facilities for the planned expansion in the coming three years. At the same time, it “re-united” our office in one location.
with the offices of the M.S. Merian – R. Tagore International Centre for Advanced Studies “Metamorphoses of the Political” (ICAS:MP), thus facilitating the further cooperation among the two initiatives funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in South Asia-related humanities and social sciences. In January 2021, I joined the team as Head of Office.

Consolidation and Change

Having “inherited” an exceedingly well-run institutional set-up founded by my predecessor, Dr Indra Sengupta, the change in leadership went smoothly, and we succeeded in building upon the earlier work, supplementing it with new avenues in our operations. In July 2021, Max Weber Stiftung implemented the decision of the Stiftungsrat to transform the India Branch Office into the 11th institute under the umbrella of MWS – the Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies (MWF) – and thereby completed the institutional journey from the Transnational Research Group Education and Poverty via the India Branch Office of MWS. Speaking for the entire MWF team, we are highly grateful for the trust and appreciation expressed in this decision, and want to thank all those who helped in this long process, particularly at MWS in Bonn and at the German Historical Institute London (GHIL), and especially Indra Sengupta for her tireless work in setting up the foundations for the new institute. In preparation for the foundation of the Max Weber Forum, we transferred the majority of administrative tasks that had so far been carried out at MWS Bonn and the GHIL to Delhi in the first six months of the year, and have thus succeeded in setting up an independent research infrastructure. At the same time, we strongly appreciate the continuing help we receive from the MWS, and the GHIL as well as our other sister institutes, among the latter the assistance provided by the German Historical Institute in Rome in granting us access to the Foundation’s electronic library resources.

In combination with these administrative and institutional changes, we succeeded in developing a promising research agenda for the new institute, in particular with the help and guidance by the MWF advisory committee. Developing our own research agenda, while also remaining
open to initiatives from our German and South Asian partners required a research program that allows us to place our own research emphases, while also remaining open to the direction of research in Germany and South Asia. Conducting research according to our own focus while also helping to build bridges between the academic communities in Germany, Europe, and South Asia necessitates a research agenda that does not copy, but actively supplements the research carried out by our present and potential partners. Lastly, our research focus needed to represent the specificities of South Asia-related scholarship, yet also provide connections to the work carried out globally at our sister institutes, and to speak to international scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. We decided to build upon the strengths of the India Branch Office in historical, sociological, and anthropological research on education by foregrounding the study of knowledge, knowledge cultures, and information flows.

Within this general theme, research at the MWF over the coming years will primarily fall within three focus areas: (1) education and learning; (2) knowledge, information, and economic interaction; and (3) the production and circulation of knowledge. The first of these focus areas, led by Dr Debarati Bagchi, carries forward the initial emphases at the IBO on education and poverty, and education and urbanity, but is planned to accentuate the centrality accorded to education within our research without losing sight of the embeddedness of education in social processes and structures. In turn, the second focus area aims to combine the study of socio-cultural and socioeconomic factors underlying economic behavior – highlighting both the act and the limits of knowing in it. Both focus areas, in this way, speak to South Asian specificities, yet address a significantly larger academic community. They are rooted in historical and anthropological research, while connecting to areas of inquiry in a range of other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Further information on our research plans and agenda is available at the institute’s new blog: mwfdelhi.hypotheses.org

In line with the Forum’s gradually expanding budgetary means, the third focus area is planned to be set up in the course of the coming year. Already, the team of research scholars at the MWF is expanding, with the extension of the contract of Dr Yamini Agarwal, and the induction of Dr Samprati Pani. In January 2022, our team will be joined by Michaela Dimmers, and we are planning to employ two further postdoctoral research scholars towards the end of 2022. At the same time, our team is and will continue to be strengthened through visiting research scholars associated with research projects from various partner institutions. Finally, we are looking forward to the possible resumption of “physical” rather than “virtual” scholarships on the part of our partner institution ICAS:MP whenever possible after a prospective end to the pandemic, with the hope of creating further synergies among the German academic communities located in Delhi.
While much of our work at the MWF thus consisted of consolidating our research infrastructure, we were nevertheless able of carrying out a range of initiatives, many of which in turn created the basis for future projects. The impact of the pandemic was felt most strongly in our decision to postpone a planned workshop on retail socialities to 2022. Similarly, we needed to shift the winter school on “Making and un-making worlds of coercion and confinement,” organized in collaboration with the Bonn Centre for Dependency and Slavery Studies to the coming year. It is now planned to take place in Bonn in September 2022. The resumption of the Max Weber Lecture format, originally also planned for January 2022, with a lecture by Prof. Sven Beckert (Harvard University), in turn

Activity Report – General Summary
needed to be postponed. Despite these difficulties, we were able to organize several events in cooperation with a range of partner institutions, to continue research activities, and to start several new research initiatives. Additional details are provided in the remainder of this annual report.

**Events:** With the postponements mentioned above, scholarly events organized at the IBO/MWF or with its participation were predominantly addressing the focus area Education and Learning. We had started with a virtual workshop on “Legacies of feminism”, jointly organized by the German Historical Institute London and the IBO in March. As part of an endeavor to broaden academic cooperation in the field of education research, we then proceeded to organize a virtual roundtable with the department of education studies at Glasgow University on “Generating research ideas on gender, education, and poverty.”

The roundtable had been organized specifically with the aim to explore future collaborations with the Glasgow department, one of the leading institutes in research on education in the United Kingdom. We were therefore glad that this cooperation proved to be highly fruitful almost immediately. In November, we organized a workshop in a “hybrid” format in cooperation with both Glasgow University and the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (IIMC), with our India-based contributors congregating at the MWF for the purpose, while being joined virtually by speakers and an audience from Germany, the UK, and Canada. The topic of the workshop mirrored a new research initiative (see below), studying the topic “Gender, education, and inequality: Pandemic and the present times.” In turn, the workshop resulted in the organization of a panel at the prestigious annual convention of the Comparative Education Society of India (CESI) in December, jointly organized by contributors from the MWF, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, the IIMC, and Glasgow University. We are looking forward to further collaborations with these partners in the coming years.

Also in December, the MWF participated in the organization of the roundtable “Voluminous Ventures: Writing World History in the 21st Century” at the German Historical Institute in Paris. Already in September, I had participated in the concluding conference of the collaborative project at the MWS “Wissen entgrenzen” in Berlin. For the year 2022, initial plans for an inaugural event for the MWF in Delhi needed to be postponed as we are once again entering a period of uncertainty induced by the pandemic, forcing the institute to delay physical events until later in the year.

