

## Abstracts for Panel 6, Uttar Pradesh: Development Failure and Identity Politics

### Running Order:

#### *Rural Politics and the development of the urban*

1. Paul Brass	Urban Development and the Peasantry: Land Acquisition in Ghaziabad and the Cultivators, 1950-2009
2. Sujoy Dutta	Power, Patronage and Politics: Comparative Study of Two Panchayat Elections in Uttar Pradesh
3. Manuela Ciotti	“Constructing gendered exceptionality through ordinary means in Uttar Pradesh: Unravelling the conundrum of charismatic women leaders versus disempowered women majorities”
4. Radhika Govinda	‘On Whose Behalf? Women’s Activism and Identity Politics in Uttar Pradesh’

#### *Politics of Identity*

5. Rahul Verma	The politics of identity and its impact on the economy of UP.
6. Craig Jeffrey	Are Youth Transforming UP? Generational Politics in Neoliberal North India
7. Gilles Verniers	“The institutionalisation of the Samajwadi Party and the mechanisms of local political representation”
8. Lucia Michelutti	Cooperation and distrust: identity politics and Yadav-Muslim relations, 1999-2009

#### *Agrarian Transition*

9. Nicolas Jaoul	Dalit pragmatism and the Land issue
10. Jens Lerche	Agrarian transitions in Uttar Pradesh
11. Vegard Iversen, Sushil Kumar & Jyoti Tripathi	Moving out and moving up? Occupational and other mobility in Western Uttar Pradesh
12. Ishita Mehrotra	Mapping Rural Low Caste Female Labour Relations in U.P., India

#### *Health, Work and Identity*

13. Ali Mehdi	Dalit Mobilization and Access to Health Care among Dalits in Rural Uttar Pradesh
14. Patricia Jeffery and Roger Jeffery	“Polio and the state of public health in UP”

15. Philippa Williams	'Like warp and weft': exploring Muslim experiences of inter-community interaction in Varanasi's silk sari industry
16. Orlanda Ruthven	"'Informality' in Moradabad's old city: regimes of labour governance, global economic agendas and the political agenda of the vote-focused state"

## Abstracts:

### 1. Urban Development and the Peasantry: Land Acquisition in Ghaziabad and the Cultivators, 1950-2009

Paul R. Brass, University of Washington, USA

Ghaziabad was recently declared by *Newsweek* magazine to be one of the ten most dynamic cities in the world, a list headed by none other than "Sin City" Las Vegas. Among numerous things about Ghaziabad unknown by the *Newsweek* writer (who probably never visited the city), is that its growth from the beginning to the present has involved substantial acquisition of good agricultural land from the cultivators,

When the process began in the 1960s Charan Singh defended the interests of the cultivators against what he considered to be the predatory efforts of industrialists, big businessmen, and government officers to take over agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes at very low rates of compensation. On the other side was the then chief minister of the state, his arch enemy, C. B. Gupta. So, we have a kind of classic confrontation between a spokesman for the peasants against a supporter of the industrialists, in which Charan Singh argued that any land sales should be done through the free market, whereas Gupta favoured government acquisitions for the sake of "development." It would seem on the surface, therefore, to have been a confrontation between those favouring untrammelled free enterprise and those favouring socialist development. In fact, it was not. It was a different kind of struggle between the cultivators, supported by Charan Singh, against the predatory activities of industrialists supported by politicians masquerading as socialists in a thoroughly corrupted politico-economic order.

The process of land acquisition continues today in which, despite the occasional windfalls garnered by clever kisans, the principal beneficiaries have been the real estate agents, property owners, and the ever-increasing middle class population who have now the money to buy condominiums in huge apartment buildings that feature all the amenities that could be hoped for in such an otherwise utterly degraded environment.

## **2. Power, Patronage and Politics: Comparative Study of Two Panchayat Elections in Uttar Pradesh**

**Sujoy Dutta, Indian Institute of Technology (Madras)**

Using ethnographic data collected from two villages in UP (district Sitapur) in 2005/06, my paper will explore the importance of panchayat elections in the context of rural politics. It will explore the various manoeuvres and contestations taking place within the panchayat election. The main objective is to argue that panchayats have become one of the main sources of power for the dominant groups, and in order to be a successful pradhan (headman), it is imperative to establish networks both within and outside the village periphery. In addressing these issues, the paper will deal with three key questions: (1) What is the importance of panchayat elections in the context of rural politics? (2) How have the panchayats become one of the prominent bases of power of the dominant groups? (3) The various strategies/tactics adopted by the powerful groups in panchayat elections?

