



October Urban Aspirations workshop: Mumbai  
**Transcendence and Control in a  
 Global Mega City**

(October 3–5, 2011)

This second Mumbai workshop on urban aspirations proceeds from the insight that the very notion of aspiration implies dissatisfaction with the limitation of given realities (session 4), and that the real or symbolic transcendence of these limits by one section of society often entails the active constraint of others (session 1). By turning from the metaphor of space (spaces of belonging, imagination, movement) to the non-metaphoric realities of physical space as an inherently limited resource, we confront the problem of mutually exclusive claims to occupancy and use (session 2). The rise of the mega city is closely associated with that of a new elite whose access to global cultural forms contributes to the appearance of having escaped the specificities of place. This transcendence of locality depends on an accumulation of social capital, which simultaneously implies regimes of distinction and other techniques of social differentiation. These do not go unchallenged (session 3). By what logics are some constrained to labor, that others may be free (session 6)? Transcendence, moreover, is not the sole purview of elites. Claims to the universal are made as well by groups rendered marginal in the dominant national imaginary (sessions 4 & 5), and the form of the claims they make often contain an implicit challenge to national modes of belonging as well as to the consumerist cosmopolitanism of urban elites.

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**Day One (October 3)**

Peter VAN DER VEER: *Introductory remarks and personal introductions*

**Session 1: Techniques of containment (ghetto and the 'special political zone')**

- Panelists: Darshan VIGNESWARAN — Monopolizing territory: Segregation and Security in Johannesburg and Mumbai  
 Arvind RAJAGOPAL — Special political zone: urban planning, spatial segregation and the infrastructure of violence in Ahmedabad  
 Qudsiya CONTRACTOR — 'Hindu' City, 'Muslim' Citizens  
 Respondent: Lakshmi LINGHAM

**Session 2: Struggles over access**

- Panelists: Lisa BJORKMAN — Making of a Slum: criminalizing infrastructure in liberalization-era Mumbai  
 Lalit VACHANI — The *Maidan Histories* Project  
 Shilpa PHADKE — Loitering Bodies: Some Dilemmas in Gendered Public Space  
 Solly BENJAMIN — Occupancy Urbanism as Transcendence Practice: Some narratives beyond 'resistance'  
 Respondent: Arvind RAJAGOPAL

**Day Two (October 4)**

**Session 3: Symbolic capital and contests of value**

- Panelists: Ajay GANDHI — The Queue and the Crowd: Forms of Urban Compulsion and Repulsion  
 D. PARTHASARATHY — The Globalized Politics of In(Equity) and the Colonization of Desire and Leisure in Mumbai and Bangkok  
 K.P. JAYASANKAR & Anjali MONTEIRO — Imagined Bombay/Mumbai  
 Respondent: Lalit VACHANI

**Session 4: Universal aspirations**

- Panelists: Patrick EISENLOHR — Shi'a transnationalism and its universalist claims in Mumbai  
 Nate ROBERTS — The category of 'the human' in Dalit and Pentecostal discourse  
 Rowena ROBINSON — Conversion and moral universalism  
 Respondent: Anupama RAO

Special working group meeting for Urban Aspirations researchers with PUKAR director Anita PATIL-DESHMUKH

**Day Three (October 5)**

**Session 5: National others**

- Panelists: Radhika GUPTA — From out-of-the-way Kargil to mega-city Mumbai: Preliminary notes on Shi'ite transnationalism in comparative perspective  
 Sarover ZAIDI — TBA  
 Shireen MIRZA — Shifting rituals: Circulating Shi'a imaginaries in Mumbai city  
 Ayse CAGLAR — Contentious Politics: Sites and Acts of Rome in Berlin  
 Respondent: Patrick EISENLOHR

**Session 6: "The precariat"**

- Panelists: Ankur SRIVASTAVA & Shabeena SAVERI — Applying Queer Lens: Spaces, Subcultures and Sexualities  
 Amita BHIDE — Struggles and the Process of Worlding: The case of Dharavi Redevelopment  
 Anupama RAO — Immanence and Everyday Life: Rethinking Outcaste Labor  
 Ratoola KUNDU — Contested peripheries of globalizing cities  
 Respondent: Peter VAN DER VEER

*Concluding remarks and open discussion:* Peter VAN DER VEER, S. PARASURAMAN, Lakshmi LINGAM

**Sponsored by:**

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