**Research:** In 2021, research scholars at the IBO/MWF concluded three research projects started in the preceding years: Robert Rahman Raman’s research project in cooperation with ICAS:MP and the Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS) at Göttingen University “From Girangaon to ‘Mini-Pakistan’: The Precarious Place of Working Muslims in 20th Century Bombay”, and the collaborative research consortium “Education and the urban in India since the 19th century” led by the principal investigators Prof Nandini Man-
jrekar, Prof Geetha Nambissan, and Dr Shivali Tukdeo as well as Dr Debarati Bagchi and Dr Indra Sengupta. In the latter case, a concluding international workshop is planned for June 2022 at the GHIL. Lastly, I concluded my own research project “Debt, trust, and reputation: extra-legal finance in northern India.” In 2021, the consortium published six new papers and concluded their working paper series on ‘Education and the Urban in India.’

On-going research projects in 2021 included the institute’s participation in the collaborative project “Bilderfahrzeuge: Aby Warburg’s Legacy and Future Iconology,” at the MWF led by Dr Dipanwita Donde, the digital repository “Archives of Indian labour” in cooperation with CeMIS and ICAS:MP, and the ICAS:MP-funded research project “Selling history: Tourist guides, bazaar histories, and the politics of the past in the late 20th and early 21st centuries” led by Dr Indra Sengupta and Prof Neeladri Bhattacharya. Since 2021, these initiatives have been joined by another DFG-funded research grant based at CeMIS led by Prof Ravi Ahuja in which the MWF is a cooperating partner, “Crisis as catalyst: Covid-19, social citizenship and political transformation in India.” Further cooperation between CeMIS and the MWF is planned for 2022 as part of another DFG-funded project “Divisions of labour: Histories of formalisation and informalisation in the transition to postcolonial India.”

Solely at the MWF, during the course of the year research scholars started four new initiatives: In February, Dr Yamini Agarwal started research on “Gender, education, and Covid-19: impacts of the pandemic in a marginalized neighbourhood in Delhi.” In November, Dr Samprati Pani began her new research project, located at the intersection of the anthropology of markets and the anthropology of human-object relations on “Repair work and maintenance: Techniques, materiality and sociality or urban marketplace infrastructures.” Also in November, DFG allowed me to shift my individual research grant “Work in the bazaar: the organization of work in a social milieu beyond state regulation. India, 1930s to 2000s” to the Max Weber Forum, thus re-starting a research project that had been paused for the preceding three years. Finally, also in the focus area Economy and Knowledge, the Forum started a new research project on “Property as contested claims: Moral negotiations over (alleged) theft, embezzlement, and encroachment in contemporary northern India,” also led by me and in association with the recently started Collaborative Research Centre/Transregio 294 “Structural change of property” based at the universities of Erfurt and Jena. Further details on these projects can be taken from this annual report.

Lastly, the Max Weber Forum continued to be a member of two NFDI initiatives, NFDI 4Memory and NFDI text+. We also expanded our commitment to cooperation with other research initiatives based at German research institutions, among others supporting the application for a new Fachinformationsdienst Südasien, and an ANR-DFG application for a initiative on “New political imaginaries in the 21st century” at the University of Duisburg-Essen, the Centre Marc Bloch Berlin
in collaboration with two French research centers at Paris. For 2022, we hope to join the planned research initiative between the German Institute for Japanese Studies at Tokyo and the National University of Singapore as a cooperating partner.

**Networking with our German partners in India:** Finally, with the foundation of the Max Weber Forum in July the presence of the new institute in Delhi has facilitated increased possibilities for cooperation with other German partners locally. Apart from our wide-ranging cooperation with ICAS:MP that includes research cooperation but also mutual assistance in providing research infrastructures, the most promising undertakings in this regard concerned the Deutsches Wissenschafts- und Innovationshaus (DWIH) at Delhi, and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). The MWF participated in various activities by these agencies in 2021.

With DWIH, apart from our regular participation in the Indo-German Research Day, as director of the MWF I was elected member of its selection committee for supporter activities. Similarly, with DAAD I was nominated as a member of its selection committee for doctoral fellowships in December 2021. We are looking forward to expand our interaction with German research institutions in India in 2022.
Outlook 2022

The year 2021 was a successful one for the MWS in South Asia. Despite the restrictions we faced, we were able to move ahead with our plans to establish an independent research institute in Delhi and expand our activities to a considerable degree. The main focus of our scholarly work remained – as anticipated – in the focus area Education and Learning where we managed to broaden our research activities significantly, and develop new fields of interest and deepen our contacts with partner institutions. In 2022, we plan to prioritize broadening our work in the second focus area Economy and Knowledge, particularly through initiatives already initiated in 2021.

Firstly, we plan to cooperate with the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo, in their joint initiative with the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore on infrastructures by creating two more postdoctoral positions in the second half of the year that, in turn, would be associated with the initiative and be provided with sufficient mobility funding to make use of this association beyond virtual conferencing. One of these positions is expected to fall solely within the focus area Economy and Knowledge, while the second would provide a bridge between this area and the focus area Knowledge Production and Circulation.

Secondly, we plan to apply for a larger collaborative project coordinated at the MWF on processes of marketization with a focus on the South Asian region. For this, we have already obtained substantial assistance by MWS with a one-year postdoctoral position for Dr Nikolay Kamenov who started work in December 2021, but is not formally affiliated to the MWF. I wish to express my strong gratitude to MWS for this opportunity.

Beyond these initiatives (and moving beyond the focus area Economy and Knowledge), our main task in 2022 will be to create greater visibility for the Max Weber Forum – in Delhi and South Asia, in Germany, and internationally. Hopefully being able to move beyond pandemic restrictions over the course of the year, the initiatives we are planning for 2022 include deepening collaborations with our South Asian partners, but also the organization of events that will generate greater public as well as scholarly awareness of the new institute, and will thus help to establish the Forum as a small (by South Asian standards), yet at the same time significant place for research and open, critical scholarly debate.
II Project Reports

1. Debt, Trust, and Reputation: Extra-legal Finance in Northern India

Sebastian Schwecke (Principal Investigator)
Director
Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies

The research project studies the evolution of financial markets operating beyond the reach of the law and without recourse to legal practices, predominantly in an urban north Indian setting centering on the city of Banaras (Varanasi). The study straddles the divide between social and economic history, and economic anthropology, and is based on archival and ethnographic research conducted between 2011 and 2019. Informed by an understanding of socioeconomic relations and their cultural embeddedness in modern India that emphasizes the engagement of market participants in a variety of overlapping economic segments following different functional logics and intersecting with the state-regulated segment of Indian capitalism, the project sets out to weave together histories of market framing and market responses that led to the coalescence of a comprehensively extra-legal economic segment. It explores the anchoring of diverse financial practices – from petty (and illegal) money lending and extra-legal ‘trade credit’ flows to (at best semi-legal) forms of financial speculation – in an underlying reputational economy that allows these financial markets to flourish in the absence of regulation and state-centered enforcement mechanisms for contractual obligations in spite of their highly (and increasingly) exploitative character.

