

The Department of

Sociology and Social Anthropology
cordially invites you to

Capital Dreaming:

Speculative Capitalism and Spectacular Urbanism in Amaravati (India)

Public Lecture by
Carol Upadhy

as part of our Seminar Series

Date and Time: Monday, November 28. 17:30

Venue: Monument Building, Popper Room



The paper explores the role of speculation and spectacle in the planning of a new capital city in southern India, 'Amaravati'. With the loss of the state capital (Hyderabad) to Telangana following the bifurcation of the state of Andhra Pradesh, the government of the residual state formulated an ambitious plan to construct a futuristic, well-planned 'greenfield' city on a large stretch of rural land. The modalities of planning, finance and development that have been deployed in this project reflect the transnational circulation of neoliberal urban policies that

have influenced the restructuring of cities across the global South. But the Amaravati plan has also been shaped by an older regional political economy that is dominated by vernacular finance capital and a political class entrenched in a specific class-caste social formation. The paper examines the creation of 'consent' for the new city (which will create extensive dislocation and dispossession) through the transformation of local farmers into speculative investors and 'stakeholders' in the project, a cultural politics of regional assertion, and the circulation of new social imaginaries that equate the building of Amaravati with the development of the state. Exploring the imagination of modernity that is embodied in the capital plan, it describes the efforts of political leaders to generate public enthusiasm and investor faith by mounting lavish public spectacles and saturating the public visual field and the media with representations of the anticipated future. This case illustrates the complex politics of development in urban mega-projects as they materialize on the ground, as well as the contradictory dynamics of recent changes in urban policies, in post-reform India.

Bio-note:

Carol Upadhyia is Professor in the School of Social Sciences at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore, India, and is currently a CEU/HESP Visiting Fellow. A social anthropologist by training, Upadhyia has researched and published extensively on diverse social and economic changes in contemporary India, including capitalist development and class formation, the 'new' middle class, the Indian software industry and labor, processes of social and spatial mobility, transnational migration and the formation of regional diasporas, the urbanization of rural landscapes, and the globalization of cities. Her most recent book is entitled *Reengineering India: Work, Capital, and Class in an Offshore Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2016).