Tenth Annual
Research And Orientation Workshop
On
Cities, Migrants and Insecurities

18-22 November 2025
Hotel The Sojourn, Kolkata

A Report

Calcutta Research Group
In collaboration with
FGHR,
European Master in Migration and Intercultural
Relations (EMMIR),
Canadian Institute for Advanced Research
(CIFAR)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OVERVIEW OF THEMES

In an increasingly urbanised world, cities have emerged as both beacons of opportunity and hotspots of social, economic, and political tensions. Cities are wrought by anxieties that manifest in various forms: competition over resources, cultural friction, policy ambiguity, and fears—both real and imagined—of insecurity. Understanding the interplay between cities, migration, and insecurity is vital for shaping inclusive, resilient urban futures. Cities represent economic hubs, cultural melting pots, and centres of innovation. These are sites that promise jobs, education, healthcare, and a higher quality of life; and despite their promise, cities are also spaces of vulnerability and conflict. For migrants fleeing rural poverty, climate change, conflict, or persecution, urban areas offer the hope of reinvention. Globally, over 56% of the world's population now lives in urban areas, and this figure is expected to rise significantly. Rural-to-urban migration accounts for a large portion of growth in cities, with growing dependencies on infrastructure, housing, and public services. Migrants are an integral part of the socio-economic fabric of cities. From construction and domestic work to entrepreneurship, migrants fill essential roles that sustain urban economies, bringing in new languages, cuisines, traditions, and perspectives, enriching the cultural life of cities, though entrenched stereotypes or systemic exclusion often leave such contributions unrecognised.

The shift of the modern city from a site of industrial production to a site of knowledge-based economy, which requires a complex of place-based services makes for a site or reorganisation of space, faced with challenges of material practices and regimes of city-making (at times intolerance, absence of resources for combating diseases and the turmoil of climate change). Urban migration in India acts as one of the key factors contributing to growth of corporate functions, marked by the geographic dispersal of economic activities. The strategic role of the services that migrants offer as inputs for a city is matched by the growing informalisation of these services, even when connected with manufacturing or industrial services. Migration, whether temporary or permanent, in many ways is a structural reality of modern cities. As urban populations diversify, the future of cities will depend on their ability to turn perceived insecurities into shared opportunities; and thereby, cities of the future can plan towards becoming not just spaces of survival, but homes of dignity, belonging, and collective progress.

Calcutta Research Group (CRG) has been engaged in the study of migration, especially forced migration and the dignity of migrants in particular, for more than 25 years. The two declarations on the protection of refugees and migrants (Kolkata Declaration & Afghanistan Declaration) adopted during the Research and Orientation Workshops in 2018 and 2021 are evidences of the possibilities for the intervention of the Research and Orientation Workshops and Conferences of CRG. The Declarations addressed different dynamics of the contemporary global refugee crisis, its articulation in the South Asian milieu, its expression of solidarity with the victims of forced displacement, and its assessment of international efforts to improve the distress of such uprootedness. Prepared in the wake of the Global Compacts, the matters to which the Declaration turned their attention are fundamental to CRG's research agenda and its valued association with its collaborating institutes. CRG's attempt to deal with the issues through conducting workshops, conferences, drafting policy

briefs and research articles, and the Annual Workshop, as part of its research programme 'Justice, Security and Vulnerable Populations of South Asia', on the newly imposed challenges and insecurities in cities, is aimed at engaging young scholars, academicians, teachers, journalists and activists, through exploration, research and discussion. The Research and Orientation Workshop is the flagship programme of this sustained study. This annual event is pivotal to CRG's aspiration to voice the experiences, opinions and discontents of South Asia, and also in global discussions on the subject, while CRG continues to respond to the increased vulnerabilities of migrants. This workshop comprises a four and half-day event with deliberations that will centre on the following three modules:

Module A: Gender and Urban Insecurities
Coordinator: *Samata Biswas*

Module B: Climate, Epidemiological Insecurities and the City
Coordinators: *Debashree Chakraborty and Shatabdi Das*

Module C: Migrants, Insecurities and Sanctuary Cities
Coordinator: *Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury*

MODULE A

Gender and Urban Insecurities

Loving and Loathing the Gendered City: Urbanity and (In)Security

Module Coordinator: Samata Biswas

The 2025 National Annual Report on Women's Safety, or NARI, included surveys of 31 Indian cities, ranking them according to women's perceived experiences of security[1], decided along the lines of crime rates, deserted area, experiences of groping and harassment, darkness in the city, low policing, and various other parameters. Kolkata, the city where our workshop is located, ranks in the bottom tier of these cities, that is, it is recognised as one of the Indian cities where women feel the most unsafe. Securing the city for women and other gender marginal people has been at the forefront of many discussions and mobilisations across the city of Kolkata, in the aftermath of the violent rape and murder of a woman doctor in the R. G. Kar Medical College and Hospital, in August 2024. The protests often involved physically occupying city spaces (from the roads in front of administrative offices and police headquarters to key intersections of the city through the night). They were also tapping into older forms of anti-rape protests in India which led to legislation changes (Bhanwari Devi, Mathura, Rameeza Bee, Nirbhaya) and decade long mobilisations for swift and vindictive 'justice'. On the one-year anniversary of the first "Raat Dokhol/ Occupy the

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[1] Incidentally, the report, created by PValue Analytics, needs one to register multiple details, including email address and phone number, before becoming available for download. The sharing of phone numbers online affects women disproportionately, because often women are subjected to much more than unsolicited advertisements, they are targets of harassment and bullying via phone and different messaging apps.

Night" protests, a smaller but significant group once again gathered in different parts of the city to continue the protests and mark the first mobilisation.

What makes a city secure for women? In the 1905 short story, "Sultana's Dream", Sister Sara claims, "how unfair it is to shut in the harmless women and let loose the men", simply because women are unsafe in their presence. Feminist utopia (think Herland, Barbie) often imagines a segregation of genders to be instrumental for a peaceful and secure future for all. Feminist Urbanism challenges the existing patriarchal conditions that mark the city as hostile for women and gender marginal persons, asking questions about safe mobility, sanitation and design. It also questions the neutrality of spaces, where gender-neutral can be cause of concern and insecurity. A case in point is sanitary infrastructure. A recent study conducted in Kolkata by Sabar Institute and Azad Foundation found that public sanitation facilities act as sites of physical violence for women, transpersons and sex workers—giving rise to forms of insecurity while presumably catering to sanitary security. They also work to further marginalise already vulnerable Dalit women who work as sanitary workers, in dehumanising conditions, poorly paid, marked by caste, class, gender alike. This attests to the security–insecurity dyad, in which mechanisms, ideologies and infrastructure of security produces further and newer forms of insecurity.

Safe sanitation was one of the key demands of the different groups that embarked on occupy the night movements in Kolkata last year. Junior doctors demanded portable toilets, political parties, private individuals and shopping complexes kept their doors open at night—and on the other side, some public utilities shut their doors early. What could have been questions and demands about equitable access to secure sanitation, ended up invisibilising the gendered labour that makes sanitary infrastructure possible.

In the past decade, South Asia has witnessed spectacular movements on its streets. Ranging from the Aragalya in Sri Lanka (2022) to the July uprising in Bangladesh (2024), the occupy the night movement in Kolkata, India (2024) and the Gen Z protests in Nepal (ongoing). It is possible to establish these movements in the long trajectory of "occupy" movements across the world, such as the demonstrations on Tahrir Square, "Occupy Wall Street", etc. Although none other than the "Raat Dokhol/ Occupy the Night" movement(s) in Kolkata posited gender security in urban spaces as their distinct agenda, critical works, testimonies and reflections based on earlier movements, give us a possible inroad into foregrounding questions of gender within urban political mobilisations and uprisings that demand security/ regime change/ structural reorganisation.[2]

The attempt in our module will be to understand and interrogate gendered security vis-a-vis urban spaces, with greater focus on South Asia. We will discuss issues of rights to the city, the gendered articulation of such rights, the gendered limits of such rights, the process of popular mobilisation that use the city space as their site of articulation, the use of gendered symbols and narratives in such mobilisation. Our engagement will also be contrapuntal in nature, seeking to understand the gendered foundation of these movements, and the gendered faultlines that they inevitably lay bare.

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[2] I am deliberately omitting the Indian farmers' movement (2020-2021) from this discussion as its pattern, mobilisation and demands were differently organised than the ones described above.

Suggested Reading List

Allison et al: "Occupy Wall Street ten years on: How its disruptive institutional entrepreneurship spread and why it fizzled"

"At Risk"? The Fed Up Honeys Re-Present the Gentrification of the Lower East Side Author(s): Caitlin Cahill

Clover, Joshua. *Riot, Strike, Riot.*

Dineo et al. "Gender and public space"

Joshi, S.et al.:" Devising gender-responsive transport policies in South Asia."

Observer Research Foundation: "Rethinking the Challenge of Women's Safety in Indian Cities"

Marat, Erica. "The Deadly Violence that Shook India". Phadke, Shilpa. *Why Loiter*.

MODULE B

Climate, Epidemiological Insecurities and the City

Module Coordinators: Debashree Chakraborty and Shatabdi Das

Cities are increasingly characterised by rapidly expanding urban spaces reeling under extreme climate events (high rainfall, extreme temperatures, flash floods and prolonged dry periods) that pose risks to human health as well as other species. The module aims at analysing the vulnerabilities and challenges of implementing mitigation plans for health infrastructure and environmental protection in the context of Indian cities. Urban environmental conservation is important for preparedness for climate disasters, prevention of climate hazards, as well as sudden and slow-onset, extreme climate events and their impacts. Indian cities witnessing rapid built-area increase are faced with challenges in terms of climate action and lack of assurance of all-inclusive sustainable development, with a projection of 53% of national population to become urban population by addition of 416 million urban dwellers by the year 2050.[3] This will further put millions more at risk of disasters and diseases.

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[3] Coalition for Urban Transitions, Seizing India's Urban Opportunity, Ross Centre for Sustainable Cities and C40 Cities (London and Washington, DC: World Resources Institute, 2021), 5, https://urbantransitions.global/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SUO-India-Designed-Report-UPDATED_12Aug.pdf; Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, "Since 2014, India has undertaken the world's largest planned urbanization programme and various transformative policies and interventions to achieve India's economic and sustainable growth targets: Shri Hardeep S. Puri," PIB Delhi, 29 June 2022.

Changing land cover and land use patterns in cities and their effects on regional climate, through the alteration of surface air properties and ground modifications (via anthropogenic emissions and waste release), is of concern, as these culminate into highly vulnerable pockets or hotspots where the city population is greatly prone to epidemiological fluxes. Through examples from Indian cities, the discussion will try to examine the changing health impacts of extreme weather conditions that further widen socio-economic disparities and the mechanisms in place, as part of climate action plans and infrastructural designs. Interventions in selected cities are often found to be directed towards policy practices for dispersing the residues of pandemic and keeping infectious diseases at bay. Again, such facilities are divided at times and discriminatory, divulging urban divides that are triggered further by environmental catastrophes. Climate Action Plans [(CAPs) at national and state levels] are important aspects, especially their take on diseases, health and vulnerability. How well do these aspects feature in policy approaches—will be one area of discussion in the module, among others.

While epidemiology, in its connotative sense, conjures up images that are largely medical, "epidemiological", in its ramifications, is more of a social phenomenon, playing out, in understated mutation, across the domains of the political and the economical, subjecting the society and its actors to insecurities. As the epidemiological plays out, cities become sites of its intrusion. Cities, with their massive population and infrastructural and municipal requirements, were the worst hit during the recent Covid-19 pandemic. Cities also bear heavy costs of life with epidemiological crises like vector borne diseases, outbreak of infections, etc. Such crises not only challenge the medical facilities on offer, but also challenge and even change the functional rubrics of the city. As the dynamics of economy and income change after an epidemiological crisis sets in and takes over cities, the salient also change.

In other words, the epidemiological is also a synonym of change and it brings with it challenges to rise up to the change. These changes are of multiple kinds and construe varied aspects of municipal and social controls which, in the end, imbue insecurities. The challenges thrown by epidemiological insecurities are expansive in their range. While medical emergencies form the top most layer of such insecurities, its effects percolate to several other strata when posited in the cityscape. From access to emergency medical facilities to who can access facilities and how much—become part of the greater question of insecurity. Alongside, the rubrics of inequality in terms of social and economic security play out to the fore more starkly in times of epidemiological crises than they do in normal terms.