Briefly summarized, colonial endeavors to modernize the Indian economy, and the role of the state in it, produced a reorientation of credit relations in South Asia in the emerging formal segment of the credit market – a shift away from the emphasis on renegotiating obligations between creditor and debtor, and towards the anchoring of credit relations in their contractual stipulation that benefited the creditor. “Formal” credit, by being constructed in this particular fashion, remained incapable, however, of serving the actual credit needs of a major part of the South Asian population. Accordingly, colonial policy – continued without significant changes after independence – merely created the conditions for credit markets serving the majority of the population to shift towards extra-legality. This shift had long-term impacts on credit relations in South Asia. It affected
the operational principles of “traditional” financial markets rooted in the South Asian bazaar economy, leading to the gradual demise of the governing apex of South Asian finance. In doing so, however, it also undermined the viability of extra-legal enforcement mechanisms for credit obligations – creating conditions under which the operational logics of extra-legal finance needed to shift towards
reputational dynamics anchored in trust – instead of the significantly stronger social ties of the bazaar. Newly dominant forms of extra-legal finance gradually became tied to an emerging economy of reputation that managed to stabilize some segments of the credit market at substantially higher levels of exploitation than in colonial times.

**State of the research project**

With the publication of the monograph (see below), this project is mostly completed. Outstanding planned publications include two further journal articles, one of which is currently revised after peer review.

**Major publications from the research project**


II Project Reports

2. Work in the Bazaar – The Organisation of Work in a Social Milieu beyond State Regulation: India, 1930s to 2000s

DFG Individual Research Grant
Sebastian Schwecke (Principal investigator)
Director
Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies

The principal investigator’s earlier research has shown the extent to which everyday economic practices in northern India and their social embedment have developed out of the ‘bazaar economy’ from the mid-twentieth century onwards as adaptations to a primarily state-led project of modernisation. Regarding the organisation of labour in the economic segments of retail/wholesale trade and related low-value services as well as at least some originally artisanal industries, the ‘bazaar’ still affected people’s lives to a significant extent. Crucially, labour relations and work conditions in these segments have adapted to state regulations, but specific aspects of this regulatory framework were impeded by the ordering of the ‘bazaar’ as an economic arena and social milieu, including its procedural underpinnings, its geography, and its social organisation. It is argued here that historical continuities arising from the ‘bazaar economy’ in the mid-twentieth century and the process of labour informalisation in India have reinforced each other in shaping work in this socio-economic segment.

The co-existence of an emerging regulatory framework for labour, gradually and erratically being extended to commercial segments of the economy from the 1930s onwards, and adaptations of economic practices arising out of a previously dominant ordering of labour relations provided a basis for the control of labour through means beyond the control of the Indian state, at the same time as offering workers avenues of coping that impeded the emergence of strong and unified collective agencies. At the height of the Indian state’s attempt to regulate labour relations between the late 1930s and 1970s, the state’s focus on large-scale industrial units (rather than small-scale manufacturing or commerce and low-value services) slowed the pace of labour regulation in the latter segments. The discontinuation of the independent Indian state’s initial thrust towards tighter labour regulation from the 1970s onwards, in turn, provided the scope for the continued evasion of regulatory frameworks through reliance on operational modes related to the ‘bazaar’. The corresponding tendency of the Indian
state to enable further informalisation in labour relations, reinforced the precarity of workers in commercially dominated economic arenas, and augmented the need of workers to rely on coping mechanisms beyond the framework of state intervention. This, in turn, affected the power of unions to mobilise workers collectively (which, in any case, had already been restricted in the context of the ‘bazaar’). Workers, at the same time, needed to rely increasingly on the (relative) advantages offered by the ordering of the ‘bazaar’ – the intimacy of social relations marked by informational flows through ‘gossip’ as well as non-mediated hierarchies and the sharing of social space – in order to develop coping mechanisms against labour control. These mechanisms, however, favoured the extraction of lenience especially related to the specific aspect of work discipline rather than employers' control over work conditions in general, or wages. The reliance of these coping mechanisms, in turn, further decreased the mobilising capacities of the unions, and thus had a debilitating effect on the bargaining powers of labour in the ‘bazaar’.

The research project follows a case study approach based on informal sector unions affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) operating in the
bazaar areas of the north Indian city of Banaras. While the city’s bazaar lost its role as one of the key financial centres of India from the early twentieth century onwards, it remains one of the largest wholesale markets in northern India. Work in the city remains predominantly shaped by commercial professions as well as the (low-value) services and artisanal or small-scale industrial manufacturing professions linked to it. Despite the relative absence of large-scale industries, Banaras emerged as the centre of the so-called ‘red zone’ of the state of Uttar Pradesh from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, an area of relatively strong influence by the Communist Party of India (CPI) in a state otherwise little touched by communism except for its industrial centre in Kanpur. The city’s few remaining communist intellectuals and activists almost invariably ascribe the rising fortunes of the party in Banaras after independence to its ‘charismatic leadership’ figures, Rustam Satin and Vishu Mukherjee. In 1964, the Shop- and Commercial Establishment Workers Union (in the following: Shopworkers Union) was founded as the first local informal sector union, followed in 1965 by the Oxcart Drivers and Carriers Union (in the following: Carriers Union), both affiliated to AITUC. The focus of the informal sector trade unions in Banaras centred on building political consciousness rather than collective action on the conditions of work, emphasising rallies rather than strikes, especially regarding the annual Labour Day rally and election campaigns.

The local trade union movement operating in the informal sector gradually entered a period of decline, accentuated from the 1980s onwards: The Carriers Union slowly transformed from a trade union to a Yadav caste association in the 1980s, in the process shifting its political allegiance to the originally socialist Lok Dal. The remaining AITUC-affiliated unions, including the Shopworkers Union, continue to exist, though in significantly reduced scale not only in terms of membership but especially regarding the scope of their activities and public visibility. Labour relations in the bazaar remain largely outside the legal framework of industrial labour. Labour regulations in the ‘bazaar’, at the same time, are and were regularly evaded by employers, and litigation remains rare. Work conditions in the ‘bazaar’ have largely remained unaffected by state regulation. Wage-levels below the minimum wage requirements remain ubiquitous, and the specific context of work in the ‘bazaar’ remains strongly characterised by the need to cope with direct hierarchical relationships in heavily constricted shared social space.