## **3. Constructing gendered exceptionalism through ordinary means in Uttar Pradesh: Unravelling the conundrum of charismatic women leaders versus disempowered women majorities**

**Manuela Ciotti, University of Edinburgh, UK**

The literature on female leadership in South Asia shows women top politicians commanding a high degree of moral authority and power which is at odds with the poverty, violence and subjection often experienced by women in this region. Women leaders' life histories do not point to a notion of gender equality but rather one of gender charismatic 'exceptionality' due to a number of factors. This paper addresses the conundrum of female leadership by testing some features of women leaders' 'grand agency' vis-à-vis the experience of women party activists at the grassroots in north India. Drawing on ethnographic material collected with low-caste housewives who joined the ranks of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in the city of Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, the paper explores the making of local leadership. While the women analysed often occupy marginal positions in overall party structures - and they lack the support of powerful political families and the financial condition of the elite - the paper claims a degree of isomorphism between historical women's leadership and that of BSP women. This isomorphism is substantiated by a sociological atypicality explaining the start of political activities amongst the latter and by their high degree of freedom and mobility developed through political participation. Against this backdrop, the paper shows how gender-related disadvantage is transcended through participation and turned into an advantage when need be. In an innovative fashion, this paper re-connects historical women leaders to ordinary women activists in north India.

## **4. On Whose Behalf? Women's Activism and Identity Politics in Uttar Pradesh**

**Radhika Govinda, Ambedkar University Delhi, India**

There is a long and significant history of women's involvement in various peoples' movements (such as the land reforms movement, the farmers' movement, and the Chipko movement for the protection of the environment) in the state. However, most women's activists working in present-day Uttar Pradesh (UP) date the beginnings of contemporary women's activism in the state to somewhere around the late 1980s and early 1990s when the Government of India-sponsored women's development programme, Mahila Samakhya was initiated. Its single most important achievement in UP was its success at organising large masses of women who had previously never been mobilised. In present-day UP, a number of big and small women's and development NGOs, and party-affiliated women's organisations have also come up. While these actors in UP are confronted with the same issues – of inclusion and exclusion based on who constitute the subjects of activism, how these subjects are defined and by whom – as those involved in women's activism elsewhere, the current socio-economic and political conjunctures in the state, especially the developments associated with Dalit political assertion and Hindu nationalist forces, have had the effect of heightening the debates and tensions around these issues. Drawing mainly on ethnographic research, this paper proposes to unpack some of these debates and tensions by exploring answers to three main questions: whether and how has the state's involvement in the project of women's empowerment influenced women's activism in UP; whether and how have Dalit political assertion and Hindu nationalist forces challenged those involved in women's activism in UP and whether and how the latter have reshaped their agenda as a result; and to what extent have caste and community identities been recognized in women's activism in UP.

## **5. The politics of identity and its impact on the economy of UP.**

**Rahul Verma, LOKNITI, CSDS, New Delhi, India**

After registering an economic growth higher than the national average in the early 80s, UP's economy has experienced a sharp drop. Yet amidst failing law and order, appalling infrastructure, unchecked corruption and administrative inefficiency, UP has succeeded in sustaining the procedural logic of a democratic system. To what extent are the answers to UP's backwardness to be found in the "politics of identity and competitive populism" pursued by political parties for more than a decade? Have the compulsions of electoral democracy have forced short lived coalition governments to take populist measures which are in turn responsible for the decline in UP's economy? This paper argues that the "capacity of the state" in UP to undertake long term development tasks and govern effectively weakened, as the mobilization by political parties centred more around the 'social justice' frame rather than 'economic justice' frame. And thus the governments of the day were

accountable to their electorates more for development as a 'voice' for the people, rather than development as 'economic growth'.

Emphasizing institutional variables in a macro-historical setting the paper highlights the choice of major policy initiatives by political actors during the decade of 90's in Uttar Pradesh. It analyses whether these played a central role in transforming UP's polity and economy, and considers alternative explanations of UP's excessive dependence on agriculture, high degree of inequality in the distribution of income/assets and widespread landlessness, and use them to analyze the sluggish and poor quality of economic growth. The paper uses three main sources: (1) the manifestos and pamphlets of political parties; (2) data from the National Election Study and Uttar Pradesh State Election Study conducted by Lokniti, CSDS; (3) the findings of the Uttar Pradesh: State Development Report, to follow the trajectory of growth in UP.