The city, in such times, becomes a veritable ground of contestations which cater to insecurities more than security. Epidemiological times are thus symptomatic of insecurities. These are moments when "biopolitics from below" play out to inform "the politics of life" as Ranabir Samaddar discusses in his latest book *Biopolitics from Below: Crisis, Conjuncture, Rupture*. Epidemiological times reveal the fissures that exist in our society in terms of inequality, accessibility and democratic practices and cities become the theatres of such play outs.

In this module, we shall try to see how the city changes itself or may be, reveals itself, in the face of epidemiological crises. The module will also attempt to explore how the cultural terrains of cities transform as outcomes of epidemiological crises, and in turn how these

changes are mapped across cultural artefacts, thus making them into testaments of spatio-temporal changes.

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MODULE C

Migrants, Insecurities and Sanctuary Cities

Migrant as Subject in an Urban Sanctuary

Module Coordinator: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury

The concept of 'sanctuary city' refers to different policies and practices in different national and regional contexts. It may also focus on variable populations in different contexts. In a way, the idea of sanctuary city is a matter of justice, with an objective of challenging the legitimacy of existing national borders, and related enforcement of immigration policies. The main motive behind sanctuary city is to provide fundamental rights and basic amenities for all residents, irrespective of their immigration status. This is also to generate cultures of hospitality in order to receive and treat migrants in a more humane manner. In many instances, the mayors of cities in the Global North, where most of the migrants reside, vow to protect the immigrants even applying policies of non-cooperation with the federal enforcement authorities. In some instances, the mayors of different cities forge their own network to ensure shelter and justice to the immigrants. In fact, the population of cities around the world have been growing quite rapidly over the last four decades due to the transition of state economies from welfare economies to market-friendly neoliberal economies. Whereas, in 2008. the population living in cities of this planet crossed the 50%

mark, this number is estimated to reach 60% by 2030, and then 70% by 2050. The total global population is projected to touch 9.3 billion by 2050, and the global urban population is likely to be 7.4 billion around the same time. Moreover, there are significant differences in the rate of urbanisation between developed and developing countries. In fact, more urbanisation is taking place in the developing economies of the Global South.

The decreasing yield in the agricultural sector, and sometimes decreasing returns in the other traditional occupations in the rural economies of the Global South, accompanied by the sky-rocketing aspirations of the population of the comparatively less developed countries in the neoliberal era, are pulling more and more people toward the urban centres. The rural population get attracted to the cities for perceived better employment opportunities, education and higher incomes. Therefore, the densely populated countries, like India, China and Indonesia, are witnessing unprecedented urbanisation. As a consequence, the comparatively fertile agricultural land on the outskirts of the cities is being transformed into urban, habitable land in many cases. The peri-urban areas have not only been experiencing significant losses of agricultural land, but also perceptible degradation of the quality of water. The demands for water, food and energy are also increasing within and immediately outside the cities.

Against this backdrop, there is an urgent need for shifting the geographies of urban futures to the Global South in the contemporary world. This is perhaps more crucial today in the context of the continued dominance of the Global North, primarily with the normative template of coloniality in the traditional urban studies. The rapid urbanisation in the 21st century is giving rise to economic, social, and environmental insecurities, and the consequent structural violence of coloniality, raciality, securitisation, environmental degradation, and patriarchy, among other dimensions. Therefore, the contemporary neoliberal cities are required to be interrogated in the backdrop of historical and contemporary dispossession. The precarious everyday existence of the masses in the city, struck by dispossession and unfreedom, have been becoming part of contestations and negotiations over multiple optimistic imaginaries of the urban, emanating from the state as well as private enterprises.

In this context, the neoliberal cities are witnessing marginalisation of low-income city-dwellers and shrinking of the urban middle class. So, more and more of these marginalised population are moving to the peripheries of cities, or beyond. Thus, these residents are being more and more exposed, not only to spatial dislocation, but also to further financial risks, and the disruption of their livelihoods. The agricultural hinterlands, and in some cases, closed industrial units of the yesteryears, are being turned into urban real estates, mainly the development of high-end enclaves of gated communities and luxury townships, whereas the population with lower incomes are compelled to move to informal settlements. In short, the neoliberal economy is unsettling lives of migrants in different ways.

In India, for instance, some inner-city informal settlements are gradually becoming prime sites for commercial redevelopment. Over and above, since the early 21st century, new national initiatives in the country have offered cities additional finance to invest in key urban infrastructure, thereby sometimes displacing more residents from the urban slums. To understand these developments, critical social thinkers have been applying spatial imaginaries to underscore social differences. The politics of location and situated knowledges appear to unfold the contours of systems of power and domination. We need to interrogate the lives of migrants in this context of a hierarchy of rights in the cities. There is a relationship between migration governance and urban space as everyday life of the

migrants. The city, after all, exemplifies a spatial and political geography of everyday bordering, of governing citizenship rights, and politics of belonging within spaces of co-existing difference. The restrictions on mobility of migrants within the city become the dominant narrative. The spatio-temporal reproduction of precarity in everyday life of the migrants, and their limited possibilities for settlement, enhance the fragilities and liminalities of the migrant as subject. The fracturing of legalities in the neoliberal era gives rise to an unstable system of rights of migrants, thereby perpetuating their precarity and insecurity.

Therefore, the migrant life becomes dependent upon the complex geopolitical spatiality of migration that divides urban actors, and the biopolitical temporality, which perpetuates the 'otherness' of migrants. The everyday life of migrants in a city is marked by the surveillance of their compliance with the rules and regulations, while their fundamental recognition as contributors to the prosperity and development of the city remain unnoticed. As a result, the migrant labour can hardly become settled in, or belonging to the neoliberal cities. Their precarity and unfreedom are spatialised through everyday bordering in the city. This everyday bordering generates more obstacles to engagement of the migrants in the society, and perpetuate the precarity of migrant labour. Everyday life in the city becomes a site of discipline and control of the migrant bodies, with stigma of the 'outsider', 'threatening others'. Their everyday acts of mobilisation and solidarity, challenging this discipline, control, and bordering acts, are capable of putting up a resistance. But, these acts of solidarity largely remain episodic in nature. In fact, being invisible, impoverished and unsettled, they cannot afford to raise their voices, more so, if they are transborder migrants, with spectres of detainment and deportation hanging on their heads.

This module will attempt to delve deeper into these issues with suitable illustrations from the Global South as well as from Global North.

Reading List

1. Elena Vacchelli & Franca Roeschert. "Participation and contested forms of citizenship in the City of Sanctuary", *Citizenship Studies*, 28:4-5, 424-443, 2024.

2. Gary Reich and Jay Barth. "Immigration Restriction in the States: Contesting the Boundaries of Federalism?" *Publius*, Vol. 42, No. 3, Annual Review of Federalism (Summer 2012), 422-448.

3. Harald Bauder. "Sanctuary Cities: Policies and Practices in International Perspective", *International Migration* Vol. 55 (2) 2017, 174-187.

4. J. Matthew Hoye. "Sanctuary Cities and Republican Liberty", *Politics & Society*, 2020, Vol. 48(1) 67 –97.

5. Jennifer J. Bagelman, *Sanctuary City: A Suspended State*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016

6. Kassra A. R. Oskooii, Sarah K. Dreier and Loren Collingwood. "Partisan Attitudes toward Sanctuary Cities: The Asymmetrical Effects of Political Knowledge", P*olitics & Policy*, Volume 46, No. 6 (2018): 951-984.

7. Raffaele Bazurli & Els de Graauw. "Explaining Variation in City Sanctuary Policies: Insights from American and European Cities", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49:14, 3649-3670, 2023.

8. Ranabir Samaddar. *Biopolitics from Below: Crisis, Conjuncture, Rupture*, Central European University Press, 2025.

9. Ranabir Samaddar. *Chronicles of Urban Justice: A Conversation*, Calcutta Research Group, 2024.

10.Sabin Bieri and Christoph Bader (Eds.). *Transitioning to Reduced Inequalities*, MDPI, 2023.

Online Orientation Meeting and Distance Segment.

The online orientation meeting of the workshop was held on 17 September 2025, 7 PM (IST) onwards on Zoom. The orientation meet was designed to introduce the workshop and its segments to all participants. This meeting marked the beginning of the distance segment of the workshop that would continue through September, October and November, till participants finally met in Kolkata for the physical segment. Throughout these two-three months, online meetings and classes were held to facilitate discussions and interactions between Module Coordinators and Workshop Participants, that helped participants develop their research ideas and revise papers, while also plan to creatively present their field experiences and academic engagements. Each module coordinator conducted two-three online meetings with respective module participants to discuss their work-in-progress between September and November 2025. All circulars, reading materials, notes, participants bio-profiles and abstracts were uploaded on a secure web-portal of the workshop and circulars and logistical notes were shared with participants from time to time.

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

Organised by
Calcutta Research Group
in collaboration with
European Master in Migration and Intercultural Relations (EMMIR), Carl von Ossietzky Universität, Oldenburg, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR), and FGHR

18-22 November 2025
Venue: The Sojourn, Hotel, Kolkata

18 November 2025 (Day 1)

4:00 pm-5:00 pm: Registration

5:00 pm-7:00 pm: Inaugural Session

Chair: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, *Professor, Rabindra Bharati University, & CRG, Kolkata, India.*

5:00 pm-5:05 pm: Welcome Address: Shyamalendu Majumdar, *Director, CRG, Kolkata, India.*

5:05 pm-5:20 pm: Introducing the Workshop: Paula Banerjee, *IDRC Endowed Chair, Centre on Gender and Forced Displacement, Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand, & CRG, Kolkata, India*, **and Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury**

5:20 pm-5:30 pm: Introduction by Participants

5:30 pm-7:00 pm: Inaugural Lecture
Speaker: Mahalaya Chatterjee, *Professor, University of Calcutta, & Member, CRG, Kolkata, India.*
Lecture Title: Future of the Metropolis: The Kolkata Case

7:00 pm-9:00 pm: Welcome Dinner

9:00 am-9:30 am: Registration

9:30 am-10:30 am: Module A Lecture: Gender and Urban Insecurities
Speaker: Samata Biswas, *Assistant Professor, The Sanskrit College and University, & CRG, Kolkata, India.*

10:30 am-11:00 am: Tea Break

11:00 am-12:30 pm: Paper Presentations by Participants of Module A [Each Participant will have 15 minutes to present their papers, followed by discussion/Q+A]
Discussant: Samata Biswas
Presenters:
1. **Anisha Bhattacharjee**, *Tezpur University, Tezpur, India*. **Women and Right to Sanitation in Urban Slums: A Socio-Legal Study of the Slum Settlements in Guwahati.**
2. **Athina Ahmed**, *SIMEC Research Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh.* **Gendering Chayer Adda:**
   Placemaking and the Invisibility of Women in Dhaka's Tea Stall Culture.
3. **Md. Eftiaz Hossain**, *SIMEC Research Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh.* **Digital Insecurities:**
   Addressing Technology-Facilitated Violence Against Migrant Women in Urban
   Bangladesh.
4. **Rabina Chatterjee**, *Heritage Law College, Kolkata, India.* **From Widowhood to Sex Work Migration, Stigma and the Search for Emancipation.**

12:30 pm-1:30 pm: Lunch Break

1:30 pm-3:00 pm: Paper Presentations by Participants of Module A, continued [Each Participant will have 15 minutes to present their papers, followed by discussion/Q+A]
Discussant: Samata Biswas
Presenters:
5. **Sekh Shamim**, *Institute of Language Studies and Research, Kolkata, India.* **Negotiating Urban Space: Queer Security and Print Culture in Kolkata.**
6. **Shreya Das**, *The Sanskrit College and University, Kolkata, India.* **A Nineteenth-Century**
   Debate Around Possession of Children by Prostitutes.
7. **Syifa Salsabila Nasution**, *Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand.* **From Regulation to Closure: The Impact of Policy on the Multidimensional Vulnerability of Sex Workers in Surabaya's Dolly District.**

3:00 pm-3:30 pm: Tea Break

3:30 pm-5:00 pm: Creative Session
Discussant: Samata Biswas

5:00 pm-6:30 pm: Special Lecture
Chair: Paula Banerjee
Speaker: Thomas Spijkerboer, *Professor, Ghent University, Belgium.*
Lecture Title: Exclusionary urban zoning: the limits and potential of European human rights law

<table>
<tr><td>20 November 2025 (Day 3)</td></tr>
</table>

9:00 am-9:30 am: Registration

9:30 am-10:30 am: Module B Lecture: Climate, Epidemiological Insecurities and the City
Speakers: Debashree Chakraborty, *Research and Programme Associate, CRG, Kolkata, India,* **and**
Shatabdi Das, *Assistant Director, CRG, Kolkata, India.*