While the local unions shifted to an emphasis on legal assistance to its members following their decline from the early 1980s onwards, initial research has shown the importance of isolated acts of evading work discipline as an arena for employee-employer conflicts. Acts of insubordination challenge the hierarchical patterns of employment relationships, but have a debilitating effect on collective workers’ agency. These acts are centred on work discipline, extracting leisure time within the microcosm of the ‘bazaar’ and reducing tight oversight of work carried out. In turn, employers tend to reward ‘good conduct’ which impedes workers’ likelihoods to seek legal redress or unionise.
In social practice, the construction of property is substantially contested. Seemingly clear-cut moral and legal definitions of property frequently obscure the contestation of property, and generate nuanced responses from parties involved. The project observes contestations in a setting that may appear unlikely at first glance – allegations of theft, embezzlement, and encroachment, each of which would often be perceived as a straightforward case of illegal acquisition of property. However, the practices observed frequently are rooted in complex moral claims to property in one or more dimensions of the latter’s social construction. Property is embedded into social structures of obligation and expectation that, in turn, are negotiated and renegotiated. Straightforwardly legal definitions of property, accordingly, are often accompanied and affected by moral claims on (limited) co-ownership. Claims on theft, embezzlement, and encroachment – wherever they are not addressing straightforwardly illegal activities – remain contentious, and constitute one of many possible moral interpretations of socially embedded notions of property.

The enhanced future orientation of credit relations based on the renegotiation of obligations that characterized much of the investigator’s earlier work has tended to obscure its deep relationship with property. The element of protention (Husserl) in credit-related property claims (or in future trading) – marking property that is yet to be realized, even though the legal claims frequently are stipulated from the outset – has served to detach discourses on finance from studies on property. In turn, this detachment has been magnified by the tendency of research on property to highlight the study of immovable assets. The project seeks to complement the analysis of renegotiations of obligations by extending the subject of inquiry into socioeconomic practices characterized by a limited element of protention.

Combining ethnography and contemporary historiography, the project studies both the moral and the legal claims on property made by contesting parties instead of their eventual resolution in law. Primarily, it relies on an archive of first information reports (FIR) filed in the
north Indian town of Banaras (Varanasi), thus facilitating the study of moral discourses on property even when legal dimensions of property are addressed. Claims on theft, embezzlement, and encroachment frequently involve conflicting moral deliberations that go far beyond the straightforward acquisition of another’s property that inform much of public discourse. Often times, allegations leading to the filing of an FIR rather mark contested claims on infringements on various dimensions of complex social constructions of property claims. They constitute part of a process of weighing, negotiating, and renegotiating various dimensions of property, comprising contestations over managerial, use, and alienation rights, the obligation to ensure proper care over the object involved in property claims, and the question of individual or shared ownership – temporary or permanent, partial or comprehensive – of an asset. While legal discourses in contemporary India may (broadly) follow western liberal models that place emphasis on individual rights to ownership – notwithstanding the complexities involved even there – social structures of obligation in India frequently deviate from this blueprint, thus emphasizing routine renegotiation processes over property claims, and/or the evasion of clear-cut moral definitions of various dimensions in the social construction of property. Disregarding straightforward cases – what we normally understand as theft, embezzlement, and encroachment – by highlighting contested claims facilitates the observation of histories of renegotiation underlying the complexities of property as a social construct. Property claims are steeped in multi-faceted dimensions of time marked by memory, obligation, and expectation, and their respective use in shaping individual and social claims. Property is constantly renegotiated, and past claims to property remain contested.

All three types of economic behavior include a fundamental commonality in that they comprise actions by the alleged offender that contest the aggrieved party’s claim to property over a part or dimension of the latter’s overall property claim. Yet, only encroachment has substantially been studied in research on property in South Asia. Literature on the regularization of encroachment activities makes it abundantly clear that the initial economic practice, allegedly of an illegal nature, is at times renegotiated afterwards, frequently according to sociopolitical interests and compulsions that nevertheless are expressed as moral claims on property. A nuanced analysis of claims on property rights through encroachment reveals that frequently only some elements in the construction of property are contested, such as use/managerial rights or time-bound alienation rights. More often than not, they constitute a moral dilemma of negotiating contentious property claims with precision, instead of a legal one. And as a moral contestation, claims of encroachment constitute the continuation of earlier practices of morally managing property claims, not the singular rupture implied in its legal term.

Compared to the discourse on encroachment, the inclusion of theft as a morally embedded contestation of
property may seem incongruous. Yet there are strong similarities between allegations of (some forms of) theft and encroachment. In the most ubiquitous type of theft visible in the archive used here for instance – scooter theft – the allegation of theft frequently comprises offences against the claim to use and managerial rights rather than alienation rights, expressed morally as rights of the offending party to time-bound shared use rights, including in lending the asset, or as contestations of property rights (or duties) relating to proper care for the asset. Complaints implicitly addressed the alleged offenders’ moral claims: the element of retention that allowed claimants to recall earlier instances of shared use and managerial practice in handling the asset that are interpreted as claims to a right. This memory of at least partially shared ownership produces elements of protention – of expecting future renegotiations of the property claim in which the quality and extent of the experience with property remains contentious, and therefore in need of management and negotiation, with legal recourse constituting merely one possibility of redress.

In turn, claims to shares in property relating to use and managerial property rights – time-bound or otherwise – constitute the essence of the claimed infractions of rights that make up the charge of embezzlement. In this case, the complexity of property rights is frequently compounded by traces of corporate personality involved in the legal claims to property. Sharing workspace in close proximity with the employer, employer-employee relations based on trust (rather than legally enforceable contracts), and the embeddedness of employment in community and kinship structures as well as other forms of social proximity produce claims to shared rights in the use and management of ‘corporate’ assets that, in turn, are contested through the allegation of embezzlement by the complainants. Again, the offence of embezzlement is embedded in its own structure of time marked by memory, obligation, and expectation, thus producing social relations as much as being produced by them.
In the first few decades after India’s independence in 1947, Delhi witnessed the establishment of public universities and institutes on acres of gated land. With the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s, however, there was a boom in private investment in higher education. A number of education hubs and private university campuses were established on the fringes of the mega city bordering the neighbouring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. My project investigates the connection between higher education institutions and urban transformation in the National Capital Region (NCR) during the post-liberalization decades. While education studies and urban studies have flourished as rich areas of research in South Asia, the interface between education and the urban has received little scholarly attention. Conventionally, it is quite difficult to trace any mention of the process of acquisition, allocation or demarcation of land for universities in the Education archive. Similarly, specific discussions on university land seem to be largely absent in the Land Department records. Based on a study of the establishment of an ‘Education City’ in the fringes of the National Capital Delhi in the post 2000s, the project attempts to address this gap. It explores how land acquisition and setting up of universities contribute to the socio-economic transformations in the neighbourhood and redefine rural-urban frontiers.

