

Arbeitskreis SÜDASIEN



**Specialty Group Meeting South Asia
of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Geographie (DGfG)
- 2nd and 3rd of February 2024 at the University of Augsburg -**

Abstract Overview

Resisting extractivism: Thari Indigenous people's struggles against the Belt and Road Initiative

Usman Ashraf (University of Helsinki)

The Tharparkar desert is under immense socio-spatial pressure due to coal energy development in Pakistan under the massive Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The desert has become a multifaceted assemblage of Pakistani and Chinese state and non-state actors, local and global capital flows, extractive logics across scales, and diverse forms of transformative resistance. The threat of socio-ecological destruction has given rise to diverse forms of resistance by Thari indigenous communities. The Thari indigenous people are resisting extractivist imperatives through multiple strategies, including sit-ins, 'long marches', blocking access to mines and roads, litigation, and social media activism. The politics of struggle, which spans into both structured and everyday forms of resistance, intersect with class interests between landed and business elite and landless agro-pastoralists. The results of the study show that class interests along with religious and caste politics are of detrimental importance in the context of the struggle. The study contributes to improved understanding of the intersectionality of class, religion, and caste in transformative resistance movements against extractivism in the global South.

Keywords: Belt and Road Initiatives, China, extractivism, Pakistan, transformative resistance

Nothing to Eat but Cherries and Apples: Politics of Wheat Subsidies in Ishkoman Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan.

Fizza Batool (University of Augsburg)

This research investigates the untold story of wheat subsidies introduced in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan since 1970's. It attempts to understand the impact of the subsidized wheat on agrarian landscapes, local food systems and diet of people. My research offers empirically grounded ethnographic research in Ishkoman valley over past 8 months and engages with different actors and institutions, from state bodies to NGOs and the small farmers involved in the transformation of agriculture and food systems.

I argue that the so-called food aid given in form of wheat subsidies has had a profound impact on the local agri-food system; different local grains such as barley, millet, wild peas, buckwheat, broad beans have disappeared from the local food system. People have moved from diversity of grains to "wheatification" of diets. The ready availability, continuous consumption and cheap price of wheat have not only changed the diet but also erased the local knowledge of production, storage, and ways of consuming the traditional crops and have created a social, ecological, and epistemic rift, which is causing a decline in crop diversity and loss of species linked to these agrifood systems. In contrast to this, the continuous push of the state toward horticulture and cash crops has changed the existing patterns of farming to orchards and has created a total dependence on subsidized wheat and federal institutions. My approach draws on and connects political ecology and critical agrarian studies to understand the role of state in introducing this policy in the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Healthcare Facilities as Therapeutical Landscapes – The Importance of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Annalia Gminder (Bonn University)

Background: The most important purpose of a healthcare facility is to restore and promote health. However, this can only be successful if hygiene practices are observed and the water

and sanitation infrastructure is well maintained. This paper deals with the importance of the Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) components on health facilities as therapeutic landscapes (GESLER 1992). The research area is the Indian capital Delhi. Main research interests are the external local conditions in India and their effects on the significance of the individual WASH components and the division of the Indian health system into a state-public and a private health sector.

Design: The methodology used for this study comprises an accompanying literature review as well as semi-structured problem-centred (expert) interviews with health professionals and organisations working in the field of WASH in health facilities, such as the WHO and UNICEF. These interviews are complemented by participant observations both in public and private healthcare facilities in Delhi.

Results: The WASH infrastructure and WASH-related practices are of great importance for the healing effect of healthcare facilities. According to several organisations and research studies, WASH services are crucial to prevent infections, to reduce the spread of antimicrobial resistance, and to provide quality care, especially for vulnerable groups like mothers and newborns. What has been less recognised in already existing publications is the importance of healthcare facilities as awareness and education centres for the local communities. Health talks organised by these healthcare facilities and awareness posters can increase the local population's awareness for the importance of WASH practices. Additionally, the importance of an adequate WASH infrastructure plays a huge and increasing role for the mental well-being of employees and patients, especially in private facilities. Thereby, local external circumstances – such as the Kayakalp programme, the Indian culture, numerous infectious diseases and the lack of an appropriate (school) education as a result of socio-economic disparities – play a major role in the significance of the WASH components.

Conclusion: In addition to the huge influence of the individual WASH components on the physical health of employees and patients, the impact on their mental health should not be underestimated. Besides there is a great importance of water, sanitation and hygiene in the salutogenic understanding of healthcare facilities as health-promoting institutions.