10:30 am-11:00 am: Tea Break

11:00 am-1:00 pm: Paper Presentations by Participants of Module B [Each Participant will have 15 minutes to present their papers, followed by discussion/Q+A]
Discussants: Debashree Chakraborty and Shatabdi Das
Presenters:
1. **Manami Bhadra**, *Gujarat University, Ahmadabad, India.* **Insecurities of climate vulnerability and the social-emotional well-being of people dwelling in the Sundarbans: Renegotiating policy perspectives.**
2. **Menaka Das**, *Fakir Mohan University, Balasore, India.* **Climate Change, migration patterns and socio-economic insecurities: A study of Bhadrak and Bhubaneswar in Odisha.**
3. **Nima A.M.**, *St. Aloysius College, Thrissur, India*. **Urban Ecological Disasters and Epidemic Imaginaries in *A Cloud Called Bhura*.**
4. **Oishika Basak**, *Interdisciplinary Researcher, Kolkata, India.* **Conceptualising Heat Injustice: Understanding and adapting to heat stress in Kolkata, India.**
5. **Paromita Adhikary**, *Presidency University, Kolkata, India.* **Migrant Bodies Under Surveillance: Climate, Labour and Disease in Nineteenth-Century Assam Tea Plantations (1840-1900).**

1:00 pm-2:00 pm: Lunch Break

2:00 pm-3:30 pm: Creative Session
Discussants: Debashree Chakraborty and Shatabdi Das

3:30 pm-4:00 pm: Tea Break

4:00 pm-5:30 pm: Special Lecture
Chair: Shyamalendu Majumdar
Speaker: Roshan Rai, *Development Practitioner, DLR Prerna, Darjeeling, India.*
Lecture Title: Living the climate crisis in Darjeeling
5:30 pm-6:00 pm: Film Screening: Calcutta, A Migrant City

9:00 am-9:30 am: Registration

9:30 am-10:30 am: Module C Lecture: Migrants, Insecurities and Sanctuary Cities
Speaker: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, *Professor, Rabindra Bharati University, & CRG, Kolkata, India*.

10:30 am-11:00 am: Tea Break

11:00 am-12:30 pm: Paper Presentations by Participants of Module C [Each Participant will have 15 minutes to present their papers, followed by discussion/Q+A]
Discussant: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury

Presenters:
　　　1. **Ajmol Hussain Laskar**, *National Institute of Technology, Silchar, Assam.* **The Politics of Indigeneity and Immigrants: The Postcolonial State Practices and the Ethnopolitics of Migration in Assam.**
　　　2. **Anandu Sunil**, *Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, India.* **Enterprise, Ethnicity and Urban Space: A study of Rajasthani Migrants in Kochi's Mobile Accessories Market.**
　　　3. **Richa Vasistha**, *Goswami Ganesh Dutta Sanatan Dharma College, Chandigarh, India.* **Migrant Children and Barriers to Education: A Study of Chandigarh.**
　　　4. **Rituparna Roy**, *Assam University, Silchar, India*. **Sanctuary in Transition: Migratory Population and Insecurities in Moreh, Manipur.**

12:30 pm-1:30 pm: Lunch Break

1:30 pm-3:00 pm: Paper Presentations by Participants of Module C, continued [Each Participant will have 15 minutes to present their papers, followed by discussion/Q+A]
Discussant: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury
Presenters:
　　　5. **Subhrajit Sen**, *Independent Multimedia Journalist, Kolkata, India*. **Bengali Women Migrant Workers: Gender, Urban Insecurity and the Politics of Prejudice.**
　　　6. **Nirmal Kumar Upreti**, **Prajwol Bastakoti** and **Sundar Thing**, *Forum for Nation Building, Kathmandu, Nepal.* **Reframing Protection: Local Justice and the Making of Sanctuary Spaces for Migrants in Nepal**
　　　7. **Madhubanti Talukdar**, *CRG, Kolkata, India.* **Envisioning the Future of the City: Housing and Urban Imaginaries in post-1960s Kolkata.**

3:00 pm-3:30 pm: Tea Break

4:00 pm-6:00 pm: Book Discussion [*Biopolitics from Below: Crisis, Conjuncture, Rupture***, by Ranabir Samaddar, CEU Press, 2025]**
Chair: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury
Discussants: Arup K. Sen, *CRG, Kolkata, India,*
　　　　V. Ramaswamy, *Member, CRG, Kolkata, India,*
　　　　Samata Biswas

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9:00 am-9:30 am: Registration

9:30 am-11:30 am: Presentations by EMMIR Students [Each Participant will have 15 minutes to present their papers, followed by discussion/Q+A]
Chair: Paula Banerjee
Discussants: Payel Rai Chowdhury, *Assistant Professor, Rabindra Bharati University, India*, **and Sucharita Sengupta,** *Volkswagen Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat & CRG, Kolkata, India.*
Presenters:
1. **Lucía Fernández Ríos**, *EMMIR Programme, University of Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany.* **Migration and the right to a healthy environment: experiences of migrants in West Bengal, India.**
2. **Madison Kelly**, *EMMIR Programme, University of Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany.* **Sanctuary Cities in the Global North and South: A Comparative Study of Boston and Kolkata**.
3. **Marion Martins Antunes**, *EMMIR Programme, University of Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany.* **Exit and Voice in Postcolonial Bangladesh: Youth Disillusionment, Protest and Migration Aspirations.**
4. **Gabriela Rubiano Polanco**, *EMMIR Programme, University of Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany.* **Protection from below across the Global South: Post-partition Refugee Camps in Bengal and Community Self-Protection in Colombia.**
5. **Isabela Velasco Pons**, *EMMIR Programme, University of Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany.* **Forced displacement and irregular economies: The case study of Myanmar. What role do migration policies play in shaping these irregular economies of displacement in the Myanmar-Thailand border region?"**
6. **Lara Vieira da Silveira**, *EMMIR Programme, University of Oldenburg, Oldenburg, Germany.* **The City as a Border: Sanctuary and Exclusion in Kolkata's Migrant Neighbourhoods.**

11:30 am-12 pm: Tea Break

12 pm-1:30 pm: Rapporteurs' Reports Presentations: Parallel Sessions

Room 1: Parallel Session 1: Report Presentations for Module A & EMMIR
Moderator: Sucharita Sengupta

Room 2: Report Presentations for Module B & C
Moderator: Rajat Kanti Sur

1:30 pm-2:30 pm: Lunch Break

2:30 pm-3:30 pm: Evaluation Session: Remarks by Workshop Evaluators

Chair: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury
Evaluators: Debolina Seth, *Professor, Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, India.*
        Swati Guha, *Director, Institute of Language Studies and Research, Kolkata, India.*

3:30 pm-4:30 pm: Transfer to EZCC Campus from Hotel Sojourn

4:30 pm-5:30 pm: Valedictory Lecture
Chair: Ranabir Samaddar, *Professor Emeritus, CRG, & CIFAR Fellow, Kolkata, India.*
Speaker: Anita Patil Deshmukh, *Director-Programs and Principal Investigator in Partners for Urban Knowledge Action and Research (PUKAR), Mumbai, India.*
Lecture Title: Climate Hazards, Cities and Urban Poor

5:30 pm-5:55 pm: Workshop Certification Distribution Ceremony
Chair: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury

5:55 pm-6:00 pm: Vote of Thanks: Debashree Chakraborty

*** This schedule is tentative and subject to last minute changes*

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

Theme: Future of the Metropolis: The Kolkata Case

Speaker: Mahalaya Chatterjee

The welcome address was delivered by Shyamalendu Majumdar and the workshop was introduced to the participants by Paula Banerjee and Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury. The workshop began with the Inaugural Lecture delivered by Mahalaya Chatterjee. She began her lecture by discussing the idea of the metropolis or the 'mother city' which was an outcome of the change in production patterns post industrial revolution. She explained how Manchester, for instance, served as one such metropolis, with its ancillary industries spread out far beyond the limits of the city proper. After the 1757 Battle of Plassey, and the East India Company's takeover, Kolkata, then Calcutta, was gradually developed into a 'mother city', a burgeoning hub of trade and commerce, centred on the production and export of jute. With the development of the jute industry came the need for improved transportation – and the Calcutta Port became a nucleus of economic activity, laying the foundation of the city that we see today. The Calcutta Industrial Region was essentially built around five major modes of transport – two railway lines, two trunk roads, and the Hooghly River itself. The growth and development of Calcutta brought in migrants from not only its rural hinterlands or other Indian states, but from all over the world, including the Armenians and the Chinese. These migrants began to take up particular professions and settling down in specific localities in the city, which often came to be named after them. Post-Independence, the Calcutta Metropolitan Area was formally delineated and became the focus of attention of the world. The Basic Development Plan 1966-86 was the first comprehensive plan on the city, advocating a bi-nodal strategy of development. Despite its impressive outlook, many components of the plan could not be implemented because of severe political unrest that characterized much of the 1960s. In 1970, with the formation of the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA), the city saw several improvements in sewerage, drainage, and transportation. However, by this period, the jute industry had begun to decline, losing its value on the world as well as domestic market. The Partition had already dealt a severe blow to the industry by leaving most jute-growing areas in East Bengal, while the factories on the Western side languished. In the post-liberalisation era, both the ecology and the human resource quality of Calcutta is at stake. With the transition of the city's economy from an industrial one to a service-based one, Calcutta has seen a steady erosion of labour and income security. In the neoliberal work situation, informal sector workers are often hidden within the folds of the formal sector, acting as its appendages. Further, unlike the industrial economy, the service-based economy, which is more self-contained, has little to no agglomeration effect, unable to generate economic growth. With the changing nature of work, housing patterns, and labour force participation, the nature of migration too has changed considerably. Chatterjee emphasised Kolkata's resilience, ability to adapt to adversity, and its commitment to welcoming outsiders. She stated that the growing IT and

ITES industries in the city, as well as its refreshing politics of gender justice offer a ray of hope in an otherwise bleak landscape. The discussant for the session Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury pointed out the intersections between economy, ecology and infrastructure.

Inaugural Session of Workshop on 18 November 2025

Module A Lecture
19 November 2025

Theme: Gender and Urban Insecurities

Speaker: Samata Biswas

The discussion started with the apparent contradiction between Kolkata's image as both one of India's "safest" and "least safe" cities for women, and links this to struggles around night-time protests, sanitation, caste and access to public space. It first unpacked the statistical paradox. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has ranked Kolkata as India's safest major city for several years, with the lowest overall cognisable crime rate and one of the lowest recorded rates of crimes against women (about 25.7 per lakh women in 2023). Yet the National Commission for Women's NARI 2025 index places Kolkata below average on women's safety, drawing on perception surveys about harassment, infrastructure and trust in police. This divergence points to under-reporting, social pressure not to file FIRs, and the limits of police records as a measure of "feeling safe". The 2024 rape and murder of a young doctor at RG Kar Medical College crystallised this gap between "safe city" rankings and lived fear. In response, tens of thousands of women as well as many men, participated in "Reclaim the Night" marches across Kolkata and other cities around 14–15 August 2024 and again around Independence Day 2025, demanding "safe nights" and justice rather than celebrating abstract safety rankings. Participants stressed that these were not conventional party-led demonstrations but dispersed night walks, art, content-creator initiatives and small protests that collectively insisted: the night belongs to women too. Drawing on Sultana's framing of gender and security, the discussion noted that many urban spaces are only considered "safe" for women when men are absent or heavily controlled. This conditional safety restricts

women's autonomy and normalises curfews, moral policing and "protective" restrictions, rather than transforming the underlying gendered power relations of the street, workplace and campus. Sanitation emerged as a crucial but often invisible dimension of night-time safety. For middle-class women, relatively predictable access to household toilets and those in commercial spaces makes it possible to craft personalised "sanitary schedules". By contrast, working-class and informal settlement residents depend on a fragmented landscape of pay-and-use public toilets, improvised latrines and open defecation zones. These infrastructures are maintained largely by Dalit communities historically pushed into sanitation work and manual scavenging. Participants underlined that women from these communities – often described as facing "double" or "triple" discrimination by caste, class and gender, clean public toilets, drains and protest sites themselves, yet remain excluded from conversations about safety and justice. Demands for safe nights therefore cannot stop at protection for middle-class women commuters; they must also address fair wages, dignity, protective equipment and legal security for sanitation workers who literally make public space usable. The discussion also foregrounded the question of access to toilets and safety for transgender and gender-nonconforming people during protests. Binary, poorly lit, police-surveilled toilets and hostile crowds often make it dangerous for trans and queer participants to attend night marches or remain for long hours. This raises the issue of who can sustainably "occupy" space, echoing earlier moments of body-based protest (from South Asian student movements to more recent sit-ins) where the political act is to keep vulnerable bodies in public overnight. Across these threads, several guiding questions were posed: Whose nights, and whose justice, are being claimed? Is the goal to reclaim physical space, or to transform the broader security regime that relies on surveillance, policing and selective enforcement? Participants noted that intensified policing and CCTV might improve the sense of safety for some women while simultaneously increasing evictions, harassment and criminalisation of street vendors, the unhoused, sex workers and sanitation workers.