The paper shall contribute to the literature on identity politics and its impact on the health of Uttar Pradesh's economy in particular and shall attempt to develop a comprehensive framework to comprehend the interconnections in politics of populism and development failure in general. The paper would also advance the literature on why do political actors prefer 'social justice' as a mobilization plank over 'economic justice' and thereby attempt to contribute to the literature on mobilization and electorate's response to this.

## **6. Are Youth Transforming UP? Generational Politics in Neo-liberal North India**

**Craig Jeffrey, St. John's College, Oxford, UK**

In contemporary western UP, economic reforms have deepened the problem of unemployment among educated young men. Unemployment has led to a widespread sense of disappointment, even melancholy. But joblessness has also created certain political possibilities: unemployed young men in their twenties and early thirties from across the religious, caste and class spectrum sometimes come together to mobilize against the state. And these young people use the idea of themselves as a "youth" or as a "generation" in voicing political demands. I use ethnographic work among student political entrepreneurs in Meerut in 2004 and 2005 to describe the possibilities and limits of "generation" as a basis for political assertion.

## **7. Post-identity politics? The impact of fragmentation and competition on UP electoral politics**

**Gilles Verniers, SciencesPo./CERI Ph.D. Candidate  
Affiliated Ph.D., Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi**

The process of democratization in the State of Uttar Pradesh has been largely understood as the product of identity-based mobilization and growing electoral participation of underprivileged social groups. These groups that were previously excluded and/or under-represented in the political sphere, have emancipated themselves and supported political parties of their own with the aim of obtaining both representation as well as a fair share of the public resources that the latter provides access to. If the identity explanation can account for the rise of caste-based parties and politics in Uttar Pradesh and for the growing fragmentation of both the party system and the electorate, it falls short of explaining the more recent developments of UP politics. Parties that were mobilizing specific segments of the electorate, defined by their ascriptive identity, have been encouraged to mobilize other and broader groups, forging local alliances and counter-alliances and encouraging as a result competition not only between but also within otherwise antagonistic social groups. This increased competition, which translates into a very high turnover or volatility of elected representatives, has contributed to blur the boundaries of caste-based politics and sheds light on other factors determining the output of elections. The “capacity to deliver” and answer the economic needs of the electorate (re)gain importance in that context, opening the way for different strategies and policies. This paper will attempt to refine the general understanding of caste-based politics and the mechanisms of political representation in UP, by analysing the sociological transformations of the UP Legislative Assembly since Independence and by confronting these data with fieldwork based qualitative observations on patterns of local leadership and political influence.

## **8. Cooperation and distrust: identity politics and Yadav-Muslim relations, 1999-2009**

**Lucia Michelutti, University of Oxford, UK**

Recent research on Hindu-Muslim relations has stressed conflict and communal antagonism. In the late 1990s I observed a situation in which Hindu and Muslim relations were not characterised by violence and conflict but by political cooperation. I looked at how this social alliance was promoted by the Samajwadi Party’s (Socialist Party) political rhetoric, and how this has been received (or resisted) on the ground in a neighbourhood in Mathura town in Western Uttar Pradesh. More specifically, I looked at the political alliance and social relations between the Qureshis and the Yadavs who are the backbone of the Samajwadi Party in the state and at the role of political leaders (such Mulayam Singh Yadav), who present themselves as promoters of social justice for both Hindu and Muslim communities. This ethnographic material and survey data collected during the 1999 and 2009 Lok Sabha elections show how over the last ten years Hindu Muslim relations have deteriorated and

conflict and tension is on the rise. The paper shows how this has much to do with caste/identity politics and elite political manipulation as well as with the normalisation of Hinduvta at the local level, and the resonance that this now has in people's day to day interactions with each other.

## **9. Dalit pragmatism and the Land issue.**

**N. Jaoul, IRIS, EHESS, Paris, France**

Has the strategic avoidance of land reforms by the BSP governments brought a consensus on agrarian inequalities? While this seems true at the level of the state politics, where the strategy of political and social alliances for the sake of electoral pragmatism has led to avoid any agrarian agenda, the picture at the local level is somewhat different. Based on villagers' accounts of the late 1990's, I will highlight some popular initiatives by local Ambedkarite activists and ordinary villagers to take possession of parcels of communal land for which they hold land titles, which systematically led to violence. During my next field trip, in February 2010, I will try to see, 10 to 15 years after, if this agrarian militancy from below is still simmering or if Mayawati's attempt to curb grassroots militancy has eventually managed to appease "her" constituency

## **10. Agrarian transitions in Uttar Pradesh**

**Jens Lerche, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, UK**

This paper aims to contribute to our understanding of the kind of rural and agrarian development taking place today in the different regions of Uttar Pradesh. I first outline recent theoretical discussions regarding the 'agrarian question'. I then examine how the agrarian capitalism in the UP regions may be characterised, and what drives these specific developments. This will be analysed from a class perspective with consideration of caste relations as well. The focus will be on land ownership, productivity, and organisation of production; on the interplay between agricultural based accumulation and other sectors of the economy; and on the role played by state institutions and state funds. The aim is to increase our understanding of which social classes are driving what kind of economic development in the different regions, and what the consequences are for rural workers.

