



## 14<sup>th</sup> Workshops Young Researchers of AJEI

### « Territories, Cities and Urban Societies in South Asia »

Mumbai, India (11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> March 2012)

#### Call for papers

The Association of Young Indian Studies (AJEI) gathers students from various academic fields related to social sciences, from MA level to postdoctorate, working on South Asia. Every year, the Association organizes a one-day seminar in France and a four-day workshop in India that brings together young researchers and experienced scholars to discuss the work presented by the former. The 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the workshop will take place in Mumbai, from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012 in partnership with the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Indian Institute of Technology of Bombay (IIT-B). This year, the topic will be "Territories, Cities and Urban Societies in South Asia."

While experiencing a relatively low rate of urbanization (31.16%) for a total of 377 million inhabitants according to the 2011 census<sup>1</sup>, Indian cities have been at the forefront of the media and scientific attention for the past two decades. Several reasons can account for the interest raised by the conditions and consequences of India's urbanization: the country includes three of the world's twenty-one megacities - cities with a high population density partly due to demographic growth<sup>2</sup> - and lists forty cities with more than one million people. In addition, those cities can gather up to 54% of their population<sup>3</sup> in slums, thus highlighting the difficulties encountered by development policies. These data illustrate the paradoxes of the urban phenomenon in South Asia and explain why cities are subject to both political and economic issues crucial to the socio-economic development of the country.

The 14<sup>th</sup> workshop of the AJEI proposes to analyze the different aspects of urban development in South Asia as well as to bring attention to the social consequences of urban management and development. This implies taking into account all the main actors and focusing on the case of Indian megacities and metropolis, along with small and medium-sized towns. The latter are facing an urban dynamic stressing slightly different issues. The major themes in focus for the workshop will be: (1) spatial transformations and their social implications; (2) urban policies; (3) the socio-spatial mobility generated by urban development; (4) the question of urban cultures and identities. Papers from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (urban planning, economics, geography, sociology, social anthropology, public policy, etc.) can rely on one or several of these axes. They can either be presented as a localized ethnographic study or as a more macroscopic one.

#### Spatial transformations, social changes

The different stages of industrial development and the economic liberalization of the country with the opening up of the markets have influenced the cities expansion with consequences on the urban landscape. Recently, many have pointed out that such territorial changes are coupled with several environmental issues. In the light of case studies, participants may explore such links between spatial (re)structuring and social transformations.

In India, the organization of the housing environment is often designed in terms of spatial segregation, as communities gather together in some areas. However, urban space offers more anonymity and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the first results of the 2011 census on [www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in).

<sup>2</sup> Véronique Dupont and Djallal G. Heuzé, « Introduction » in V. Dupont and D.G. Heuzé (eds), *La ville en Asie du Sud. Analyse et mise en perspective*, Paris, Éditions de l'EHESS (coll. Purushartha), 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The census of 2001 estimates that 54% of the inhabitants lives in slums in Greater Mumbai.

opportunities to 'mix' with each other. Accordingly, an interesting question lies in ascertaining the extent to which city space favors an intermingling of populations - from different geographical origins, religious communities, castes and socio-economic status - and has thus created a break with traditional housing. What are the factors that create the stratification of contemporary urban society? Does the city allow a decompartmentalization of groups or does it lead instead to a 'communitarization', reinforced by the help of support networks and other forms of socialization based on caste and community?

For the migrant belonging to the working classes or the wealthy ones, the city appears as a place offering job and education opportunities. Therefore, we can wonder to what extent the city constitutes an ideal place for a (potential) social mobility. Relations between urbanization, economic growth and the development of a middle class may also be investigated in link with this theme.

### **Urban policies**

Governments face social challenges such as population pressure and growing inequality between rich and poor. Authorities are striving to find solutions to the lack of space, to the soaring prices of real estate and to the overloading of the transport networks. As a result, town planning projects follow one after the other with the implementation of large-scale projects such as the creation of new suburbs in metropolis (Dwarka, Gurgaon, Okhla in Delhi, Navi Mumbai in Mumbai, etc.) and the construction of metros (Delhi, Bangalore). From the study of one or several town-planning projects, proposals can address current trends in the ways governments (local or national) are responding to contemporary challenges vis-à-vis planning. In this way, the examples may illustrate present or past choices of urban planning policies.

Skyscrapers and shopping malls are growing in number in order to meet the demand of the elites and the middle classes, while the slums, especially those located in the heart of city center, are regularly eradicated causing a displacement of their inhabitants to the periphery. What are the current trends of urban development projects in India or South Asia and what do they reveal about official representations of the city? What are the emerging opportunities for the slums: do we see a national response or is the case-by-case basis of local actions the rule? However, without the required resources, the reforms planned by the policies of urban management cannot be applied. Thus, territorial transformations are sometimes due to the sole interest of private companies. As a consequence, the lack (or impossibility) of proper planning is a reality that can be studied by some of the presentations. Papers may also be centered on problems of public health and environmental risks, which are two criteria associated to what is now called 'sustainable development'.

If understanding the process of urbanization involves governance issues, the recognition of the plurality of decision-makers and agents in the urban space seems essential to apprehend the current dynamics. The analysis of the respective roles of each urban policy-maker or decision-making body such as the central government, municipal authorities, non-institutional agents, local representatives, property developers, etc., as well as their relationships can be a fruitful approach. The influence of political movements involved in poor as well as in rich neighbourhoods may be addressed. How political parties have taken part in the debate on urban development issues? The role of law may also be inquired as judicial authorities are involved to solve land conflicts<sup>4</sup>.

### **Socio-spatial mobility**

Urbanization directly affects the geographical, economic and social environment of the surrounding rural areas but also the region as a whole. A process of suburbanization is going on with the development of a periphery, at the outskirts of the city and countryside. Such places have their own socio-spatial dynamics. Papers might study the issues and conflicts resulting from the acquisition and development of these areas by agents with conflicting interests. They could also focus on the way mobility between urban, peri-urban and rural areas is structured. The city is indeed an area open to the outside: it is at the heart of migration flows, whether they are transnational and international, between towns and rural areas or between big

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. for instance the judgment of the High Court of Allahabad and the Supreme Court in 2011 on the dispute on the sale of farmer lands in the conflicts between farmers and UttarPradesh government in Greater Noida.

and medium-sized cities. Social and spatial consequences of mobility can be analyzed by taking into account the diverse realities covered by the word migration (as either based on economic, professional, or political motivations, being seasonal, temporary or permanent) and the variety of individual situations (labor force, domestic employees, highly skilled labor, etc.).

### **Urban culture and identity**

The city is primarily a living environment where 'cultural' practices are forged, hence participating in the definition of urban identities. Thanks to the infrastructure available and the presence of both patrons and audience, the city is a privileged place for many art forms: painting, music, dance, theater and also cinema. This axis highlights the theme of integration of artistic practices into the urban space. It aims at understanding the object or the performance, from its conception to its realization, considering the specificity offered by the city it belongs to. How the art forms are being reinforced by the urban context? Were they adapted to it? To what extent can urban space be the cradle of innovation and reinvention of cultural and religious practices? The city itself is a subject of thought and a source of inspiration for artists: films and novels are set against the backdrop of this city and contemporary art is nurtured and exhibited within the city.

Both inherited and constantly updated, resulting from construction and acquisition processes, from individuals and groups, urban identity embodies a wide range of meanings. By taking into consideration the shared existence of various forms of enculturation and sub-cultures<sup>5</sup>, resulting from the individual experience, it will be essential to elucidate the debated and imprecise notion of urban identity. This can be done by bringing issues such as memory, heritage, representation and imagination of the city. Which identity affiliations get to be mobilized by the migrant, those of the occupation, the caste, the place of origin or those of the new place of living? Are the links between towns and villages coming out through the cultural practices or by the symbolic references developed by the migrants? Does urban life influence one's behaviors after returning back to the village? Identity speeches are known for their highly evocative and inspiring power. As a consequence, are they easily manipulated by politics? What is the social and political efficiency of urban identities?

### **Call for papers**

Proposals for papers should be sent either in French or in English before 30<sup>th</sup> November at the following address: [ateliers@ajei.org](mailto:ateliers@ajei.org). Each presentation (in English) will last 20 minutes. Please mention along with your abstract and title, your full name, discipline, level of studies, institution of affiliation and research topics.

The organizing committee will study the proposals and will notify the selection to the authors in December. The full text (20,000 word limit and written in English) will be requested by 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012 for the discussion of each session.

### **Organization :**

Ingrid Le Gargasson (*École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, CEIAS, Paris*) : [ingridl@ehess.fr](mailto:ingridl@ehess.fr)

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<sup>5</sup> Marie-Caroline Saglio-Yatzimirsky, *Intouchable Bombay. Le bidonville des travailleurs du cuir*, Paris, CNRS Editions (coll. Monde indien. Sciences sociales 15<sup>e</sup> -20<sup>e</sup> siècle), 2002.