

ISAS Public Lecture Series



Urban Theory goes South: On the Historicity of Space & Urban Imagination in South Asia

a talk by

Thomas Blom Hansen

Reliance-Dhirubhai Ambani Professor in South Asian Studies; Professor in Anthropology; Director of Center for South Asia, Stanford University

TALK ABSTRACT: Many urban scholars assume that global capital flows, commodification and capitalization of land universally affect urban areas all over the globe. However, not all spaces are equally amenable to commodification or gentrification and in many cases the specific historical character of a city, a neighborhood or an urban space tends to stick to it for many generations. What happened in a space, which community or class was associated with it, leave marks that do not easily disappear. This is particularly true in post-colonial cities marked by deep historical segmentation along race, class and community. Drawing on material from India (and South Africa) Dr. Hansen will show how religious markers and boundaries of caste, race and community get etched onto the urban imagination. These markers and memories profoundly and durably structure the use and habitation of urban space. Such deeper historical dynamics must be at the heart of a more global urban theory for the 21st century.

SPEAKER BIO: Thomas Hansen is the Reliance-Dhirubhai Ambani Professor in South Asian Studies and Professor in Anthropology. He is also the Director of Stanford's Center for South Asia where he is charged with building a substantial new program. He has many and broad interests spanning South Asia and Southern Africa, several cities and multiple theoretical and disciplinary interests from political theory and continental philosophy to psychoanalysis, comparative religion and contemporary urbanism. Much of Professor Hansen's fieldwork was done during the tumultuous and tense years in the beginning of the 1990s when conflicts between Hindu militants and Muslims defined national agendas and produced frequent violent clashes in the streets. Out of this work came two books: *The Saffron Wave. Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton 1999) which explores the larger phenomenon of Hindu nationalism in the light of the dynamics of India's democratic experience, and *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton 2001) which explores the historical processes and contemporary conflicts that led to the rise of violent socioreligious conflict and the renaming of the city in 1995. During the last decade, Professor Hansen has pursued a detailed study of religious revival, racial conflict and transformation of domestic and intimate life from the 1950's to the present in a formerly Indian township in Durban, South Africa. This round of work has now resulted in a book entitled *Melancholia of Freedom: Anxiety, Race and Everyday Life in a South African Township* (Princeton University Press, 2012). In addition to these ethnographic engagements, Professor Hansen has pursued a number of theoretical interests in the anthropology of the state, sovereignty, violence and urban life. This has resulted in a range of co-edited volumes, and special issues of journals such as *Critique of Anthropology* and *African Studies*. He is currently working on a collection of theoretical and ethnographic essays provisionally entitled *Public Passions and Modern Convictions*.

Thursday, April 6, 2017

5 - 7 pm

10 Stephens Hall (ISAS Conf. Room)

Event Cosponsor: Sarah Kailath Chair of India Studies

Event is free & open to public. Information at 510-642-3608 or southasia.berkeley.edu