The analysis will draw on state level and regional statistics, and on secondary qualitative sources. This will lead to the sketching of regional patterns of accumulation and their impact on rural workers, but it will also lead to the identification of absences of data which will need to be filled in order for a firmer analysis to be developed.

## **11. Moving out and moving up? Occupational and other mobility in Western Uttar Pradesh**

**Vegard Iversen, Sushil Kumar & Jyoti Tripathi, Indian Statistical Institute New Delhi, India**

Using data from random samples of households in two villages in Nagina tehsil in Bijnor district, Western Uttar Pradesh, we complement existing research by making comparisons of the network resources, mobility and work career trajectories of Muslim Ansaris, Chamars and Jat males. While local employment prospects remain grim and government failures on the ground (private schools, NREGA) persist and are pervasive, startling patterns of persistence co-exist alongside occupational and other social change. While Ansaris, over time, have been entrepreneurial, developed links and cluster intensely in a bakery sector spread across locations in North and central India, the predicaments of those within this sector are mainly pessimistic. For Chamars, in contrast, early readings of our data suggest rapid occupational diversification although outside work often remains seasonal in nature. We illustrate how sub-groups of Chamars have gained footholds in government jobs and show how modes of labour market entry appear to be transmuting. *Thekedars* – who have been important for finding seasonal, manual work – may be losing their grip at the expense of social network based entry into off farm jobs. Apart from contrasts in occupational diversification, we present detailed evidence on the extent to which the latter is accompanied by improvements in earnings and working conditions more generally.

## **12. Mapping Rural Low Caste Female Labour Relations in U.P., India.**

**Ishita Mehrotra, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, UK**

The literature on rural labour relations in India highlights the changing nature of agriculture and agrarian relations, the delinking of agriculture and rural labour, the disintegration of traditional attached labour and the emergence of neo-bondage and debt-based labour relations, the increasing importance of seasonal migrant work, interrelationship between social structures and rural labour relations, politicisation of rural labour and labour struggles and so on and so forth. However, with a few exceptions, there has been little systematic empirical work on what these developments have meant for rural low-caste female labour and how they have responded to them.

Drawing on recent village-based empirical work in eastern U.P., this paper would briefly discuss the broad implications of above developments for low-caste labouring households, while focussing on the dominant forms of labour commodification and relations that the rural low-caste female labour is engaged in and forms of labour struggles/resistance.

Based on an analysis of these, it will be argued that rural female labour has remained largely excluded from these processes of change. In the contemporary context of labour

fragmentation and male mobility, rural female labour continues to be preponderant in the agricultural sector irrespective of availability of local alternative employment opportunities and even where male members of the labouring households return at times of peak agricultural season, their participation in agriculture is on the decline. The fieldwork material shows that rural female labour relations and the position and choices of rural female labourers in the labour market are predominantly shaped and determined by local rural social structures and their specific economic position. It will also be argued that their modes of struggle and resistance are best understood as 'negotiations' within existing power relations (individual as well as collective) and not as organised visible collective action directed towards challenging established socio-economic structures. Such 'negotiations' may even occur in tied/priority/debt based labour relations. Finally it will be shown that such forms of labour protest do not preclude the possibility of intra-group conflicts.

### **13. Dalit Mobilization and Access to Health Care among Dalits in Rural Uttar Pradesh**

**Ali Mehdi, University of Freiburg, Germany**

It is said that, despite the mobilization of Dalits in Uttar Pradesh since the past two decades or so, they continue to have the worst development indicators in the State. Using a combination of indicators from NFHS (1,2,3) and DLHS (1,2) surveys for the State at the macro level, and qualitative interviews with a cross-section of Dalits in some villages of Nanauta development block in Saharanpur district of Western UP at the micro level, I would like to explore: 1) how have health indicators of the SCs changed over the years?, 2) has 'access to health care' (defined broadly to include psychological, social, economic, political and other determinants of health) improved for the SCs?, and 3) what sort of challenges do they continue to face in accessing these determinants of health? Health outcomes for the SCs may not have improved considerably with Dalit mobilization in UP – and one could argue that compared to the long history of mobilization in Southern States like Tamil Nadu, it is still at a nascent stage in UP, and would thus need more time to show itself in improved health outcomes. But it will be interesting to explore whether access to the determinants of good health has improved for them since Dalit mobilization in the State began. I have not yet come across a study which explicitly explores Dalit empowerment in UP from this perspective; as such, this paper would make a contribution to understanding the process of their empowerment in the State as well as to the challenges in the reduction of health inequities in a caste-ridden society.