The project combines policy discussions, legal cases and ethnography to discern how establishment of private universities enables the transformation of property relations and social relations in the predominantly agrarian peripheries of a city. The project also attempts to grasp an emergent public policy discourse which envisions private investment in university education as the prime mover of a new urbanism at the margins of a metropolis. It examines how from early 2000s, the domain of higher education in India witnessed a phenomenal shift, fostering a very specific relationship between education, land acquisition and urbanization. This enabled a certain discourse on the linkages of the land market and the education market, thus bringing the education and the urban in conversation. This project examines the land–university nexus.
on the northern, agrarian fringes of Delhi by examining an instance of land acquisition for an elite education hub, the Rajiv Gandhi Education City (RGEC). I focus on the education hub as a site for studying ‘frontier urbanism’ and the entanglements of the agrarian and the urban in South Asia.

Work done in the Report Year

Because of the pandemic, it has been impossible to conduct field visits to Sonipat over the last two years. However, I have been able to consult primary documents related to urban restructuring of Sonipat in early 2000s. I have also been able to access records related to the shifts in higher education policies during the same time. With the assistance of a local contact person, I did manage to conduct phone interviews with a few local people including stakeholders of various kinds. Based on these, I have explored some crucial aspects of the making of the education hub. First, I have mapped how the Sonipat-Kundli region in Haryana was envisioned as a multifunctional urban complex, which would form a part of the expansion plan for Delhi NCR. I have tried to locate the RGEC in this urban imaginary. Second, in this context, I have studied three key government regulations and pieces of legislation that facilitated private investment in higher education. Together, they highlight how, in the post-liberalization decades, the rhetoric of urban policy and education commissions converged and echoed each other, thus paving the way for enclosed elite private education zones. Third, I explore the role of the state and the judiciary in facilitating land acquisition for the RGEC and look at how private education was posited as a ‘public purpose’. Fourth, I have studied the advertisements published by the Haryana government and real estate agencies that projected the emerging education hub as the prime mover of urban growth in the area. I try to address the nature of ‘speculative urbanism’ in the agrarian stretches of Sonipat. Finally, I briefly reflect on the farmers’ protests against land acquisition and their negotiations for compensation. Their stories indicate a few interesting points concerning the university–locality relationship and the changing social relations in the region. The project is an attempt to start off a discussion on the specificities of education as infrastructure and to understand whether it enables a new urban form.

Based on these observations, I have written a paper for the Education and the Urban in India Working Paper Series.

Publication


Conference Presentation

Presented a paper titled “Education Hubs and the Changing Rural-Urban Interface: The Emergence of an ‘Education City’ in the National Capital Region,” at the 12th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), Kyoto, 24-28 August, 2021.
In this project, I look at the challenges faced by young girls in a marginalized neighbourhood in Delhi due to the Covid-19 crisis and the subsequent closure of schools for nearly a year and a half. The project maps the experiences of participants between 13 and 17 years, an age already considered vulnerable for girls’ education in India, using intersections of caste, class, religion and their location in an unauthorized colony in the city. The parents of the participants are in unorganized, manual and low-pay jobs, hence putting the participants at a risk to start with. Research from across the world indicates that these groups have borne the brunt of the pandemic, not just economically but in terms of other disparities as well.

Ethnography of the neighbourhood, the opportunities or the lack of it, available to girls is an important part of the project and in fact, forms a significant precondition for the project’s aim to facilitate the analysis of the interplay of sudden disruptions in livelihoods and educational opportunities on long-term crises of poverty and its gendered dimensions.

The study is located in Sompur, one of Delhi’s largest unauthorized colonies. This resettlement colony is mainly home to migrants seeking regular employment in low-skilled jobs. It is marked by illegally built houses, persistent sewage problems and irregular water supply, and comprises a population of nearly one and a half million people.

The schooling system in the colony is deeply stratified. The Delhi government’s schools information website lists one aided senior secondary school in Sompur with morning shift for girls and evening shift for male students. The school has about 6500 students in total. Seven schools are run by the local municipal corporation of which five offer education till primary level only. The number of students studying in these corporation schools is about 15,000. Each school has about 1000-2000 students in every shift, and there is a dearth of infrastructural facilities and teachers. After this stage, students shift to the lone senior secondary school mentioned above. Three registered but unaided schools offer education till secondary classes. Dotting the
An unrecognised secondary school that closed down during the pandemic in Sompur

Photograph courtesy of Yamini Agarwal
colony and perhaps one in every second lane are unrecognized private schools or low-budget private schools, several of which also shut down permanently during the pandemic. These schools too lack adequate space, infrastructure and trained teachers and it is yet to be known how they would have managed the education of students during the lockdown.

The research questions I am working with are: What were the educational opportunities available to the participants before Covid-19? Specifically, the schools they were studying in, the education of their siblings and parental choices and parents’ occupational histories. What was the immediate impact of the pandemic and subsequent school closures on their education? How did they prepare for online classes? Did they have access to phones, computers required for studying? What supportive measures did they receive from schools, teachers and their families to continue their classes? Were they expected to work at home, contribute to family income as compared to their male siblings in the wake of online classes? When did they realize that schools were going to be closed for long and how did they prepare for the same? Did it affect their aspirations? What are the narratives that emerge from the experience of the crisis and how are they differentiated based on the social, economic and religious divides of the participants? A theoretical framework of social exclusion and gender is being used for the study. The main thrust is on the participants’ experiences of the crisis, their coping mechanisms and the outcome of the pandemic on their aspirations as well as its long-term implications for these livelihoods.
Work done in the Report Year

I started fieldwork in September, establishing contacts and identifying and interviewing the participants. Due to Covid-19-related health concerns, some interviews were conducted telephonically. These were supplemented by collecting and evaluating textual resources on the local field site and other relevant research material.

Publications


Workshops and Conferences


Minority Education, Identity and Opportunity: A Study of Sikh Schools in Delhi. Invited Lecture at Education in India seminar, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 14 September, 2021.

Ethnicity, Aspirations and Education: A Study of Young Women from the North-East Region in Delhi, 12th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS), Kyoto, 24-28 August, 2021.
Modern cities are typically viewed as gigantic engines of production and consumption, with cycles of construction and destruction and fabrication of novelty and obsolescence, whether it is its architecture, infrastructure or commodities. Yet, the rhythms and practices of ordinary life in the city do not comprise discrete acts or events of production and consumption but rather processes of continuously improvising, repairing and maintaining objects. The practices and techniques involved in these processes are about making objects work, adapt and last within a specific context that connects people, materials, skills, temporalities and places into an associational milieu. A skilled *rafoogar* is sought to darn your favourite pair of jeans, again and again, to make it last longer than its life. The kurta bought from the neighbourhood Wednesday bazaar is altered by the street tailor to fit you perfectly. Kitchen implements and appliances are continuously repaired in the local markets and by itinerant repairmen who do the rounds of neighbourhoods.

