

MAGAZIN DES BEREICHS

GAMSZINE

GENDER AND MEDIA STUDIES FOR THE SOUTH ASIAN REGION



**THIS IS (NOT)
THE END,
MY FRIEND**

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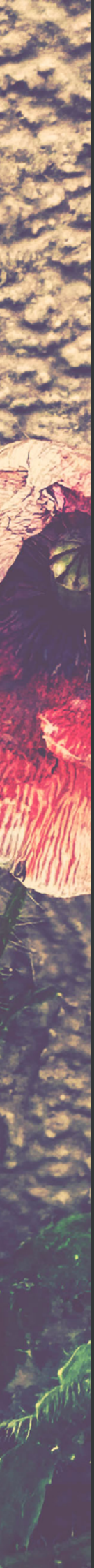
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LIEBE LESER:INNEN,

wo anfangen, wenn das Ende naht? Oder muss ein Ende immer auch als Neuanfang gedacht werden? Wie aber können wir uns einen Neubeginn ausmalen, während Studierende, Kolleg:innen und viele Unterstützer:innen gemeinsam bemüht sind, das im Februar 2024 drohende Ende des Arbeitsbereichs Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region (GAMS) aufzuhalten?

Auf diese Fragen eine Antwort zu finden, fällt momentan niemandem im GAMS-Team leicht – wir, das sind aktuell fünf Postdoc- und eine Predoc-Mitarbeiterin, vier Promovierende, mehrere Gastwissenschaftler:innen und ich selbst, als nunmehr seit vierzehn Jahren befristet an der HU beschäftigte Professorin.

Im OUTRO dieser fünften Ausgabe unserer GAMSzine kommen junge Forschende zu Wort, die entweder am GAMS-Bereich promoviert haben, dies aktuell tun oder gerne in den kommenden Jahren promovieren würden. Sie schildern aus ihrer eigenen Sicht, was es für sie bedeutet, einen Arbeitsbereich zu verlieren, an dem einige von ihnen bereits ihre BA- und MA-Studiengänge erfolgreich abgeschlossen haben.

In der Rubrik RESEARCH PROJECTS lernen Sie ein hochaktuelles studentisches Lehrforschungsprojekt zur Frage der digitalen Positionalität kennen.

Wir stellen Ihnen unter GRADUATIONS Auszüge aus drei Masterarbeiten vor, die im zurückliegenden Jahr im Studiengang Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien fertiggestellt wurden. Sie stehen beispielhaft für viele innovative Themen und Zugänge, die Studierende mit Hilfe einer regionalwissenschaftlichen Medien- und Genderperspektive für ihre Forschungsinteressen am Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften der HU entwickeln können.

In den TEAM UPDATES lernen Sie unsere aktuellen Gastwissenschaftler:innen und eine neue wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin am GAMS-Bereich kennen – und wir verabschieden uns mit einem großen Dankeschön und auch etwas Wehmut von unserer studentischen Mitarbeiterin Lara Kauter.

Einen Eindruck der Bandbreite an Neuerscheinungen an unserem Arbeitsbereich vermitteln Ihnen unter dem Titel PUBLICATIONS drei Beiträge zu zeitgenössischen Künstler:innen aus Süd- und Südostasien,

zu feministischen Bewegungen in der Türkei sowie zur Perspektive kritischer Architekt:innen auf das Thema Wohnraum in Indien. Über weitere neu erschienene Publikationen des GAMS-Teams können Sie sich auf unserer Webseite oder auch im aktuellen RePLITO-Projektnewsletter informieren.

Auf den ersten Seiten der GAMSzine finden Sie wie immer unseren FOCUS, in dem wir Ihnen diesmal zwei Beiträge zur letzten Ausgabe der Kochi-Muziris Biennale und zu einem Filmprojekt mit geflüchteten Jugendlichen in Berlin präsentieren. Außerdem einen weiteren Text zu Srinagar in Kaschmir und den Folgen einer Liebe zwischen zwei jungen Menschen, die keine vorgeschriebenen Grenzen hinnehmen wollten.

Ich wünsche Ihnen viel Freude und Inspiration beim Lesen unserer Nummer 5.

NADJA-CHRISTINA SCHNEIDER

FOCUS

»Biju Ibrahim's 'Soul That Art at Rest' at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale«
»Talking About Difficult Topics Through Films«
»I Have Exiled My Heart, for I Loved Across Boundaries«



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ORIGINAL ARTWORK FROM BIJU IBRAHIM'S SERIES 'SOUL THAT ART AT REST' SHOWS THE SUFI RITUAL OF *KUTHU RATHEEB*, IMAGE COPYRIGHT BY SYDNEY NOEMI STEIN

'A BULWARK AGAINST DESPAIR', A BULWARK AGAINST CULTURAL HEGEMONY BIJU IBRAHIM'S 'SOUL THAT ART AT REST' AT THE KOCHI-MUZIRIS BIENNALE 22-23