## 14. Polio and the state of public health in UP

Patricia Jeffery & Roger Jeffery, University of Edinburgh, UK

India has continued to report wild poliovirus cases throughout the 2000s. Confirmed polio cases have become increasingly localised in UP and Bihar, and increasingly, amongst Muslim children. Whilst some commentators critique the technical limitations of India's 'Pulse Polio Initiative', we show how the programme's operational requirements have serious socio-political implications at the grassroots level, particularly with regard to civilian resistance on one side and coercion and victim-blaming on the other. An intensive communication strategy, including the Underserved Strategy, was designed to persuade Muslim parents to allow their children to take the polio drops. This paper draws on long-term research in rural Bijnor district, north-western UP. It highlights the diversity of Muslim villagers' views about polio immunisation and shows how the history of Muslims' relationships with the post-independence state in India makes them particularly prone to mistrust and sometimes resist the polio immunisation teams. Yet Muslims are not alone in expressing reservations about the PPI. Muslim and Hindu villagers alike critique the inadequacies of government health services in UP in terms that echo other critiques of 'vertical programmes' (such as the PPI) as focused top-down programmes that deploy huge financial and personnel resources, divert attention from other health-related activities and often entail coercion of the citizenry. Ironically, the Underserved Strategy has taken the insight that Muslims are underserved by government health care provision and turned it into a victim-blaming programme that pressurises parents into complying with the administration of multiple doses of polio vaccine to their children.

## **15. 'Like warp and weft': exploring Muslim experiences of inter-community interaction in Varanasi's silk sari industry**

**Philippa Williams, Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, UK**

The Hindu pilgrimage city of Varanasi (Banaras) is widely celebrated as the home of the Banarasi silk sari. Like the 'warp and weft' that constitute silk fabric, Hindu and Muslim relations in the industry are reported to be similarly interwoven and integral to the (re)production of a sense of 'Hindu Muslim brotherhood' in the market and in the city more generally. But economic competition between these communities in the industry has apparently been the source of tension in Varanasi, giving rise to moments of conflict and violence. Typically, Hindu merchants have controlled marketing and trading, while Muslim Ansaris have occupied production level jobs, largely weaving, polishing and preparing the saris for market. This broad distinction continues to resonate materially and imaginatively, but it does of course belie a more complex and cross cutting existing reality.

This paper explores contemporary interactions and exchanges in the silk sari market from the perspective of its Muslim participants. Firstly, I examine how Muslim weavers, polishers, businessmen and others, negotiate their identity in relational contexts that are intersected by religious, socio-economic and generational differences. Public religious identity represents a more pronounced axis of identification in the mid 2000s than was observed by Nita Kumar in the 1980s. Secondly, I examine varying experiences and articulations of 'Hindu Muslim brotherhood' in these economic settings. While such a discourse constructs the notion of inter-community trust and affection, it is simultaneously cognisant of inter-community difference. Since the industry depends upon the successful daily reproduction of Hindu and Muslim interaction, this narrative effectively serves the interests of the (financially) powerful, both Hindus and Muslims. Signalling communal harmony, the notion of 'Hindu Muslim brotherhood' has been keenly engaged by city leaders as they try to maintain peace in the city. But in more mundane ways too, where economic inequalities and exploitation are daily realities, the discourse of 'Hindu-Muslim brotherhood' acts to depoliticise these practices and facilitate the reproduction of existing power structures. The paper contributes to broader discussions concerning public and relational experiences of being Muslim in multicultural and urban Uttar Pradesh.

## **16. Government inspectors and 'ethical' buyers: regulating labour in Moradabad's metalware industry**

**Orlanda Ruthven, Oxford/Delhi**

The presentation is based on fieldwork for a PhD thesis in the metalware cluster of Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh. I present two different ways in which labour standards are regulated in the city, first by Indian labour law and second by the 'voluntary' codes of conduct brought to bear by the city's global buyers. I discuss the text of each regulatory form

and how this is interpreted, used, avoided and applied in the city's export firms. The material raises questions about the moral legitimacy of labour law and whether or not it is or can be effectively replaced by the 'market-led' regulation of global buyers.