Socio-Ecological Dynamics of Rohingya Influx-led Deforestation: Evidence from Ukhia, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Dr. Nahreen I. Khan & Mohammad Rasel (Jahangirnagar University Dhaka)

Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh is mainly significant in terms of environmental and economic perspective which have been disrupted considerably due to Rohingya influx in 2017. A significant amount of the forest has been cleared for the Rohingya community's refuge. The appearing deforestation of the mega camp (camps in Kutupalong area) and huge anthropogenic activity has made it necessary to perform a change detection research in this area.

The concept of this research comes from the intention to explore the changes it had experienced in past few years. This study will inspect the changes with particular reference to a major theoretical approach named Socio-Ecological System since it incorporates an encroachment of a society and the local environment.

The overall aim of this research is to find the changes of forest cover in Rohingya response camp area of Ukhia upazila between 2017 to 2022 using Landsat imageries of the study area. In this secondary data-based quantitative research, Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) will be performed on three multi-temporal satellite imageries and total of 4 major land

cover classes will be identified and mapped followed by inspecting interconnectivity between society and environment.

The result of this study can reveal the amount of deforestation occurred in this area along with the environmental and societal disruption. The findings will analyze and quantify trends of land cover change in the chosen area. The findings will also be used to quantify the patterns of land cover change in the chosen area and analyze land cover changes within a spatiotemporal framework. This can be used as inputs to land management and policy decisions with regard to varied themes that have link with space such as tourism, water management, deforestation and land degradation.

Influence of Place Attachment on Flood Risk Perception: A study of Kosi River Basin in Bihar

Tulika Kumar (IIT Guwahati)

Risk perception towards natural disasters tends to be affected by social, spatial, economic, psychological, and regional conditions. Sociologists conceptualise risk as a socio-cultural product connected with the dynamics of social systems such as social organisations, social institutions, cultures, norms, beliefs, etc. (Tierney 1999; Weichselgartner 2001). Without understanding how society perceives risk and its determinants, the possibilities to conduct effective flood risk management are reduced. Despite continuous flooding followed by disastrous outcomes, households do not move to safer places or relocate themselves. This raises a critical question: What drives communities to live in flood-prone areas despite knowing the risks? Examining the pull factors of flood hazard from the place attachment perspective can provide valuable insights into this question. Against this pretext, the present study aims to empirically examine the influence of place attachment on the flood risk perception of the affected community. The study was conducted in the Supaul district of Bihar, in India, where flooding is a perennial phenomenon. In response to these flood events, various flood management strategies, primarily in the form of structural measures, have been put in place by the government. However, they have failed and increased the devastation in terms of rising river beds, overbank flooding, drainage congestion, permanent water logging, etc. The study employed a mainstream qualitative sociological approach to achieve its objectives. In-depth personal interviews were conducted with the community members of the Supaul district, focusing on how people relate to their surroundings, their living space, their perceptions of flood risk, and their willingness and capacity to cope with flood disasters. Thematic analysis was done to analyse the interview responses. The findings suggest that the communities have a genealogically induced behaviour which impacts their flood risk perception. As the communities are tied to each other through kinship, marriage, and common ancestors, they deeply revere their ancestors and belongings, especially ancestral homes, properties and valuables. The study's findings enhance our understanding of the influence of place attachment on flood risk perception. A thorough understanding of the intersectionality of place attachment and risk perception will also enable policymakers to develop effective and inclusive flood risk communication strategies.

Keywords: Flood Risk Perception, Place Attachment, Sociological Approach, Qualitative Research

Belonging versus Ownership: Paniyas in Agrarian Landscape

Swathi Manalodiparambil (Central European University)

This paper explores the relationship between landless agrarian labourers and the conservation of agrobiodiversity. Property rights play a pivotal role in agrobiodiversity conservation in India; landownership is the determining factor in seeing one's connection to the agrarian

environment. Fixation to landownership leaves a large population of landless agrarian labourers out of the agrobiodiversity conservation discourse, and here arises the need to look beyond property rights. The case of Paniyas, a community of landless Adivasis from Kerala, Southern India, can offer a different perspective. Previously treated as agrestic slaves Paniyas are still largely dispossessed and constitute the major share of agrarian labor force in the district of Wayanad, Kerala. Following the footsteps of the Paniya community offers a different lens to capture the relationship between people and biodiversity in the agrarian environment. This, in turn, can facilitate another modality to understand the engagement of the community with the agrarian environment and biodiversity. The path traversed by a landless Adivasi community helps us observe and appreciate the place-making practices through which they assert their belongingness. The community's foraging habits and walking trails in the agrarian landscape signify their deep connections with the wetland. The paper argue that seeing walking and foraging as a place-making activities help us understand their agency, engagement, knowledge, and skills as landless Adivasis.