It is a humid Sunday afternoon in Kochi. Now, in the first days of April, the Biennale is taking its last breaths. Just weeks before the heat and humidity become unbearable, art aficionados have gathered plentifully inside the air-conditioned colonial walls of Aspinwall House where the fifth edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale is held. The port city of Kochi has established itself as a hub for contemporary art

in India, and now, after a four-year COVID-forced slumber, the comeback of the Biennale renders the city even more vibrant and dynamic. Branded as a 'bulwark against despair', the Biennale seeks to 'remember the ability of our species [...] to flourish artistically, even in fraught and dire situations', reads curator Shubigi Rao's introductory note. National and international, up-and-coming and established artists cele-

brate their greatest works here and voice their minds through their artwork. The art often is highly political, be it from Finland, Australia, Pakistan, or India, artists are inviting us to investigate their political, sometimes also personal manifestations as we admire their work at the Biennale. I meet one of the artists, Biju Ibrahim, to discover more about the artistic and personal story behind his captivating artwork.

'A traveler's mind is also a Sufi's mind'

Biju Ibrahim's art as a statement against xenophobia

Biju Ibrahim seeks to document India's spiritual diversity in times of cultural hegemony and growing 'xenophobic currents', as the official exhibition text reads. His photographic collection titled 'Soul That Art at Rest' shows light into the Mappila community of the Northern Malabar coast of Kerala. They are believed to be the oldest community of Muslims in South Asia. One of the rituals performed by devotees, *kuthu ratheeb*, involves the ritual piercing and cutting of the devotee's body while reciting ancient texts. The ritual commemorates Sufi saints and their miracles and serves practitioners to strengthen their faith by connecting themselves to God and the saints, as well as to perform it for healing and blessing purposes.

Biju Ibrahim is from Kondotty, a town in Northern Kerala, grew up around the ritual, and sought to investigate the pre-modern philosophy practiced in his community. His photographs are taken from a bird's perspective and seem to reverse our gaze. We observe the practitioners from above while still being very close and almost intimate with the ritual. "When you look at these photographs, you are also the god. You are the center, you are connected with this practice", he explains.

"Some magic is happening when I'm photographing", Biju Ibrahim continues when talking about his art. "When people are gathering and watching it, they believe that their sorrows and their fear, their physical illness, is all healed when they are watching it. When people are watching it, they are all surrendered to that practice". The spectator is being made part of the ritual when looking at his photographs. We are surrendered to their inner search or what Biju Ibrahim calls 'magic' while being encouraged to go on our own inner search. To believe that the photographs depict a certain reality, however, is far from the truth. "My photographs are not a reality. They are my thoughts. The truth is not connected with visuality", according to the artist. He is providing us with an insight into a community of Muslims whose practices are often misunderstood by other believers. He also lets us in on his personal journey of purpose-seeking and spirituality through his photographs. Everybody has to go on their own inner search, just as much as the disciples of *kuthu ratheeb* when performing the awe-inspiring recitations of the Sufi saints while cutting and piercing their bodies to the sound of recitation and drumbeats, according to him. The practitioners believe that no harm can be done to them when they perform, and indeed, they remain unharmed due to their training.

"They are detaching their body from their souls", Biju Ibrahim explains the miraculous healing of the wounds. "I am connected to Allah, who is truth, that is inside me. I am the truth. Me and my God, we are the same". In times of chaos, as we experience nowadays, spirituality gives us hope and purpose, so that our souls may 'art at rest'. Weeks later, I will meet an *ustadh*, an Islamic scholar and teacher, who teaches local youths to practice the Sufi rituals. He will tell me that the ritual is performed to become a better person. In that sense, maybe all of our souls need a little *kuthu ratheeb*.



BIJU IBRAHIM IN FRONT OF HIS ARTWORK IN THE ASPINWALL HOUSE VENUE AT AT THE KOCHIMUZIRIS BIENNALE 22-23. COPYRIGHT © SYDNEY NOEMI STEIN

'If you believe that only your Islam is true, that is wrong'

Biju Ibrahim's work can also be read as a reminder of the global trend of 'pure' Islam. The obsession with a Pan-Arabic Islam that does not leave much room for local traditions is increasingly felt also here in Kerala. While traveling through Northern Kerala, the clash of Islamic traditions is visible everywhere. The influence of the Malayali migration to the Gulf not only brought a lot of money to the area, but also the ideas, values, and aesthetics of the Gulf's Islamic traditions to Kerala that seem to slowly evict local Islamic traditions. Traditional Kerala-style mosques with their tiled roof that almost resemble Southeast Asian temples become fewer. They are being replaced or expanded by domes and minarets. Some mosques seem almost out of place here: opulent, huge golden domes in the midst of the palm-seemed forests. "They are obsessed with 'pure' Islam. If you believe that only your Islam is true, that is wrong", Biju Ibrahim states as we talk about the perception of *kuthu ratheeb* among the Muslim community. His photographs render the Mappila community and its practices visible who are subjected to alienation and prejudice.