In conclusion, the discussion argued that Kolkata's dual status as "safest" and "unsafe" is not a contradiction to be resolved by better statistics, but an invitation to centre lived experience, caste and class in debates on urban safety. "Reclaim the Night" becomes most powerful when it is linked to demands for inclusive sanitation, fair conditions for those who clean the city, non-binary and accessible toilet designs, and a vision of security where all women and trans people can inhabit the night, not as protected dependents, but as equal occupants of the city.

**Module A Lecture by Samata Biswas**

Module A Participants' Presentations

"Women and Right to Sanitation in Urban Slums: A Socio-Legal Study of the Slum Settlements in Guwahati" — the first session of this Module 11 am to 12:30 pm was by Anisha Bhattacharjee, from Tezpur University, Tezpur, India. The presentation examined the governance of slums in Assam—particularly in Guwahati—through a critical lens that foregrounds administrative invisibility, colonial legal inheritances, and the precarious citizenship of urban poor communities. The paper argued that legislation such as The Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, 1956 continues to shape contemporary policy through a moralising framework that disciplines rather than empowers residents. The use of the term "morals" in the Act was a key point of discussion. The session also highlighted concerns about people's agency and the question of labour. Despite being central to the informal economy—through construction, domestic work, and waste management—slum residents remain excluded from decision-making processes.

Participants questioned how such a subjective term is justified in a legal document intended to regulate housing and sanitation. The presenter explained that this reflects colonial assumptions about the poor as subjects requiring behavioural regulation, enabling authorities to exercise discretionary control over everyday life in informal settlements. One of the most significant questions raised was: To what degree is Assam's sanitation policy shaped by colonial-era legislation such as the Assam Slum Areas Act of 1959, and how does this outdate framework limit contemporary rights-based approaches? The role of NGOs was another area of active discussion. Participants asked how NGOs can become more effective within these governance constraints. The presenter emphasised the need for community-anchored models, transparency, and collaboration with resident groups to avoid reproducing top-down interventions. Overall, the session underscored the need for legislative reform, community-driven planning, and the dismantling of moralising frameworks that continue to shape slum governance in Assam.

"From Widowhood to Sex Work (Society Fear): Migration, Stigma, and the Search for Emancipation" — this presentation by Rabina Chatterjee, examined how widowhood and sex work—two deeply stigmatised social identities—intersect to shape women's survival strategies within patriarchal moral and material structures. The paper highlighted how widowhood often triggers a cycle of abuse, abandonment, and economic precarity, pushing many women toward migration as a means of survival. Within this landscape, sex work emerges not merely as a profession but as a form of economic agency, self-protection, and reclaiming of autonomy. One of the key findings discussed was the distinction between younger and older widows. Younger widows, the study showed, tend to view sex work as a pathway to emancipation: a means of breaking ritualised widowhood, achieving economic mobility, and reimagining selfhood. For many, Sonagachi becomes a paradoxically liberating space, offering community, safety networks, and organisational support through Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee. In contrast, older widows experience more complex forms of agency, marked by declining income, bodily devaluation, and social invisibility. Their participation in collective politics is limited, and aging often renders them economically expendable.

The Question -Answer session raised important queries about demographic diversity within the study. Participants asked whether widows from Muslim or upper-class backgrounds were included; the researcher clarified that none appeared in the sample, indicating potential research gaps related to class and community privilege. Questions also addressed the "expiry" of a sex worker's career, the role of professionalism (rate-setting, time-based negotiation), and the legal landscape. Participants were also directed to the book People's Constitution for its chapter on how everyday laws—including those governing sex work—shape lived experiences. The session underscored the need to view sex work through the lens of rights, labour, and agency rather than stigma.
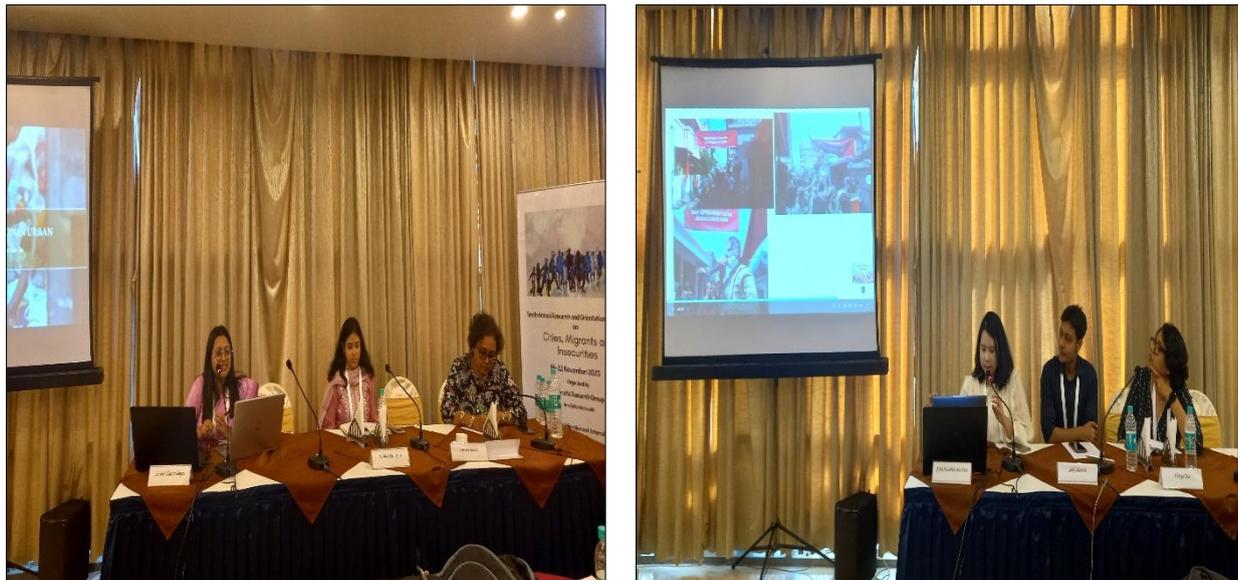
Presentations by Module A Participants

Sekh Shamim from ILSR, Kolkata, presented on "Negotiating Urban Space: Queer Security and Print Culture in Kolkata", where he examined the experiences of queer individuals navigating Kolkata's urban terrain through two crucial magazines: 'Pravartak' (1990s) and 'Swakanthey' (2000s–present). Shamim highlighted how these publications act as "affective archives," documenting evolving networks of care, visibility, and cultural expression while also capturing the insecurities produced by caste, class, housing precarity, and moral policing. 'Pravartak', circulated quietly within trust-based circles during a period of near-invisibility, recorded fear, anonymity, and tentative community formation. In contrast, 'Swakanthey' reflects the complexities of a more digitally connected but surveilled era—one marked by neoliberal transformations, activism, and heightened scrutiny. The discussion following the presentation raised key methodological and conceptual questions. Participants asked how Shamim integrates oral history with archival reading, especially given the partial and emotional nature of queer documentation. Another question probed the role of caste and class in shaping access to queer platforms, and whether such magazines inadvertently reproduce middle-class dominance. The issue of visibility generating new insecurities was also brought up, prompting reflection on how queer publications simultaneously empower and expose their communities. Shamim's responses underscored the importance of reading archives through their silences, contradictions, and affective registers.

Shreya Das from the Sanskrit College and University, Kolkata, presented on "A Nineteenth Century Debate Around Possession of Children by Prostitutes", where she examined how the colonial state attempted to control and categorise women's bodies in nineteenth century Bengal. Rather than simply recounting legislative history, Das discussed how the British framed certain interventions—such as regulating marriage or policing sexual health—as humanitarian reforms while simultaneously expanding surveillance over women they labelled as "public" or "immoral." She argued that the colonial categorisation of women often ignored the complex social distinctions within local society, flattening multiple identities into broad labels like "prostitute" or "fallen woman." Das highlighted how colonial officials debated questions such as who could be considered a legitimate caregiver, whether certain women could raise children, and how morality was defined within legal frameworks. Her work draws on archival documents alongside contemporary Bangla literature to investigate how colonial officials misread or flattened the distinctions within native society. When questioned about the biases inherent in colonial archives and the absence of sex workers' voices, Das acknowledged the limitations but pointed to judicial records that often-contradicted official claims. She also noted that fictional writings—despite being authored mostly by upper-caste men—contain narrative "cracks" through which alternative readings can emerge. These ruptures, she argued, offer critical openings to challenge the singularity of colonial narratives.

Syifa Salsabila Nasution from the Centre for Forced Displacement, AIT, Thailand, presented on "From Regulation to Closure: The Impact of Policy on the Multidimensional Vulnerability of Sex Workers in Surabaya's Dolly District", where she discussed on the closure of the Dolly red-light district in Surabaya and the consequences for sex workers pushed into hidden and precarious forms of labour. Nasution discussed how the state justified the shutdown as a moral achievement, yet the policy deepened insecurity by dismantling established support networks, reducing income stability, and strengthening stigma. She argued that the closure did not eliminate sex work; rather, it displaced it into more fragmented, risky spaces, while the state attempted to reshape the area into a sanitised cultural and economic zone. During the discussion, participants asked about the current pathways available to former sex workers, how the presenter conceptualised gender, justice, and vulnerability, and how "erasure" operates in the aftermath of the closure. Nasution argued that the state's attempt to "erase" Dolly was incomplete; the work and networks persisted underground, while the government sought to reconstruct the area as a cultural and commercial hub. She emphasised that justice remains contextual—shaped by class, power, and whose voices are prioritised. Together, the three sessions highlighted the entanglements of regulation, identity, precarity, and urban governance, offering critical insights into how marginalised communities persist, adapt, and resist across time and space.

Module A: Creative Session

Discussant: Samata Biswas

The creative session for Module A started with the short reels made by the participants of Module A, explaining their research areas briefly. The discussant for this session was Samata Biswas. The session also screened a documentary film "If We Dare Desire", produced by Sappho for Equality and directed by Debolina, offering a powerful and emotionally resonant exploration of queer rural–urban migration, the fragile search for belonging, and the shifting meanings of "home" for queer individuals in contemporary Bengal. Rooted in the true and

tragic incident of the suicide of two young women from Nandigram, the film imagines their possible futures had they survived and attempted to build a life together in the city. Through this speculative narrative, the film bridges the stark divide between rural queer invisibility and urban queer precarity. The discussion began by acknowledging the film's origins in lived trauma. By choosing not to recreate the exact events of the Nandigram case, the filmmaker instead creates a narrative space where the two protagonists can speak, dream, desire, and struggle. The girls' migration to Kolkata becomes both an act of escape and an assertion of queer possibility. Their decision to change their names stands out as a symbolic effort to integrate into the urban landscape—to be read as modern, autonomous subjects who can claim space in a city that promises anonymity and opportunity. Yet, as the film poignantly reveals, this gesture remains fragile. The city may offer mobility and relative freedom, but it also produces new anxieties and exposes queer lives to fresh forms of surveillance, exclusion, and heteronormative policing. A central theme that emerged in the post-screening discussion was the persistence of heteronormativity within urban spaces. Despite the visually vibrant, culturally plural environment of the city, its moral codes remain deeply rigid. The protagonists continuously negotiate visibility and risk—balancing desire with caution, longing with fear. Their struggles reflect a paradox: cities imagined as sites of liberation simultaneously reproduce traditional norms that constrain queer expression. The film's portrayal of their daily negotiations—finding accommodation, navigating public spaces, seeking employment, maintaining secrecy—captures this tension with striking clarity. Equally compelling was the film's engagement with the idea of home. For the protagonists, home is neither the village they left nor the city they inhabit; it is an unstable, constantly shifting horizon shaped by their relationship and their shared dreams. The screening prompted rich reflections on how queer people often experience "home" as a space of both rejection and reinvention. The girls' journey suggests that home is not a fixed geographical location but a relational practice—something created, abandoned, rebuilt, and improvised. Importantly, the film situates the personal narrative within broader questions of state failure, societal stigma, and the lack of institutional support for queer youth. The audience discussed how the absence of safe housing, mental health support, and legal protection often pushes queer individuals into precarious migration patterns and survival strategies. The film stands as a poignant speculative tribute to two lives cut short, while simultaneously offering a larger commentary on queer longing, mobility, and the unfinished struggle to create spaces of belonging. The session underscored the urgency of imagining alternative futures for queer individuals—futures that are not foreclosed by violence, erasure, or displacement, but shaped by dignity, safety, and love.

