Urban Policies and the Right to the City in India

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3:45 pm  Tuesday, 18 December 2012

Conference Hall, Centre for Policy Research, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi

The presentation draws on “Urban Policies and the Right to the City in India” a recent UNESCO and CSH publication (http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15066&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). We situate the “Right to the City” (RTTC) concept and its various interpretations in the Indian context through a discussion of the notion of urban citizenship. In a radical interpretation, idea of a RTTC is a critique of the capitalist model of accumulation which calls for a right to change the city through mobilisation “from below”. In a more reformist interpretation, it is defined as a collection of rights in the city. RTTC refers simultaneously to entitlements and claims, to formal and substantive rights, to individual and collective rights, because it can refer to the city-of-today, or to the city-that-should-be. This publication aims to contribute to efforts at converting the former into the latter. It relies on a reformist interpretation since it focuses on policies, but it also recognizes the importance of a transformative agenda. Situating the concept of the RTTC in the Indian context entails looking at urban citizenship, which can be defined as a very fluid, but not very porous, boundary between those people whose presence is legitimate in the city and others. Unbundling the notion of urban citizenship is important from a political point of view, but it is also critical to an analysis of urban policies, many of which hinge on provable residence and thus exclude large numbers of urban dwellers.

Véronique Dupont is a senior research fellow in demography at the French Institute of Research for Development (IRD) and is an associate member of the Centre d’Études de l’Inde et de l’Asie du Sud Centre, Paris (CEIAS). Her research focuses on the link between transformations of metropolitan territories, population mobility and urban policies and the processes of socio-spatial exclusion, with a focus on Delhi. Stéphanie Tawa Lama-Rewal is a research fellow in political science and deputy director of CEIAS. Her current research focuses on urban democracy in India. Marie-Hélène Zérah is a research fellow in Urban Studies at IRD and is deputed to the Centre de Sciences Humaines of New Delhi. She has worked extensively in the area of urban services in Indian cities, especially water supply and sanitation. Her more recent research interests concern urban governance in India, energy transition in large cities and subaltern urbanization in India with a focus on small towns.

You are invited, to participate in this thirty fifth workshop, in a series of Urban Workshops planned by the Centre de Sciences Humaines (CSH), New Delhi and Centre for Policy Research (CPR). These workshops seek to provoke public discussion on issues relating to the development of the city and try to address all its facets including its administration, culture, economy, society, and politics. For further information, please contact: Marie-Hélène Zerah at marie-helene.zerah@ird.fr or Partha Mukhopadhyay at partha@cprindia.org