Mending, fixing and maintenance of everyday objects in cities can be located within the interstices of the modernist technological order that purportedly governs contemporary cities. However, these practices both challenge and sustain that order and are in turn challenged and sustained by it. Many forms and skills of repair work are disappearing, are on the margins, or are shifting; at the same time, there are also ways in which repair work is rendered invisible or are taken for granted. How does one analytically and methodologically focus on and follow repair work practices and their embeddedness in the ordinary lives of cities?

Repair work has largely been conceptualized as ‘broken world thinking’ – what happens if we take breakdown and decay rather than innovation and progress as the key to understanding the world (Jackson 2014). This project takes this idea as the central question but takes it forward by arguing that objects are repaired not only when they are broken but also when they are customized for use by individual persons and families. More often than not, objects, whether it is clothing, furniture, houses or even streets and cities, challenge us because
A makeshift mobile repairing shop outside a metro station in Old Delhi
Photograph courtesy of Samprati Pani

Hand-painted advertisement for laundry services in a neighbourhood in south Delhi. The tagline reads ‘stress bhi dho dalo’ – wash away the stress too
Photograph courtesy of Samprati Pani
they are not fit for purpose, given the wide diversity of people who use them (Sennett 2008, Attfield 2020). They are hence continuously repaired, fixed, re-fashioned and remade through use and improvisation.

It is through fixing objects or encountering resistance from them that we learn to work with them. This fixing can take place either through ‘static repair’, restoring something to its original state, or ‘dynamic repair’, changing an object’s current form or function, which may involve a jump of domains (Sennett 2008, Simondon 1980 [1958]). Repairing roads, renovating buildings and restoring monuments are some common examples of static repair in the city. Transforming a spot on the footpath to a teashop or a street to a weekly bazaar are examples of dynamic repair – both instances involving a shift in domain, the teashop transforming the footpath as an infrastructure of walking and transit to one of rest, refreshment, exchange and sociality, and the itinerant bazaar transforming the daily uses and rhythms of the street to a bustling marketplace and place of leisure.

How are objects of everyday use, including streets and marketplaces, repaired? Who are the people who maintain infrastructures of everyday life? What does repair reveal about objects and the people who use them? What does it reveal about the people engaged in fixing objects and the techniques and skills that go into their work? What understanding of the social can be arrived at by looking at objects and the world as not static but a dynamic process of making and remaking? What are the ethics, politics and affects involved and created through repair work practices? This project explores these questions by focusing on specific kinds of repair work such as cobbled, darning, and repair of bags, umbrellas and footwear that are located in neighbourhood markets as well on the maintenance of the infrastructures of the markets themselves. In doing so, it hopes to provide an understanding of how urban living in India is shaped by repair practices as a process of improvisation that allows everyday life to carry on.

The project is at a preliminary stage and I am putting together a bibliography on the research area and exploring possible sites for conducting fieldwork early next year.

References


The research project seeks to provide a fundamental contribution to a cultural history – through a history of images and ideas practised in an interdisciplinary and international setting.

Our global Bilderfahrzeuge sub-group have been meeting since the last eight months to discuss and deliberate on the idea of memories for our forthcoming conference, “Mobile Memories” in November 2022. Examining memories as processes carrying impressions/engrams of images, events and episodes which are culturally determined and produced as memoirs, monuments and commemorations, I have been engaging with memory reflecting loss, nostalgia and defeat, as well as accomplishment, conquest and victory.

Applying Aby Warburg’s notion of social memory to analyse artworks as repositories of history, I have been examining images contained in illustrated manuscripts to trace the cultural transfer from Central Asia to Mughal India, in an attempt to perceive the significance of particular events, episodes and genres which expressed a shared cultural heritage with Timurid ancestry, and were favoured by Mughals for shaping their dynastic identity.

Sublimity and Pleasure: Images for Evoking the Sensorial Experience in Indian Art, 18th-19th centuries

Recently I have been examining pre-modern paintings illustrated at the courts of Rajput rajas and maharajas produced in the 18th and 19th centuries in an attempt to explore the following research ideas: The Persianate tradition of the arts of the book arrived with the Mughals, who brought the knowledge and skill from Central Asia and the Safavid courts to Hindustan in the 16th century. As objects of pleasure, performance and
Akbar Receiving his Younger Brother Mirza Muhammad Hakim.
Second Akbarnama, Artist: Govardhan
Mughal 1600-1605, Chester Beatty Library. In 03.49

Artwork in the public domain, photograph provided by Chester Beatty Library
https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/in_03_49/2/LOG_0000/
entertainment, illustrated albums and manuscripts containing Mughal dynastic histories and biographies, classical Persian epics and literature, philosophies, astrology and astronomy, magical and extra-ordinary tales, travelogues, etc. became treasured possessions of emperors and the elite during the Mughal empire.

The popularity and demand for illustrated manuscript among the Mughal ruling elite spilled over from the imperial centres of Agra, Lahore and Delhi, to the surrounding courts of the Rajput kings. Portraits of Rajput kings had found inclusion in Mughal albums in the 16th – 17th centuries, hence Indian rulers were already familiar with the practice of book production and their reception in Mughal courts. In the 18th and 19th centuries, mobility of artists trained in the arts of the book at imperial Mughal courts brought their knowledge of manuscript illustration into neighbouring imperial courts in Rajasthan. Prolific production of illustrated manuscripts in the Rajput courts - scenes of rajas in darbars, hunts, on pilgrimage, at festivals, and engaging in pleasure activities; also paintings from the Indic epics – the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Bhagwat Purāṇa, paintings depicting moods and music containing the rāgamūlā images, as well as maps and landscape views were illustrated in abundance at the Rajput imperial courts. In addition, there was a continuation of scribing and illustrating Persian verses and epics, theological texts, scientific surveys and travel books. In continuation of the Mughal practice of book production, Rajput kings commissioned deluxe and luxurious copies of illustrated manuscripts, which functioned as leisure objects, representing the engagement and enjoyment derived from performances and events, enjoyed by the patrons.