Module A Special Lecture

Theme: Exclusionary urban zoning: the limits and potential of European human rights law

Speaker: Thomas Spiejkerboer

The talk revolved around the case study of *Rohinidevie Garib v the Netherlands* and how the European Court of Human Rights rejected the application of Rahniedevie, a Dutch single mother of two children. When she asked for a housing permit for a three-bedroom apartment to shift from her previous one-bedroom apartment, she was denied the permit on the ground of the City Policy of restricting the "inflow of sociologically disadvantaged

groups" in her desired location, which was just a few hundred metres away from her previous place of residence. Spijkerboer divided his lecture into three parts, looking at its distributive, discursive, and ideological aspects. The distributive analysis explored the influence of the judgment on the existing power relationship between the individuals and the landowners; the discourse analysis talked about the colonial type of treatment of law, where exclusionary behaviour towards the outsiders especially the migrants became a common practice; and the ideological analysis dealt with the Court's treatment of injustice as a matter of identity and not about oppression. Rohinidevie's identity as a single mother led the State to automatically assume that she was a bad woman of loose morals and her previous residence at a Rotterdam hotspot, which is traditionally linked with bad behaviour and crime, rendered her as a non-eligible candidate. Instead of the State having to justify its interference on a personal right to choose the place of residence, Rohinidevie was asked to justify her reason for making a choice. Sijkerboer argued that how the human rights law often has its own biases against the non-European migrants and the Eastern-European migrants. As a result, human rights have very limited transformative potential. He, then, drew inference upon the Black Lives Matter to examine the relation between strategic litigation and activism.

In the Question-Answer session, Chair for the session, Paula Banerjee, reflected upon how space and criminality had been a closely intertwined concept in India since the colonial times. A case in point was the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. She further pointed out how the Black Lives Matter movement instead of focusing on White v Black experiences shifted towards Black v Brown experiences, where the Brown felt that they were being discriminated against. Samata Biswas commented on how, at times, social movement is about bringing a change, referring to the decriminalisation of Section 377 in India that gave queer community more power to openly express themselves. Arup Sen pondered upon the colonial race question that took different shape and meaning in the neo-liberal times. One of the presenters, Oishika Basak, on the other hand, shared her experience as an international student, where visa barriers led to mobility problems for students like her. She also shared how without a proper arrangement of housing, the applications of the international students are often rejected in the European countries.

Module B Lecture
20 November 2025

Theme: Climate, Epidemiological Insecurities and the City

Speakers: Debashree Chakraborty and Shatabdi Das

The session on "Climate, Epidemiological Insecurities and the City" was conducted by Debashree Chakraborty and Shatabdi Das. Their discussion highlighted how climate-related challenges and emerging epidemiological risks shape urban vulnerability and governance. Debashree Chakraborty began the discussion by referring to key observations made by Ranabir Samaddar in his essay *The Urban Turn*. She highlighted three important quotes from the essay. The first quote explained that the city is a space where images are created, marking the long historical journey of how cities developed and the kinds of ideas and identities they produce for the citizens who live in them. It ends with the observation that the modern city shapes the very idea of citizenship, placing the citizen at its centre. The

second quote discusses how the modern city consumes our consciousness of what a place is, emerging alongside the harsh working conditions of the labouring classes. The final quote emphasises that the city is both a substance and an illusion. Building on these reflections, she questioned whether our cities today are truly capable of ensuring the rights of all citizens. She noted that 90% of future urban growth will be concentrated in the Global South, with urban centres contributing nearly 70% of the GDP. Such rapid growth creates opportunities for employment and innovation. She explained that urbanisation is driven not only by higher natural population growth in urban areas compared to rural regions but also significantly by migration. She further highlighted that slums constitute nearly one-fourth of all urban housing in major Indian cities. Concluding her lecture, she stressed that climate change poses a serious threat to India, especially to coastal cities that are increasingly at risk of submergence. Following this, Shatabdi Das began the discussion on the effects of climate change and its impacts on cities. She emphasised the need for revisiting environmental perceptions and ethics, and how these values are reflected in the functioning and structure of cities. She highlighted that cities can become more sustainable by modelling urban processes on ecological principles and aligning them with natural systems. She also discussed the importance of environmental perception and stressed that climate security has become a critical concern in contemporary urban planning. Referring to disaster management and mitigation frameworks, she noted that recent IPCC reports identify Mumbai, India's largest megacity by population, as one of the world's most vulnerable cities to climate change, particularly due to the increasing threats of coastal flooding. She pointed out that rising humidity levels are another emerging challenge linked to climate change. Shatabdi Das further spoke about climate action plans, with a particular focus on Kolkata's Climate Action Plan, and discussed various epidemiological issues that urban populations are facing as a result of climate-related stresses. She concluded her lecture with an interactive discussion involving participants like Rabina and Madhubanti, who raised questions on topics such as the implementation and stakeholder involvement in climate action plans, the privatisation of urban spaces, the impacts of hydroelectric dams, and concerns related to the Ramsar site of East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW).

Module B Participants' Presentations

"Urban Ecological Disaster and Epidemic Imaginaries in A Cloud Called Bhura" — Nima A.M., examined Bijal Vachharajani's *A Cloud Called Bhura*, through an ecocritical and posthumanist lens. Nima's paper employed an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to interpret the novel as a cultural document that reflects the insecurities of Indian city life, where toxic air, infrastructure breakdown, and class inequality combine to shape lived experience. Through her paper, Nima highlighted how literary texts, such as, *A Cloud Called Bhura,* can provide rich understandings of climate change processes and impacts, and environmental justice.

"Conceptualising Heat Injustice: Understanding and Adapting to Heat Stress in Kolkata" — Oishika Basak's paper argued that extreme heat in the cityscape affects people disproportionately depending on varied socio-economic and demographic factors like caste, class, race, gender, disability, age. By conceptualising heat injustice, she therefore urged to recognise heat not as a neutral meteorological phenomenon but rather as an embodied experience shaped by the aforementioned intersecting factors, which also influence people's living standards, income levels and occupational exposure. Oishika highlighted the lack of a heat action plan in Kolkata and called for the need to recognise heat injustice when devising

policies and in adaptation planning.

"Migrant Bodies Under Surveillance: Climate, Disease, and Labour in Nineteenth Century Assam Tea Plantations (1840–1900)" — Paromita Adhikary in her presentation, portrayed colonial Assam's tea plantations as sites where ecological transformation and bodily governance converged. She argued that migrant labour was medically scrutinised, seasonally regulated, and spatially confined, turning health into an economic instrument rather than humanitarian care. The clearance of forests for tea cultivation created endemic zones of malaria and cholera, revealing how environmental fragility and bodily insecurity were mobilised for profit within the plantation economy.

"Climate Change, Migration Patterns and Socio-Economic Insecurities: A Study of Bhadrak and Bhubaneswar in Odisha" — Menaka Das presented on climate-induced migration in Odisha, focusing on out-migration from Bhadrak and Bhubaneswar. Her study showed that Bhadrak's migration is largely distress-driven, triggered by cyclones, floods, and salinity intrusion, while Bhubaneswar's reflects aspirational mobility linked to education and employment diversification. Gendered patterns persist: men migrate for work, women for marriage or family movement, though education-driven female migration is rising. The paper emphasised that migration operates as both an adaptive strategy and a response to socio-economic insecurities.

During the Question-Answer session, there were questions raised on if there was any investigation done by Nima on the class dimension in imagining children's agency. For Oishika, there were discussions on how the heat action plans recognised extreme heat and the neoliberal nature of the adaptation strategies. For Paromita, there were discussions on the usage of terminology like wastelands, the gendered nature of tea plantation workers, and the continuity of the labour conditions to date.

Presentations by Module B Participants

Module B: Creative Session

Scholars presented various experiences on creative and artistic endeavours related to their papers or former works (but still related to the theme of the paper). By presenting Deej Phillips' documentary "Forced to Adapt India", Nima discussed the life and work of renowned environmentalist Kallen Pokkudan, followed by the trailer of Episode 1, The Mangrove Family. The film highlights Pokkudan's pioneering contributions to mangrove conservation in northern Kerala, despite his marginalised background as an illiterate Dalit farmer. It documents how his sons continue his legacy by planting and protecting mangroves to combat coastal erosion. Their ongoing efforts enhance biodiversity, support fishing livelihoods, and contribute significantly to carbon sequestration, demonstrating community-led climate resilience. Menaka Das, through photographs, showed how rural families live with constant exposure to floods that damage their fragile mud houses, disrupt daily activities, and force people to move through contaminated water. Children and adults face serious health risks such as skin infections, diarrhoea, fever, and water-borne diseases due to unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation. With repeated loss of shelter, livelihood, and health security, vulnerability becomes a continuous lived reality rather than a concept. Oishika Basak presented about her former works, a short film and a poster (both co-created with her former colleagues). The film's core theme is conflict, situated within the context of a superdiverse city (Rotterdam) where people from different socio-economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds mingle to create a diverse urban landscape. By incorporating interviews, ethnographic accounts, and observations, the film touches upon themes such as, identity, sense of belonging, and right to the city. The poster is an exhibition installation exploring what the future of the Rotterdam port could look like in 2084, dealing with the questions of fossil capitalism, energy transition, heat extremes, climate migration, etc.

Paromita Talukdar presented photographs from her field visit to a tea plantation in Assam. She drew connections between her personal situation and several illnesses and the realities of tea plantation workers to capture an "embodied vulnerability". She highlighted that her illnesses while working on the paper put her in a vulnerable position, but she recognises that her privilege protected her and ensured that she recovers quickly and safely, something tea plantation workers can never So, embodied vulnerability is differential and is based on the socio-economic realities of the lives of varied people.


Module B Creative Session

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Module B Special Lecture

Theme: Living the Climate Crisis in Darjeeling

Speaker: Roshan Rai

Roshan Rai, development practitioner highlighted a comprehensive interdisciplinary engagement with issues of climate vulnerability, social justice, migration and urban transformation. The lecture presented a grounded and analytical overview of the escalating climate crisis in the Eastern Himalaya, with particular emphasis on the town of Darjeeling. Drawing upon ecological observations, community-based interventions, and his organisational experience, he highlighted the ways in which rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, diminishing snowfall, and altered seasonal cycles are reshaping both natural environments and everyday life. These climatic shifts are deeply intertwined with longstanding governance challenges and inequitable urban development. A key concern addressed was water insecurity. Despite Darjeeling's dependence on water sourced from the Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, local springs—over ninety in number—remain undervalued and poorly integrated within formal water management systems. Fragmentation among government departments further weakens coordinated responses, exacerbating structural vulnerabilities. Mr. Rai stressed the need for an integrated watershed approach that recognises both visible and invisible water systems, including recharge zones and aquifers. The lecture also examined the region's waste management crisis, framing it as a systemic issue rooted in production and consumption patterns. Findings from the Himalayan Cleanup initiative reveal that the majority of collected waste consists of non-recyclable plastic packaging associated with food and beverage consumption. Existing Extended Producer Responsibility mechanisms, he argued, largely bypass mountain regions due to logistical difficulties. Additionally, deficiencies in liquid waste management—such as leaking sewage lines and untreated discharge—pose serious environmental and public health risks. Rai emphasised the importance of equity and social inclusion, noting that waste workers and peripheral communities continue to face marginalisation despite their crucial role in sustaining urban resilience. He advocated for community-led, context-specific climate action grounded in local knowledge and ecological sensitivity.
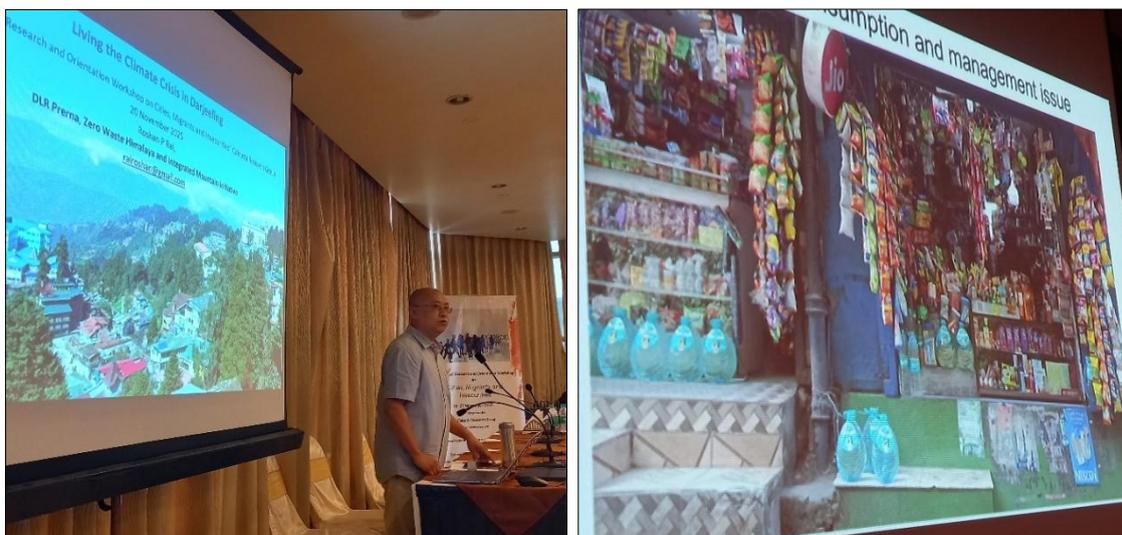
Lecture by Roshan Rai