Spatio-Temporal Evaluation of Urban Pollution Islands and Variability of Urban Heat Islands in Lahore, Pakistan

Muhammad Nasar-u-Minallah (University of the Punjab Lahore)

In the urban and rural landscapes of densely populated megacities, air pollution and the urban heat island effect have emerged as serious environmental problems. The current study's objectives were to use remotely sensed data to investigate the seasonal variations in the surface urban heat island intensity as obtained from the MODIS satellite and the corresponding seasonal distribution of specific air pollutants, such as sulphur dioxide (SO₂), carbon monoxide (CO), and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) as obtained from the European Tropospheric Monitoring Instrument (TROPOMI), for the years from 2019 to 2023. This study offers data on factors that are taken into account in future urban developments to build mitigation measures that could enhance the quality of life for a particular population when evaluating environmental quality. These parameters include air pollution (SO₂, NO₂, and CO), LST (land surface temperature), the normalized difference built-up index (NDBI), urban hotspot, surface urban heat island, and the normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI). The Findings of the study show that, over Lahore City, there is an urban heat island effect, especially in the areas with high population density and urban land use, as well as near industrial and construction sites. Summertime records the highest SUHII. Conversely, the pollutants that have been chosen also constitute an urban pollution island (UPI) that limits the areas with elevated SUHII levels. The study's findings highlight the value of using geospatial technology tools to analyse and mitigate regional air pollution in a sophisticated manner. The results have significant implications for managing the urban environment and adapting the quality of the air in cities.

Keywords: Urban Pollution Islands, Surface temperature, Urban Heat Islands, Spatial Techniques, Lahore

Erosion of the commons in the Karakoram of northern Pakistan?

Matthias Schmidt (University of Augsburg)

Water and grazing land are essential for the livelihoods of the local population in the Karakoram mountains of Northern Pakistan and have been successfully managed and used as common property resources for many centuries. Climate change and modernization processes are threatening the functionality and existence of the elaborate local common property regimes. Technological developments, educational successes, better accessibility and the desire for greater participation in modernization processes and a higher living standard, with the need for

cash income, are leading to a loss of importance and attractiveness of farming activities and consequently to an increasing unwillingness to take on communally defined duties and tasks. In addition, there are negative consequences of climate change with regard to water availability and extreme weather events, which lead to yield losses in agriculture and livestock farming as well as greater uncertainties. The presentation is based on empirical research conducted in 2023 in the Baltistan region of the Central Karakoram and presents recent developments in communal property regimes and possible consequences.

Gap in Awareness Generation and its impact on the Utilisation: A case of RSBY in India
Priya Singh (Jacobs University Bremen)

As a step forward towards providing universal health coverage in India, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY) was introduced in 2008 as a national hospital insurance scheme for the poor in India. RSBY aims to reduce out-of-pocket expenditures arising out of catastrophic healthcare needs and reduce financial barriers to accessing hospitalization care. It provides in-patient health care to a family of five for up to INR 30,000 (~359.75\$) per family per year. RSBY was designed to be a paperless and cashless scheme; however, the program faced several challenges. Despite being a well-designed program, RSBY could not achieve its goals in terms of outreach to the target population. Previous studies on RSBY highlight that despite a higher enrolment rate in the program, there was lower utilization of the program benefits. Thus, this study aims to explore the gaps in the implementation of RSBY which might act as a barrier to the utilization of benefits of the program. To achieve the goals, I employed a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with the stakeholders of the program. The stakeholders varied from government officials, front-line workers, insurance company representatives, third-party administrators, and the private and public health care providers engaged with RSBY. In total, I conducted 12 interviews to understand the on-ground implementation of the program. For this paper, I mainly focus on the gaps in the awareness generation of the program. The findings of the study highlight that there were several gaps in the awareness generation process which directly impacts the access of benefits by the target population. The process of awareness generation mainly focused on the information about the process of enrolment in the program, while the information about the program benefits and the process of utilization of these benefits was conveniently ignored by the non-government stakeholders engaged in the awareness generation process. Furthermore, through RSBY, it was the first time the government schemes involved private healthcare providers to benefit the target population under the program. The findings suggest that the information about the private empanelled hospitals was not communicated properly to the target population. The findings of this study highlight the gaps in the implementation process; a lesson based on the learnings of this study can help in the better implementation of the currently functioning *Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna* (AB-PM-JAY), which has replaced the previously running RSBY.