The pleasure derived from viewing and engaging with illustrated manuscripts, originally a leisure-giving activity as well as a process of knowledge creation and circulation, was originally cultivated by the Mughals and subsequently imitated by the Rajputs. My research questions to what degree did itinerant artists transfer motifs, ideas and compositional elements from their art practice at Mughal imperial courts into images produced in Rajput albums and manuscripts, commissioned by Indian kings? In the absence of a Persian-speaking elite and subjects, to what extent and purpose were Persian literary manuscripts consumed by rajas and maharajas at Rajput imperial courts? To what extent did Indic philosophical discourses and aesthetic theories of bhāvā and rāsā gain inclusion in the image-making practices of artists at Rajput courts?

In the past two months, I have visited a few museums, palaces and gardens in Jodhpur, Ajmer and Jaipur in Rajasthan and examined collections displayed in these institutions. I met the director of the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Mr Karni Singh Jasol, resulting in a very rich and comprehensive discussion with him, facilitating my access to the library and further research with the art and manuscript collection contained in the royal fort museum.
Publications


Dipanwita Donde. “The Owl as a Visual Metaphor in the Art of Sadegh Hedayat.” In The Blind Owl After Eighty Years, Sage Publication (manuscript in publication)

Conferences, Lectures and Workshops

Conference participation with my paper, “Birth Images of Ghazan and Timur as Vessels containing Social, Historical and Cultural Memory of Mughal Emperors in the 16th century” in the 12th International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 12) held virtually at Kyoto, Japan, from 24-28 August 2021.

Chaired a session, “Early Modernity in Indian Painting Traditions,” at the conference, I Was Looking High and Low: Towards a Redistribution of the Sensible, organised by Visual Studies, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, March 11-13, 2021

Lecture and presentation, “Musical Cultures Explored in Mughal Art” in Music and Court Culture: Paintings and Musical Innovations, Indian Theatre and Performance Histories, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 6 September 2021

Co-host of the global Bilderfahrzeuge sub group for the conference, “Mobile Memories,” to be hosted in Berlin in Nov 2022.
Collaborative / Third-Party Projects

1. Migration of Images, Texts, Ideas and Objects from Timurid Central Asia to Mughal India, 16th – 18th centuries
   Third Party Project: A part of the transnational research project Bilderfahrzeuge: Aby Warburg’s Legacy and the Future of Iconology, funded by the Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)
   Dipanwita Donde
   Research Fellow
   Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies

2. Selling History: Tourist Guides, Bazaar Histories and the Politics of the Past
   Part of ICAS:MP (M. S. Merian – R. Tagore International Centre for Advanced Studies ‘Metamorphoses of the Political’) Thematic Module 1: History as a Political Category
   Indra Sengupta (Principal Investigator)
   German Historical Institute London
   Neeladri Bhattacharya (Principal Investigator)
   Ashoka University New Delhi

3. Ethnicity, Aspirations and Education: A Study of Young Women from the North-East Region residing in an Urban Village in Delhi
   Geetha B Nambissan (Principal Investigator)
   Former Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University
   Yamini Agarwal
   Research Fellow
   Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies

4. Of Desh and Bides: Sketching a History of Hindustani Labour between North India and the Calcutta Region in the 20th century
   Camille Buat
   PhD Student
   Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS)
   University of Göttingen

5. Crisis as Catalyst: Covid-19, Social Citizenship and Political Transformation in India
   DFG funded project
   Ravi Ahuja (Principal Investigator)
   Professor
   Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS)
   University of Göttingen
On 24 June 2021, a roundtable discussion on ‘New Directions in Gender, Education and Poverty’ was organized by the School of Education at the University of Glasgow, Max Weber Stiftung India Branch Office (MWS IBO), New Delhi, and the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (IIMC) to engage with research on gender, education and poverty.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and adoption of the Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs), seek to incorporate and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental (UNESCO, 2017). Concomitant with this, is the emphasis on the critical role of equitable access to education (SDG4) for sustainable development and transformative change. Over the past decade, major progress has been made towards increasing access to education and school enrolment rates at all levels, particularly for girls. Nevertheless, some 750 million adults – two thirds of them women – remained illiterate in 2016 (United Nations, 2021) and about 260 million children were still out of school in 2018 — nearly one fifth of the global population in that age group (UNESCO, 2021). Poverty remains a significant constraint for women’s educational attainment. Moreover, how poverty impacts women’s education is complicated by multiple social and cultural contexts. This roundtable brought together researchers from the global South and the North to foreground new directions exploring the intersections of gender, education and poverty.

The participants at the roundtable included senior and early-career scholars from Glasgow and India. The speakers from Glasgow included Prof Ellen Boer en, Research Director at the School of Education, University of Glasgow and Dr Barbara Read, Reader at the University of Glasgow. From India, the speakers included Prof Parimala Rao, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawa-
harlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Prof Nandini Manjrekar, Professor, School of Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai and Dr Manish Jain, Associate Professor, School of Education Studies, Dr B.R. Ambedkar University, New Delhi. Dr Srabani Maitra, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, University of Glasgow and Dr Saikat Maitra, Assistant Professor, Public Policy and Management Group at IIMC chaired and moderated the session.

The first speaker, Prof Ellen Boeren, spoke on rising gender inequality and educational achievements of women from a quantitative perspective and women's socio-economic attainments in the context of contemporary Europe. The second speaker, Dr Barbara Read reflected on gender dynamics in the STEM fields, in connection with disparities in funding availabilities for women in the field and the difficulties faced by women in accessing higher education. The next speaker, Prof Parimala Rao presented a historical perspective on Scotland-India connections in the development of educational institutions in nineteenth and twentieth century India. She also briefly spoke on her current research on the history of the idea of academic freedom in India. The fourth speaker Prof Nandini Manjrekar discussed the web of interactions between educational interactions and various socio-economic and cultural norms and practices determining how education has transformed in contemporary India. She then reflected on the effects of the Covid pandemic on school children in India. The last speaker Dr Manish Jain shared his views on the less explored areas in education research in India and suggested possible directions for further research, primarily in relation to non-state actors in the field, the connections of labour, caste and educational institutions and the development of the idea of ‘corporate social responsibility’. He also emphasised the urgent need to look into indigenous forms of education in India in a more sustained, historical manner. Finally, Prof Nandini Manjrekar highlighted the need for a rigorous and nuanced ethnographic study of the effects of pandemic on education in India. Dr Saikat Maitra wrapped up the session by reiterating the new challenges posed by the pandemic and the importance of political and social practices in relation to how the field of education is currently transforming. The floor was then opened and the session ended with a vibrant and stimulating discussion.
Hybrid Workshop ‘Gender, Education and Inequality: Pandemic and the Present Times’
13 November 2021
Organised jointly by:
Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies, New Delhi
School of Education, University of Glasgow
Indian Institute of Management Calcutta