Film Screening: *Calcutta, A Migrant City*

The subsequent screening of *Calcutta, A Migrant City* offered a historical and sociological perspective on migration in Kolkata. Directed by Saibal Mitra and produced by the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group in collaboration with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, the documentary traced the city's evolution from the 14th century to the present, foregrounding the indispensable contributions of migrant labourers, artisans, traders, and displaced populations. Despite their central role in shaping Kolkata's infrastructure, economy and cultural identity, these communities remain largely absent from dominant narratives. Through interviews, archival visuals, and reflective storytelling, the film highlights the paradox of migrant labour being essential yet invisible. The session invited viewers to reconsider questions of belonging, representation and the politics of recognition in an evolving metropolis. Together, the lecture and the film screening provided a rigorous and thought-provoking engagement with issues of climate change, migration, and social justice. The events underscored the need for equitable governance, community participation and sustained scholarly attention to the intertwined challenges facing contemporary urban and ecological landscapes.

Module C Lecture
21 November 2025

Theme: Migrants, Insecurities and Sanctuary Cities

Speaker: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury

Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhary delivered an informative and comprehensive talk on "Refugees, Migrants and Sanctuary Cities". Basu Ray Chaudhary began by situating forced displacement within the broader global humanitarian crisis and highlighted that as of 2024, there are 123.2 million forcibly displaced people, including 38.8 million refugees, of whom 71% reside in low- and middle-income countries. He further pointed to an estimated 73.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), victims of conflicts, and development- and climate-induced displacement, who are supposed to be governed by the same State – the very agent responsible for displacing them. The lecture reviewed the key international legal instruments governing refugee protection: the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol, Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and region-specific frameworks such as the OAU Convention of 1969. Turning to migration, Basu Ray Chaudhary explained how neoliberal capitalism has intensified the movement of undocumented migrants globally. While globalisation and liberalisation have greatly facilitated the flow of goods, materials, and products across borders, the seamless movement of people has been prevented and subjected to a range of conditions, witnessing a form of re-territorialisation. Such undocumented migrants, he stressed, exist in an extreme state of liminality and vulnerability, their exploitation and deep economic insecurities invisibilised and their paths to seek redressal sealed. The lecture then turned to the concept and evolution of Sanctuary Cities, a practice of establishing some border cities as sites of solidarity that originated largely in the Global North. Drawing on Derrida's concept of hospitality and Hannah Arendt's idea of "the right to have rights", the lecture explored how hierarchies between the 'host' and the 'guest', and between 'desirable' and 'undesirable' migrants shape contestations over urban space. The speaker traced the earliest example of a sanctuary city to Berkeley, California (1971), explaining that although the resolution

adopted by Berkeley did not concern immigration, it offered safe harbour to conscientious objectors of the Vietnam War, making a statement not only against the war itself but also President Nixon's policies. He also discussed Los Angeles' Special Order 40 (1979) as a similar example of 'sanctuary' policy existing in contravention to federal law, which prohibited police officers from inquiring into the immigration status of residents. The UK's City of Sanctuary movement, initiated in Sheffield in 2005, was presented as one of the most extensive collaborations between municipalities and civil society to support people with precarious immigration status. Professor Basu Ray Chaudhury observed how the policy of sanctuary gained momentum steadily in the UK post-2005, resulting in the creation of sanctuary towns and villages, as well as pockets of sanctuary within major cities. The session also explored Digital Sanctuary initiatives, including Toronto's Sanctuary Health Initiative (May 2021), which sought to address vaccination disparities among migrant communities by refusing to record identifying information, and facilitating the use of alternative ID cards. At the end of the presentation, the question-answer session raised insightful questions regarding digital nomads in developing countries, the future of sanctuary policies under a potential second Trump administration, and the role of communities as sanctuary providers. Professor Chaudhary emphasized that while local governments face constraints, people's initiatives and collective gestures often become the true foundation of sanctuary practices.

Module C Lecture by Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury

Module C Participants' Presentations

Richa Vashista, in her presentation on "Migrant Children and the Barriers to Education: A Study of Chandigarh" argued that migration is generally considered to be an adult-centric activity, with children conceptualised as 'passive followers', 'silent actors' or 'associated migrants' lacking agency of any kind. Because of this, such children have received little attention from policy makers and academicians alike, despite being significantly affected by migration processes. In this context, the paper was centred around the challenges faced by children residing in government-allotted colonies, slums, and other peripheral settlements of Chandigarh in accessing education. Richa discussed a variety of administrative and structural hurdles, including the absence of adequate documentation, that deter children from securing admission in schools. She further mentioned how socio-economic precarity of migrant households, language barriers, procedural delays, and the socio-spatial

organisation of the city itself become crucial factors impacting migrant children's access to quality education. Further, Richa's presentation highlighted that significant learning deficits among such children, the lack of suitable bridge courses or adequate academic support, and incidents of discrimination result in feelings of alienation and demotivation, keeping these children from school. Collectively, the presentation highlighted that migrant children's educational journeys are shaped not only by institutional policies but by everyday realities of poverty, mobility, urban governance and social exclusion. It stressed on the need for a more responsive, flexible and context-sensitive educational framework that acknowledges the unique vulnerabilities of migrant communities and the right to education which is an important part of their right to city.

Rituparna Roy's paper titled "Sanctuary in Transition: Migratory Population and Insecurities in Moreh, Manipur," discussed how Moreh, historically a space characterised by fluid mobility, cross-cultural exchanges, and community-driven hospitality, has gradually transformed into a tightly-regulated and militarised zone where the notion of sanctuary is increasingly shaped and constrained by the nation-state. The paper drew on archival records, memoirs, newspapers, published interviews, secondary literature, and recent studies on the Indo- Myanmar border to trace the shifting dynamics of sanctuary in Moreh, from reciprocal hospitality practices rooted in trust, kinship, and shared identities to a highly securitised and regulated system where local autonomy is undermined by heightened militarisation, increasing state intervention, insurgency, and geopolitical shifts. Rituparna highlighted how interactions that were once organic became mediated by permits, checkpoints, and military oversight. The increasing securitisation also generated fear among refugees and local residents alike, undermining traditional norms of refuge. She concluded by discussing how the transformation of sanctuary in Moreh reflects broader changes in border governance. What began as a people-centred, trust-based practice has gradually shifted into a state-regulated mechanism shaped by security imperatives. Local communities remain compassionate, but their role has narrowed as the border becomes a political instrument rather than a humanitarian space.

Subhrajit Sen, presented his paper titled "Precarious Belongings: Gender, Migration and Urban Insecurity" among Bengali Women Domestic Workers in which he examined how Bengali migrant women from the Indian Sundarbans navigate layered precarity in urban spaces shaped by informality, linguistic profiling and climate-driven displacement. Drawing on long-term fieldwork across Ramganga and Pathar Pratima blocks in the Indian Sundarbans, as well as Bongaon near the Indo-Bangladesh border, the study foregrounded the experiences of women whose labour sustains metropolitan households yet who remain outside labour law protections, their belonging in the city continuously questioned. The presentation highlighted how migrant women enter the urban domestic labour market through informal recruitment chains that often involve wage deductions, document seizure and lack of formal contracts. Once in cities, linguistic accents become a form of biometric identification, making them vulnerable to suspicion, police raids and deportability – an everyday threat of deportation. Through this work, Subhrajit argued that insecurity is produced structurally – through policing, media narratives, and the legal invisibility of domestic labour. At the same time, the study recognised women as agents of survival who build informal solidarity networks, share resources, protect each other during raids and rebuild after climate disaster, their presence challenging narrow ideas of citizenship tied to accent, birthplace or class.

Nirmal Upreti and Prajwol Bastakoti presented on "Reframing Protection: Local Justice and Making of Sanctuary Spaces for Migrants in Nepal" and provided a comprehensive overview of Nepal's evolving migration realities, structural vulnerabilities, and community-level justice interventions. While economic pressures, unemployment, income inequality, and growing demand for low-skilled labour abroad continue to push Nepalis to seek opportunities overseas, factors like environmental stress, political instability, remittance dependency, and persistent education-skill mismatches further intensify this mobility trend. The presentation demonstrated the scale of mass migration from Nepal, while also highlighting rising concerns around human trafficking, to which women, children, and marginalized caste groups remain disproportionately vulnerable. It further outlined the legal barriers and loopholes in the formal justice system that prevent victims from seeking remedy. Finally, the presentation highlighted the innovative community-based interventions of Forum for Nation Building (FNB) Nepal, a youth-led organization working on legal empowerment, governance, and migration justice. Through a number of case stories, the presentation explained how FNB combines legal expertise, psychosocial counselling, local partnerships, and grassroots mobilization to empower and bring justice directly into communities. The presentation concluded by emphasizing FNB's model as an effective bridge between community realities and legal structures, survivor-centred, participatory, mobile, and trust-based.

Madhubanti Talukdar's presentation titled "Whose City Is It Anyway? Housing and Urban Imaginaries in Post-1960s Kolkata," attempted to look at marginalisation and exclusion in the city through an analysis of housing-related planning and policies undertaken since the mid-1960s. Madhubanti began the presentation by providing the context in which urban planning began in Kolkata. She then discussed how planning discourses otherised and marginalised the urban poor, constituting them as the "other" of the "real" citizens, hierarchising them on the basis of 'deserving' and 'undeserving', regulating their lives and occupations through socio-spatial organisation and interventions, and depriving and dispossessing them of their rights. By simultaneously foregrounding the experiences of three marginalised groups in the city – slum dwellers, refugees, and out-of-work industrial workers – and tracing the evolution of the planning discourse itself, Madhubanti's paper attempted to use Derrida's concept of hospitality to examine the extent to which urban planning enabled or resisted the creation of protective, welcoming spaces in the city for its "outsiders".