Keywords: Publicly-funded Health Insurance Program, Social Welfare, India.

Diversity and complexity of protracted disaster displacement in urban areas of Kathmandu Valley, Nepal

Alexandra Titz (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

On 25 April 2015, the Himalayan state of Nepal was severely hit by a devastating Mw 7.8 earthquake disaster, followed by a major Mw 7.3 aftershock on May 12. Approximately 17,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) fled the worst affected rural regions towards displacement sites in the Kathmandu Valley. In spring 2018, the number of camps and temporary shelters was still strikingly high, especially in the urban periphery. While the drivers of disaster displacement are relatively well understood, uncertainties remain as regarding the long-term

displacement and immobility of IDPs. In this paper, I analyse factors that trigger long-term internal displacement in urban areas of Kathmandu Valley/Nepal after the 2015 earthquake disaster to illustrate and theorise the discourse of reconstruction and return that shapes experiences, strategies and policies. I use the concepts of fields of practice, disaster justice and waiting to provide insights into the connections between social inequality, structural forms of governance and the reconstruction process. People most affected by the disaster are systematically excluded from the forms of disaster justice as well as the design of reconstruction and return. This exclusion is the result of highly unequal social and political regimes, which in turn legitimise governance in general and disaster response in particular. Displaced people therefore often draw on the relationships and resources that shape their 'everyday' life story to give meaning to the legacy of injustice and to carry out the social repair work that is an almost inevitable part of life after disasters. Due to perceived or experienced lack of power and uncertainty of not being able to control future, the situation of displaced people is characterised by a deep feeling of hopelessness and despair. They may feel oppressed by the passage of time and stuck in a state of unending, unstructured time. Disaster risk and displacement risk cannot be fully understood and resolved through a purely technocratic risk management perspective: As the findings of this research show, disaster displacement risk is fundamentally social and political process that involves choices and constraints, challenges, and opportunities experienced, perceived, and interpreted by IDPs in very distinct ways. However, to make sense of such questions and observations, it is necessary to understand how the decision making of at-risk societies and individuals is embedded in culture, and how people use culture in their everyday life to establish DRR practice.

A comprehensive approach to disentangle climate and land cover change impact on water resources (DECLARE)

Paul Wagner¹, Athira Pavizham², Bs Soundharajan³, Sreeraj Sreenivas², Kristin Peters¹, Nicola Fohrer¹, Jens Kiesel¹

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Both climate and land use/ land cover changes have decisive impacts on the environment across the globe, especially water resources are significantly impacted and vulnerable. This is shown by the alteration of characteristics of hydrological extremes such as floods and droughts, which are closely linked to society. Separating the impacts of climate and land use/ land cover changes on water resources is important to understand our role in mitigating and adapting to global change. This separation is of high research interest and many studies targeted both climate and land cover change impacts on water resources in individual case studies, especially over the last two decades. The project aims to 1) analyze the key outcomes of the available studies, 2) propose a comprehensive approach to attribute the combined impacts of land use/ land cover or climate changes to these drivers. The project is carried out in an Indo-German collaboration between IIT Palakkad, Amrita School of Engineering and Kiel University. The team consists of two senior scientists and one PhD student on both the Indian and the German side. The two-year project (2023 – 2024) is funded by a collaboration of the Indian Department of Science and Technology (DST) and German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). In this contribution, first results from this Indo-German research project will be presented.

Assembling fair labour in Indian tea and granite industries. Transformations through voluntary sustainability standards?

Miriam Wenner (University of Göttingen)

Organising labour in a way to guarantee adequate incomes, reliable contracts, and safe work conditions remains a challenging task especially in countries of the Global South, where low salaries and the patchy enforcement of national regulation pertaining to work and environment continue to attract global capital. Inspired by values such as equality, solidarity, and empowerment of producers, a number of “fair” trading initiatives aim at improving the conditions of workers by setting standards regarding child labour, wages, work contracts, besides others. Together with formal and informal laws, rules, agreements, social relations, and ideas, such standards construct a complex web of regulation of labour that manifests in partly overlapping, complementary or contradictory regulations of labour at local sites. Yet, there is hardly any research on how voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) work inside and in relation to these already existing regulatory contexts, and through what mechanisms possible transformations of local labour regimes work. This presentation will show first preliminary insights on the ways in which standards attempt to transform labour regimes in the Indian tea and granite sectors, and discuss what ideas of fairness and justice these initiatives like “Fairtrade” or “Fairstone” transport. The aim is to get a clearer picture of the multi-scalar governance of labour regimes. Conceptually, the project draws on a novel combination of the approaches of assemblage and moral economy, and thereby complements existing research on the workings of VSS from Labour Geography and Global Production Networks.