Funded by:
ESRC/GCRF project Can Dual Apprenticeships Create Better and More Equitable Social and Economic Outcomes for Young People? A Comparative Study of India and Mexico (2018-21)
(A collaboration of University of Glasgow, School of Education, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, Monterrey Institute of Technology, Mexico, University of Cologne, Germany, University of Zurich, Switzerland)

Following up on the roundtable organised in June 2021 on ‘New Directions in Gender, Education and Poverty’, the workshop brought together senior and early career academics to engage with new research on gender, education and inequality, particularly in the post-pandemic times. Challenges to education in general and to girls’ education in particular during and in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic has been flagged as one of the most important concerns for social science researchers. Scholars from the global South and the North are engaged in foregrounding new directions in the area of education research. Some of the most pertinent themes in the field have been reenergised with new questions and debates. They include the uneven distribution of and access to resources at all stages of education; how inequalities in education intersect with marginalities based on class, caste, religion and ethnicity; the entrenched gender hierarchies in the domains of education in general and how these hierarchies have acquired new dimensions over the last one and a half years; the question of representation in the STEM fields in connection to gender and class. The workshop took up these questions and many others both conceptually and empirically. Speakers discussed existing scholarship on these issues and reflected on how they are transforming in the post-pandemic times.

The first paper was presented by Dr Saikat Maitra & Dr Sadaf Sethwala. They shared their research on the impact of the pandemic on women students enrolled in vocational training institutes in India. The paper particularly looked into how the dual system of training (DST), offered by a few Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in the country, empowered women in participating in the labour market. But
Image 1 and 2: Participants of the workshop on Gender, Education and Inequality: Pandemic and the Present Times
Photograph courtesy of Deepanwita Dutta
the pandemic and the resulting distant mode of learning has caused severe disruptions in the training and ruined the careers of many women students who were already struggling with financial stress. Prof Nandini Manjrekar, the second speaker, began her presentation by suggesting that in terms of gender and education, it might not be analytically productive to look at the pandemic as a complete rupture, we should rather see it as an amplification of existing asymmetries. Addressing the question of access, Manjrekar pointed out how the pandemic has pushed the girls back to the domestic space, exactly the opposite of what movements for girls’ education had intended to achieve since 1950s. She also discussed the symbolic and real effects of digital education on lower middle class and working-class women’s access to education. Dr Yamini Agarwal, the next speaker, presented her study on the impact of the pandemic on the young girls from a marginalised community living in an unauthorised colony in Delhi. She highlighted that a number of unrecognised, low-budget schools in the area had shut down. School closures have taken away the only educational opportunity the girls of this area had, thus aggravating the already deeply stratified structure and pushing them to further marginality.

The fourth speaker, Dr Manish Jain, echoed Manjrekar’s thoughts by saying that we have to situate the year 2020 in terms of continuities and shifts instead of a sudden break, as the ‘present’ is largely marked by segregated educational infrastructures. The new discourse of ‘learning loss’ due to the pandemic needs to be analysed in connection with the learning crisis that had already been repeatedly discussed since 2018. Jain also alerted the audience about the dangers of the discussion of ‘volunturism’ being pushed in the National Education Policy, published in the midst of the pandemic in 2020. He emphasised the need to understand the mechanisms that reproduce inequality in education. The next speaker Rebecca Ipe’s paper discussed community-based school governance in Karnataka. She particularly looked into the need to bring in the categories of care and emotion as governance practices in the domain of education and their gendered dimensions. Prof Geetha B Nambissan, the last speaker of the workshop, presented her paper on education and gender from the perspective of the urban poor in a resettlement colony. She gave an overview of the enrolment ratios of various marginalised communities—Dalits, Muslims and Adivasis— and particularly women of these communities. She then moved on to discuss the implications of the pandemic on the Bawana resettlement colony. The pandemic has only sharpened the fault lines of structural and intersectional inequalities and institutional inadequacies, she pointed out. The return of the migrants had completely disrupted the schooling opportunities of their children in the big cities. Dr Srabani Maitra wrapped up the workshop with a discussion on further collaborations and publication plans. A panel for the December 2021 Comparative Education Society of India (CESI) conference was planned with the panellists of the workshop.
IV Events

Workshops and Conferences

19 March 2021

Virtual Roundtable Discussion on *Legacies of Feminism in Germany and India*

Organised jointly by the International Standing Group on Medialisation and Empowerment at the German Historical Institute London (GHIL) and the Max Weber Stiftung India Branch Office (MWS IBO), New Delhi.

The roundtable evaluated the historical legacies of feminist activism in two very different contexts: Germany and India. By bringing together the diverse trajectories of women’s rights activism in India and Germany, the roundtable sought to critically examine the meaning and history of feminism.

**Speakers:**

*Prof Helma Lutz*, Goethe Universität Frankfurt  
*Prof Janaki Nair*, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi  
*Prof Samita Sen*, University of Cambridge  
*Prof Paula-Irene Villa*, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
24 June 2021

Virtual Roundtable Discussion on *New Directions in Gender, Education and Poverty*

Organised jointly by the School of Education at the University of Glasgow, Max Weber Stiftung India Branch Office (MWS IBO), New Delhi and Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (IIMC).

This roundtable brought together researchers from the global South and the North to foreground new directions exploring the intersections of gender, education and poverty.

**Speakers:**
- *Prof Ellen Boeren*, Research Director, School of Education, University of Glasgow
- *Dr Barbara Read*, Reader, School of Education, University of Glasgow
- *Dr Srabani Maitra*, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, University of Glasgow
- *Dr Saikat Maitra*, Assistant Professor, Public Policy and Management Group, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (IIMC)
- *Prof Parimala Rao*, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
- *Prof Nandini Manjrekar*, Professor, School of Education, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai
- *Dr Manish Jain*, Associate Professor, School of Education Studies, Dr B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi
13 November 2021

Hybrid Workshop on Gender, Education and Inequality: Pandemic and the Present Times

The workshop was co-organised by Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies, New Delhi, University of Glasgow, School of Education and Indian Institute of Management Calcutta.

Following up on the roundtable organised in June 2021 on ‘New Directions in Gender, Education and Poverty’, the workshop brought together senior and early career academics to engage with new research on gender, education and inequality, particularly in the post-pandemic times.

**Speakers:**

*Dr Saikat Maitra & Dr Sadaf Sethwala,* Indian Institute of Management Calcutta  
*Prof Nandini Manjrekar,* Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai  
*Dr Manish Jain,* Dr B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi  
*Rebecca Ipe,* University of Glasgow  
*Dr Yamini Agarwal,* Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies, New Delhi  
*Prof Geetha B. Nambissan,* Professor (Retd.), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi  
*Dr Srabani Maitra,* University of Glasgow
V Publications

Working Paper Series Education and the Urban in India


Other Publications