In the Question-Answer session several participants further discussed the themes. Richa, who presented on the migrant children of Chandigarh, was asked about incidences of child trafficking and sexual exploitation, to which she replied that since her paper focuses primarily on education, she has not looked into the question of trafficking. She also stated that since Chandigarh is a safe city, there are no known incidents of trafficking or child sexual abuse to be found among migrant children. However, she further clarified that the absence of reported trafficking cases should not be interpreted as the complete non-existence of such risks but rather as an indication that trafficking was not a prominent concern articulated by the respondents within the scope of the study. Rituparna, who presented on migration and insecurities in Moreh, Manipur, was encouraged to provide additional empirical illustrations to demonstrate the specific transformations that she discussed in her paper. She was also asked to elaborate on the responses and perceptions of local ethnic communities regarding these contemporary changes, given Moreh's complex socio-political landscape and its history of inter-group interactions. Subhrajit, who

presented on Bengali migrant women from the Sundarbans, was suggested by Arup Sen to strengthen his work through deeper ethnographic grounding and thicker description of field encounters. He recommended expanding the everyday narratives of women's movement, recruitment, negotiation and silence to sharpen the analytical connection between lived experience and theory. Nasreen Chowdhary sought a clarification of the term "Deportable Citizen". In response, Subhrajit stated that the term reflects how local police and administrative bodies sometimes treat internal migrants as removable subjects despite legal citizenship. Professor Chowdhary additionally advised Subhrajit to elaborate on his methodological approach, particularly clarifying sampling logic, interview ethics and how field access was negotiated. For the presentation on Nepal, Samata Biswas offered a brief but thoughtful reflection, commending FNB for its innovative grassroots work in strengthening access to justice for migrants and communities vulnerable to trafficking. Biswas then inquired whether FNB's model has also been applied to internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Nepal, particularly those affected by natural disasters or internal crises. In response, the presenters clarified that FNB Nepal has indeed extended its interventions to help displaced and vulnerable populations during major national emergencies, such as the 2015 earthquake and the Covid-19 Pandemic. Finally, Madhubanti, who presented on the evolution of urban planning in Kolkata was suggested by Samata Biswas to structure the paper better by following a clear chronological progression from the 1960s to the present instead of moving back and forth through time. She also suggested that Madhubanti add a section on urban planning initiatives in colonial Calcutta to show a continuity of planning discourses over time. Nasreen Chowdhory stated that the project is ambitious, and would improve if the part on Derrida's hospitality is reconsidered. Finally, Arup Sen inquired if the presenter had found any references to the World Bank's interest in arresting the influence and development of radicalism in Calcutta within official planning documents. Madhubanti answered that she had not found any such references.

Presentations by Module C Participants

The session began with the release of the Book "Migrant Asia: Migrants in the Making of Asia", edited by Priya Singh, Lydia Potts and Paula Banerjee and published by Frontpage in 2025. Paula Banerjee, one of the editors of the volume that was planned as a conference proceedings volume, introduced the work and the research themes that the book entailed. Thomas Spijkerboer along with Paula Banerjee, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Abhijit Mazumder and Ranabir Samaddar released the edited volume and briefly spoke about the key features of the volume.

Book Release of "Migrant Asia: Migrants in the Making of Asia" (Edited by Priya Singh, Lydia Potts and Paula Banerjee, Frontpage 2025)

The book "Biopolitics from Below: Crisis, Conjuncture, Rupture" authored by Ranabir Samaddar and published by CEU Press in 2025, was discussed by Samata Biswas, V. Ramaswamy and Arup Sen, while Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury chaired the session. Samata Biswas opened the discussion by examining democracy, socio-political response, and an alternative politics of life, with the book organised around three key themes: Crisis, Conjuncture, and Rupture. Samata Biswas highlighted how Ranabir Samaddar remains extremely dialectical throughout the book, as he navigates these themes. She noted that the ethics of biopolitics from below involves the protection of life, collective responsibility, and mutual solidarity, where conjuncture produces instability and possibility simultaneously. The spaces of neoliberal urban restructuring, in Samaddar's formulation, are not only sites of violence and marginalisation but also ones that produce acts of subaltern organisation and care. The Covid-19 Pandemic, which Samaddar explains as both an instance of rupture and conjuncture, revealed a breakdown of biopolitics from above and at the same time, was marked by horizontal solidarities. As the limits of government action brought migrant workers – the surplus population existing at the intersections of the space form and labour form – out onto the streets, informal networks of care emerged to respond to the crisis. Finally, Biswas concluded by explaining how Prof. Samaddar draws on a range of eclectic sources to exemplify how the city produces 'shadowy places', marked by both violence and

horizontal solidarities.

V. Ramaswamy, while commenting on the passion with which Ranabir Samaddar wrote the book, remarked that the breathless quality of his writing reminds one of Marx's prose. Connecting his reading with his own existential standpoint, Ramaswamy travelled back and forth between his life experiences and Prof. Samaddar's text, speaking of how the question of labour under capitalism is inseparable from the question of life itself, and how public space often serves as a factory of politics. Drawing on his extensive grassroots immersion and participation in popular political movements and processes, Ramaswamy described the parallel power rooted in subaltern awareness, and emphasised that the settlements of the poor – slums, bustees, and squatter colonies – are the breeding grounds for a biopolitics from below.

Arup Sen discussed that the book's central attempt to theorise the politics of the popular classes, where domination is never total, and there is always scope for resistance. Referring to the often unintended and unpredictable outcomes of political processes, he noted that the effects of a biopolitics from below can never be fully known. There can be no standard theory for reading these subaltern mobilisations, which depend heavily on specific socio-historical contexts. Sen explained that in Samaddar's work, the city comes to be seen as a contested space, where the neighbourhood becomes a key site for biopolitics from below. There is nothing a priori in this biopolitics, and within it, the wage question and the life question are not binaries. Finally, he concluded that while the book involves many theoretical engagements, it should primarily be grounded in the Gramscian tradition.

Ranabir Samaddar responded by bringing in the concept of 'necessary utopias.' He discussed how utopias are never realised fully; if they were, they would cease to be utopias. He then described his writing process in detail, where, drawing on Plato, he commented on how the language of thinking and that of writing are not the same. Contrary to how PhD researchers are trained to write, Ranabir Samaddar reported having written the Introduction first, as he already had a clear idea of what he wanted to convey through the book. He spoke of experiencing a conflict between a historical understanding of what he wanted to say and a logical understanding of the same. Finally, he referred to the vast body of literature that informed the book, ranging from a variety of 17th century texts, to Partition literature, to the works of William Walters, Foucault's Birth of the City and Marx's reading of Dante's Inferno.

Book Discussion: Biopolitics from Below [CEU Press 2025]

Lucía Fernández Ríos spoke on "Migration and the Right to a Healthy Environment: Case Study on Migrants in West Bengal, India", where she focused on the fulfilment of the recently recognised "right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment", crucial for the further realisation of human rights, remains significantly uneven due to deeply rooted disparities in society. She underscored how neoliberal nation-states design hierarchies between the population eligible for human rights and the one that through "necropolitics", thus dehumanising those bodies deemed to be "expendable" by means of "sub-citizenship" processes, and also spoke about detrimental living conditions and reflections of injustices. The research revealed violations of the right to a healthy environment, concretely focusing on migrants as a large part of those bodies "sacrificed" in the name of others' profit. Using a "climate justice" framework that helps to connect the existing theories to real-world deprivations of this fundamental right to migrants, and using a qualitative and deductive approach, the research shed light on the ongoing consequences of those structural inequalities that are to be addressed in West Bengal, one of India's most climate-vulnerable states, in order to leave no one behind in the face of the increasing climate crisis.

Madison Kelly's research was titled "Signs of Belonging: Language and Identity Demarcation in Postcolonial Kolkata's Linguistic Landscape" and the study examined the linguistic landscape (LL) of two distinct areas in Kolkata to determine how language choices reflected and reinforced linguistic hierarchies within the urban context. Utilising a comparative linguistic analysis, the research focused on which languages are chosen, displayed, and given priority in public signage along two frequently traveled streets within Salt Lake (Bidhannagar) and Kestopur. Systematic photographic documentation of shops, signs, and advertisements in both areas guided the study, with specific attention to the interplay of English and Bengali across these spaces. The work drew inspiration from postcolonial theories of linguistic hierarchies across India, and English as a potential marker of aspirations towards globalisation, while also reinforcing exclusionary practices. The paper argued that Kolkata's linguistic landscape is indicative of tensions between visibility and invisibility within the city, and is a practical representation of how urban citizenship and belonging are developed and denied. By situating practices and individual decisions of language use on the local level within global hierarchies and changing attitudes towards the use of English, the research aimed to contribute to scholarship on how language simultaneously shapes and is shaped by urban transformation in cities like Kolkata.

Marion Martins Antunes research on "Whose Space, Whose Culture? Government planning and Artisan Agency in Kumartuli" traced how Kumartuli, Kolkata's historic neighbourhood of idol-makers has for long embodied these tensions, despite the global cultural visibility. Kumartuli's residents continue to face inadequate infrastructure and competitive pressures that deepen internal inequalities. In order to analyse how culture, planning, and resistance intersect in the production of space in Kumartuli, the paper draws on Lefebvre's concepts of the production of space and rhythm analysis, Zukin's account of culture as capital, Roy's theorisation of informality as a mode of urbanisation, and Bayat's notion of quiet encroachment. Informed by this theoretical framework, the study adopts a qualitative case-study approach, examining spatial practices, temporal rhythms, and forms of agency through secondary sources drawn from multidisciplinary academic literature. This secondary data approach inevitably carries limitations, including the absence of first-hand

ethnographic engagement and the ethical need to acknowledge its dependence on perspectives available in existing literature. The paper traced the evolution of Kumartuli and its socio-spatial conditions and practices through the review of literature and then discussed the theoretical concepts into dialogue with empirical material, highlighting the stratified forms of agency that emerge within the neighbourhood, along with reflections on the implications for urban inequality and planning.

Gabriela Rubiano Polanco presented on "Protection from Below Across the Global South: Post Partition Refugee Camps in Bengal and Community Self-protection in Colombia", and began with a methodological difficulty: how to think about the ways displaced people protect their own lives without forcing very different experiences into the same analytical frame. This difficulty is intensified when the cases in question seem to belong to very distinct contexts such as the Cooper's Camp in post Partition West Bengal and the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in north west Colombia. One is embedded in a moment of state making and territorial rupture and the other emerges in the long aftermath of failed agrarian reform and counterinsurgency. Gabriela emphasised how the two cases can still be placed in a kind of conceptual proximity, again, not to demonstrate similarity but to shed light on a shared question that appears differently in each setting: what do people do when the state's promise of protection proves unreliable, conditional, or even part of the very problems it claims to solve? The point of juxtaposing the sites was not to collapse their differences but to linger on the common problem, and to observe how those who occupy the lower ends of caste, class or racial hierarchies develop their own strategies for safeguarding life when the institutions in charge of enacting protection fall short.

Isabela Velasco Pons presented on "Forced displacement and irregular economies: The case study of Myanmar. What role do migration policies play in shaping these irregular economies of displacement in the Myanmar-Thailand border region?" through the analyses of a series of documents intended to contribute to the literature on irregular economies, displacement, border governance and necropolitics as an apparatus for managing forced migration. The paper aimed to analyse and identify the role that Thailand's policies play in the continuation of irregular economies along the Shan, Kayin and Kayah States of the Myanmar-Thailand Borderlands, which are connected to cross-border routes running toward Myawaddy and, further south, to Mae Sot in Thailand. Given the significance of the economic relevance that the extraction of minerals, opium production and scam centres at the border of Myanmar with Thailand, Laos and China possess in the world, the study tried to fill the gap that has not been explored by linking the geopolitical interests of the area and the necropolitical management of migration, processes leading to forced displacement, by profiting from death and violence. The research aimed to answer: what role do migration policies play in shaping irregular economies in the border regions.

Lara Vieira da Silveira discussed "The City as a Border: Sanctuary and Exclusion in Kolkata's Migrant Neighbourhoods" through the approach of looking at Kolkata as one of South Asia's most emblematic postcolonial cities as a space where histories of displacement, colonial planning and neoliberal restructuring converge. Once the capital of British India and now the economic and cultural hub of eastern India, the city embodies the paradoxes of modern urbanisation in the Global South. She drew reference from the urban landscape's encapsulation of the contradictions of postcolonial modernity. The presentation focused on the city's evolution and the ways in which the changes revealed how processes of modernisation, displacement, and survival are deeply entangled. Migrant labour sustains the city's infrastructure and economy, yet those same workers are systematically denied the

right to fully belong. The presentation looked into this central paradox defining Kolkata as a living border: a space where symbolic inclusion and material exclusion coexist, producing precarious forms of urban belonging. This study analysed how urban governance, redevelopment and collective resistance intersect in Kolkata's migrant neighbourhoods. Drawing on ethnographic and secondary sources, the research examined areas such as Nonadanga, Tangra, and Topsia as key sites where exclusion and belongings are co-produced through the interplay between state control, precarity, and everyday practices of survival.