"A traveler's mind is also a Sufi's mind. I believe that every person should travel. Every person should know about other practices and beliefs. Only then they

will know the truth", Biju Ibrahim concludes our interview.

In a country with a domestic tourism sector as strong as India which also attracts millions of foreign travelers every year that seek to experience the country's unrivaled diversity, the Kochi-Muziris Biennale and its artists play an important role to uphold this status quo. Even more so in times of recurring tensions rising all over the country. Times in which Uttar Pradesh's city of Allahabad is renamed to the Hindu name Prayagraj, and Assamese BJP Member of the Legislative Assembly **RUPJYOTI KURMI DEMANDS THE DEMOLITION OF THE TAJ MAHAL**. During the time India celebrated its diversity through its artists at the Kochi Biennale, two videos went viral that sparked old debates. A **RICKSHAW DRIVER IN BANGALORE VIOLENTLY REFUSING TO SPEAK HINDI TO A CUSTOMER**, or **MEGHALAYA'S MLA ARDENT MILLER BASAIAWMOIT HOLDING A FURIOUS SPEECH WHEN ADDRESSED IN HINDI**. Standing up for India's diversity seems more necessary – and more heated – than ever. The Kochi Biennale is held during a time India is hosting the G20 summit and Narendra Modi announces 'One earth, one family, one future' on posters all throughout the country. The Kochi Biennale is not only a 'bulwark against despair' as the official slogan reads, but also a bulwark against rising populism and cultural hegemony in India to which artists such as Biju Ibrahim provide an important contribution.



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SYDNEY NOEMI STEIN

Sydney Noemi Stein completed her bachelor's degree in Area Studies Asia/Africa at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2023. In her thesis *The Togoyo language as documented by Santandrea*, she compiled a digital database for an under-documented extinct language in South Sudan. Her areas of interest include art, activism, human rights, and languages in Melanesia, SWANA, South and Southeast Asia.



TALKING ABOUT DIFFICULT TOPICS THROUGH FILMS

REFLECTIONS AFTER THE FILM »I ESCAPED TO MY FUTURE«

In September 2022, Zahra Gardi and I were speakers at the conference "Living Together Looking Apart" organized by the **REPLITO PROJECT**. We presented our video works, which were created in collaboration with migrant collectives on Lesbos Island, and shared our experiences. Among the audience was Sophie, the project manager of an institution, which is the first reception center for the unaccompanied minors, and a former student of IAAW. She proposed that we collaborate on a similar film project with the residents of the space.

Our work on Lesbos Island is always part of a longer relationship that we build as a result of solidarity, and our video works are primarily spontaneous and organic products of our activism. I had concerns when I heard that all the work needed to be completed within just one week. However, I also felt that this could be a valuable experience to explore the connections between Lesbos and Berlin. The synergy and practices of living together that I observed among the people in the reception center greatly motivated me because I realized that this workshop and film project could be

accomplished within this timeframe. The crucial goal was to establish a communication channel through film among all of us. The children residing in this reception center are being held there while awaiting age assessment by the German government, and this bureaucratic process can be lengthy. Shahram Khosravi discusses the dynamics of waiting for migrant individuals by analyzing in a remarkable way how waiting affects the less powerful groups in society, how it generates "powerlessness and vulnerability" (2014), and how it produces "subjective effects of dependency

and subordination" (Auyero 2012: 28). Another important point is that being forced to wait is also a demonstration that "one's own time (and therefore, one's social worth) is less valuable than the time and worth of the one who imposes the wait" (Schwartz 1974: 856). In accordance with the importance of using time efficiently in Western societies as a form of capital, "waiting symbolizes waste, emptiness and uselessness" (Khosravi 2014). This waiting time, alongside the negative aspects, also created a remarkable space for living together and sharing among the residents. It was crucial to mention this and present our film as an extension of our shared living, working, and collaboration. Following our *Visual Storytelling as Resistance* workshop, the participants expressed interest in

interviewing their friends about their migration routes and creating a short documentary about their reflections on Europe, migration, and their expectations for the future in Europe. Together, we sought to understand their experiences and initial encounters with Europe, as well as the ideas that evolved during this waiting period. For the shootings, we utilized a room where they slept and a mattress as a backdrop. This strongly evoked the sense of the first space they acquired after their long journeys.

Amidst the difficult words and topics we dealt with, there was ample room for fun and humor. Some participants heard about their friends' stories for the first time, and the film helped strengthen the "family feeling" among the participants. What

surprised me greatly was the overwhelmingly positive value attributed to Berlin and Europe in general. If the same question were posed to people who recently arrived on Lesbos Island, the answers would likely be quite the opposite, as the deterrence politics at the EU border are stronger there than anywhere else. One participant was saying, "Here the human rights are followed and everyone is seen equal. It's not Turkey, where they treat you differently depending on if you're black or white. Here everyone is equal." One other participant said, "What I was imagining about Germany was correct. The people can have comfort and can get their rights, they can do an education and they can make a career", one other, "They give you your rights. They never discriminate your rights, I like it." