

Interrogating Marginality: Education and the Urban

Venue: National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore

Dates: 12-14 November, 2018

The enormously diverse and engaging research on cityscapes, especially in the developing world has highlighted the numerous, at times contradictory purposes, imagery and narratives that go on to make the contemporary urban. Masterplans, strategic urban reforms, mega projects of infrastructure, transport and business operations form the part of much of the state-driven as well as transnationally supported visions of urbanism. Other visions including that of “occupancy urbanism”, for instance, construct the city through everyday practices that appropriate and interrupt the master-visions and generate expansive, complex micro networks (Benjamin, 2008; Anand, 2017). Urban marginality is constituted by a range of processes and factors that are bound of urban spatial coordinates as well as those that are outside of it; thus linking to different histories, locations and movements.

As they are forever under construction, urban landscapes can also be read as pedagogical sites involved in interactions, learning and meaning-making. With their own scripts and signs, cities become legible, open, barricaded and guarded. How do we make sense of the relationship between education and the urban? The much fraught history in India points out plurality, institutional expansion and significant re-structuring that has played a key role in determining this relationship (Pink & Noblit, 2017). Shouldering the burden of nation-building, linguistic and regional identity formation, the schools and colleges in Indian cities also began to be prominently plugged in the processes of global information-economy that identified cities to be ideal nodes in the spread of global capitalism (Nambissan, 2017; Kenway et.al. 2017; Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Goldman, 2011; Upadhyya & Vasavi, 2012). Interestingly, a number of regional towns and towns in proximity with urban centers have undergone transformation in recent years, furthering the speculative urban growth and intensifying local dynamics.

Research on education in India, especially within sociology of education has a robust engagement with marginality in terms of rural and Adivasi regions. Works on higher education have paid attention to metropolitan universities and colleges, but urban questions seem to have been inadequately theorised. Outside of the consensus that education is central to thinking of urban publics, a rigorous scholarly engagement appears to be missing.

As researchers of contemporary India with broad disciplinary interests including history, sociology, cultural studies and critical policy studies, the collaborative collective of GHIL, JNU, TISS and NIAS hopes to pay attention to the void in both, education and urban research. Towards this, we are organising a two-day interactive workshops for junior scholars, a masterclass and a panel discussion at National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore. While urban marginality is at the center of the proposed interaction, we look at a number of issues, scholarly texts and engage in peer feedback.