Presentations by EMMIR Students

Rapporteurs' Reports Presentations

The session on the presentations for Module A & EMMIR Session was moderated by Sucharita Sengupta. The Report for Module A included a summary of topics covered and respective discussion of the lecture given by Samata Biswas on "Gender and Urban Insecurities", the students' presentations, as well as Thomas Spijkerboer's lecture. Attention was also given to the creative session, and its respective outcomes – reels and documentaries prepared by the Module A participants. The report was delivered with remarkable clarity and conciseness, highlighting the main arguments and highlighting the insights from Module A in a straightforward way. It offered a useful overview that supported the collective reflection during the conference. In response to this presentation, Samata Biswas highlighted the role of agency in the presentations and discussions of the Module A, emphasising the importance of thinking more about it. Additionally, she referred to the diverse backgrounds of participants to portray how these had pushed boundaries through their research. The session with the report presentations for EMMIR students served as a space for discussion and comments connected to the EMMIR students' presentations. As students could intervene by reflecting on their presentations, participants delved deeper into the connection between the realities her paper analysed in Colombia and India, also further discussed by Thomas Spijkerboer. Samata Biswas highlighted the connection of the EMMIR presentations to the analysis of phenomena from below and suggested the reading of Ranabir Samaddar's work to delve into the matter. The session with the report presentations for Modules B and C was moderated by Rajat Kanti Sur. The major themes of

Module B lecture were listed out while the overview of the discussions in Module B participants' presentations as well as the creative sessions were briefly highlighted and the pertinent comments and suggestions were pointed out in the report. The Rapporteur's Report for Module C was presented by Madhubanti Talukdar. The Module C participants had put together a very brief report that did not adequately highlight the main arguments of each presentation and failed to summarise the Question-Answers and discussions that followed them. The module tutor, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury suggested that the report be modified to incorporate the comments and questions received by each participant and the answers that they provided. Arup Sen suggested that a few corrections be made to the report on the book discussion. The moderator, Rajat Kanti Sur, pointed out the need for detailing out the report especially by focusing on the discussions that took place after each presentation.
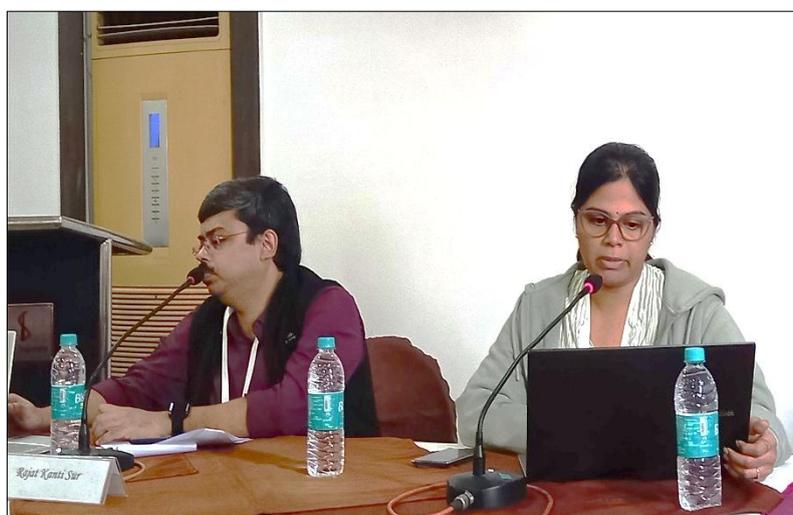
Rapporteur's Report Presentation

Valedictory Lecture
22 November 2025

Theme: Climate Hazards, Cities and Urban Poor

Speaker: Anita Patil Deshmukh

The valedictory lecture of the conference was delivered by Anita Patil Deshmukh whose extensive work at PUKAR-Mumbai, centers on community-based participatory research and the empowerment of youth as "barefoot researchers". Chaired by Ranabir Samaddar, the session brought the conference to a reflective yet urgent close, emphasising the intersection of climate hazards, urban growth, and social inequity. Anita Deshmukh began by situating her arguments within the backdrop of global climate negotiations, highlighting the message reaffirmed at COP30: the world cannot achieve a fair and fast climate transition without restructuring financial systems, strengthening ethical frameworks, and enhancing global cooperation. Turning to India, she noted the country's position as the world's third-largest carbon emitter, juxtaposed with the extreme vulnerability of its poor. The year 2024 was recorded as India's hottest, with lethal wet-bulb temperatures, such as the 200 deaths in

Uttar Pradesh within a single week in 2023, demonstrating the deadly convergence of heat and humidity. A major theme of her lecture was the deep fragility of migrant and low-income urban populations. Migrant workers, often engaged in circular migration, are excluded from stable housing and are routinely unable to access government schemes due to bureaucratic hurdles—complex forms, language barriers, and lack of Aadhaar-linked documentation. Despite contributing significantly to the economic life of cities, they remain invisible in planning processes. Drawing on examples across Global South cities, Deshmukh explained how informal settlements are forced onto hazardous lands—riverbeds, garbage dumps, steep slopes, and marshes—areas considered uninhabitable by others. In Mumbai, 87 million people occupy just 0.8% of the city's land, leading to extreme population density, poor ventilation, and exposure to heat. The "vertical slums" of Mumbai, multi-story structures with no windows and minimal light, typify the infrastructural deprivation that amplifies health risks such as tuberculosis. Climate hazards, she argued, intersect with pre-existing inequalities, intensifying vulnerabilities. Rising sea levels, more frequent cyclones, and extreme rainfall threaten to submerge large parts of coastal cities like Mumbai by 2050. Drought-prone regions such as Marathwada have witnessed worsening agrarian distress and farmer suicides. In unrecognised slums, scarcity of basic resources has given rise to phenomena like the water mafia, forcing residents to pay exorbitant rates or trade political loyalty for access to essential water supplies. Health impacts featured centrally in her discussion. The speaker highlighted that 70–80% of diseases are shaped by social determinants—inadequate housing, contaminated water, poor drainage, and overcrowding. As infrastructure collapses under climate stress, vector-borne, waterborne, and heat-related illnesses rise sharply. In her concluding remarks, she urged policymakers to adopt equity-centered climate planning: recognition of heatwaves as national disasters, heat codes, decentralised ward-level heat action plans, early warning systems, and universal access to basic services irrespective of tenure. She also pointed out India's low public health spending compared to countries like South Africa, underscoring the need for stronger health system investments. The lecture served as a powerful conclusion to the workshop, reminding all participants that climate change is fundamentally a social and public health crisis, demanding urgent, inclusive, and justice-oriented responses.

Valedictory Lecture by Anita Patil Deshmukh

Evaluation of the Workshop

Evaluation of the Workshop

The Evaluators of the workshop Swati Guha and Debalina Seth spoke about their experiences of the workshop and shared their detailed feedbacks and suggestions that would help improve the workshop as well as other CRG events while planning for future programmes. The detailed report submitted by Debalina Seth is as follows.

The evaluation of the Research and Orientation Workshop employed an 'appreciative inquiry' approach, which has the potential in programme-evaluation, focusing on the objectives of the workshop in understanding the interplay between Cities, Migrants and Insecurities. The aim of "this annual event is pivotal to CRG's aspiration to voice the experiences, opinions and discontents of South Asia, and also is global discussions on the Subject". The stated goal of the workshop was to engage "young scholars, academicians, teachers, journalists and activists, through exploration, research and discussion". 'Cities', 'Migrants', 'Insecurities' the three coined words were explored and unfolded probably in all possible ways in the thorough academic sessions, creative sessions and also in detailed informal discussions. The evaluation is absolutely from the evaluator's direct participant observation of the entire four and half-day workshop and informal discussions with the module mentors, participants across the country and also from abroad, CRG staffs and above all the feedback of participants at the end session.

The orientation workshop was extremely well organised and well-planned. The detailed programme schedule was shared along with the names of speakers, lecture titles, participants names and paper titles to have a prior conception of the ion of the entire workshop. Printed Brochure and needed stationeries were provided before the inaugural session.

On the very first day of the workshop, it was announced that zero tolerance policy on harassment, bullying, discrimination, belittling will be observed and this was an excellent approach which all academic events should follow. It gave the participants an exceptionally collegial, supportive academic space and rapidly they could feel free and comfortable in a new city. The technical setup of the workshop was overall flawless and the audio-video support was throughout consistent.

The framework of the workshop was exemplary which was designed to support the academic development of young scholars from different backgrounds and focus around a specific paper combined with the creation of peer learning community which enabled the participants to present such high-quality papers.

The learning, teaching, interactions in the Tenth Annual Research and Orientation Workshop were designed and planned as an open platform for long positive impact on academic skills and networks. To enhance the in-depth research of participants in short span, the entire workshop was designed and divided into three modules following the fundamental research agenda of CRG and all collaborating institutes.

The number of participants was reasonably limited and they were divided into three small module groups each led by a coordinator. The toiling intense workshop wasn't just for these four and half-days. The academic excellence of the papers reflected, mentoring-tutoring of two- or three-months span, before the workshop. The nurtured community made it easier for both participants and module coordinators to know each other, exchange views and this

was further strengthened by the expectations for participants to act as a peer mentor to one another, within the module groups. Actually, workshops aim to this kind of ideal collective learning without any unhealthy competition and this is what I experienced here.

The range of research area needs special mention. Following the module title, the module coordinators helped the researchers to explore a spacious range from East to West, North to South, Mumbai to Kolkata, hills and terrains of Sikkim, Darjeeling, mangroves of Kerala to tea gardens of Assam, towns of Odisha to city of Chandigarh, cry of Manipur to violence of Nepal, Myanmar, refugee camp of Colombia to Cooper's camp, and urban slums and cities of Global North and South. The arrangement of module coordinators' lectures, prior to the participant's paper presentations easily set the context like a keynote lecture and strengthened and focused their paper objective. This academic practice even helped the young researchers to handle the question answer session. It further reflected the module tutors' engagement with all the papers in the module— of course having evaluated and highly informed, nuanced, and ready to provide supportive feedback on the module papers at the conclusion of each session. This extensive academic effort of the mentors should be applauded. Among the participants' papers, besides theoretical papers, a few were proposed from intense empirical research with the testimonies and all the three modules designed one or two of these kinds of research papers. Even lectures of eminent speakers were also presented from intense empirical research. These papers and lectures provided another dimension.

Besides academic presentations, the **creative session** was quite absorbing with posters, short films, docufilms, created by the participants and this helped to intertwine creative self with academic skill. The schedules of four and half-day might appear quite tiresome, but the planning of public lectures, film screening, book release and book reviews, creative sessions included varieties. The detailed Rapporteur's Reports appeared very effective and few participants were suggested for development of their research papers. The focus of the workshop was absolute and the valedictory session also winded up the entire Journey in a single tune.

Policy advocacy was one of the fundamentals of the research workshop. The connection with policy were direct and multiple running through all the three modules, keynote address, valedictory lecture, participants' papers, introductory lectures of module coordinators and even it reflected in question answer sessions, interactive floors. Not only migration policy, the arena included rural urban area development policy, health and care, environmental protection policy, climate hazards, gender issues, city planning policy, human rights and these are just few. Mission and discussion of the wider work of CRG was well-knit throughout the workshop and their attentive presence and spontaneous participation enhanced the discussion. The **academic merit** of the workshop was exemplary.

A best paper token award was planned by CRG and the module coordinators shared one or two selected research papers from each module with a board of jury members. This selection was so collegial and cordial that the issue of unwanted confusion unhealthy competition never diverted the participants. This token award certainly inspired the young participants and would encourage them to enhance their study, research, and presentation in future workshops.

Overall, participants were actively involved in the very high standard programme and the excellent academic level of papers and special lectures marked it as an exemplary research and orientation workshop. In informal discussions, the participants expressed their gratitude to CRG and planned to relate to future CRG programmes, online-offline lectures. This urge of learning community creation is the aim of any workshop and can mark the workshop successful over the longer term. **Some proposals and suggestions** raised from their end like fieldtrip or photo exhibition- though CRG people clarified that fieldwork could be only planned in longer duration of workshop. But photo exhibition or short trip to CRG library could be added in the schedule for a change and also expansion of academic progression. From my end I need to mention, though the participants were so attentive and keen about their research papers and presentations but their questionnaire part was often limited. Junior researchers should have much more questions and only questions could help them to explore the plethora of wider knowledge in workshops or academic events.

Debalina Seth shared her views as an evaluator in the dedicated evaluation session of the workshop and mentioned a significant contribution of this Research and Orientation Workshop for expanding the frontiers of research in 'Cities', 'Migrants' and 'Insecurities'. The papers presented, the creative works, extensive discussions with a cohort of young scholars from different cities and abroad and eminent renowned academicians would help researchers and participants in building their skills, confidence, and expanding their networks and contacts. The programme was **highly informative** and one participant even mentioned, the ocean of new knowledge provided a learning material of four years is just four and half-days.

At the end, Debalina Seth expresses her heartfelt gratitude to Calcutta Research Group for providing her with the opportunity to share the entire journey. The hospitality of CRG staff needs special mention and everyone involved in the workshop is to be commended for their commitment, as she wished the best wishes for the coming years.

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