Time Table

		Friday 02.02.24	Saturday 03.02.24
9:00 - 10:30	Forenoon session A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registration - Welcome by Markus Keck (University of Augsburg) - <u>Keynote by Anindita Datta (in person)</u> 	<p><u>-Keynote by Ejnavarzala Haribabu (online)</u></p> <p><u>Panel 4: Water scapes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influence of Place Attachment on Flood Risk Perception: A study of Kosi River Basin in Bihar (<i>Tulika Kumar</i>) - A comprehensive approach to disentangle climate and land cover change impact on water resources (DECLARE) (<i>Paul Wagner, Athira Pavizham, Bs Soundharajan, Sreeraj Sreenivas, Kristin Peters, Nicola Fohrer, Jens Kiesel</i>)
10:30 - 11:00	Tea/coffee break		

		Friday 02.02.24	Saturday 03.02.24
11:00 - 12:30	Forenoon session B	<p><u>Panel 1: Indigenous environments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erosion of the commons in the Karakoram of northern Pakistan? (<i>Matthias Schmidt</i>) - Socio-Ecological Dynamics of Rohingya Influx-led Deforestation: Evidence from Ukhia, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh (<i>Nahreen I. Khan, Mohammed Rasel</i>) - Resisting extractivism: Thari Indigenous people's struggles against the Belt and Road Initiative (<i>Usman Ashraf</i>) 	<p><u>Panel 5: Health scapes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Healthcare Facilities as Therapeutical Landscapes – The Importance of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (<i>Annalia Gminder</i>) - Gap in Awareness Generation and its impact on the Utilisation: A case of RSBY in India (<i>Priya Singh</i>) - Farewell by Prof. Dr. Markus Keck
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch	Soup and bavarian breads -> thematic tables	Lunch boxes -> for in-house or to go
13:30 - 15:00	Afternoon session A	<p><u>Panel 2: AgriFood scapes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belonging versus Ownership: Paniyas in Agrarian Landscape (<i>Swathi Manalodiparambil</i>) - Nothing to Eat but Cherries and Apples: Politics of Wheat Subsidies in Ishkoman Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan (<i>Fizza Batool</i>) - Assembling fair labour in Indian tea and granite industries. Transformations through voluntary sustainability standards? (<i>Miriam Wenner</i>) 	
15:00- 15:30	Tea/coffee break		

		Friday 02.02.24	Saturday 03.02.24
15:30-17:00	Afternoon session B	<u>Panel 3: Risk scapes</u> - Spatio-Temporal Evaluation of Urban Pollution Islands and Variability of Urban Heat Islands in Lahore, Pakistan (<i>Muhammad Nasar-u-Minallah</i>) - Diversity and complexity of protracted disaster displacement in urban areas of Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (<i>Alexandra Titz</i>) - annual reunion of the members of the AK Südasien	
19:00	Dinner	Dinner at Sangam Restaurant (on participants' own expense)	

How to reach

The meeting takes place at the conference room of the Center for Climate Resilience of the University of Augsburg. The address is: Universitätsstraße 12a (Gebäude I), 86159 Augsburg.

By public transport from Munich to Augsburg

The regional trains (RB) from Munich central station to Augsburg central station run at least once per hour, with nine stops on the way. Additionally, there are high speed trains (ICE) with no intermediary stops. Further information on timetables and ticket prices can be found here:

<https://int.bahn.de/en>

By public transport from Augsburg to the Center for Climate Resilience of the University of Augsburg

Streetcar line 3 runs from Augsburg main station in the direction of „Königsbrunn" or „Inninger Straße P+R" to the stop "Universität". You exit on the University Campus. From here it is about a 5-minute walk to the Center for Climate Resilience. It is located in building I on the campus plan. This is over the lake and up the stairs to the left where you see a metal statue. Further information on timetables and ticket prices can be found here:

www.avv-augsburg.de/fahrplan/fahrplanauskunft

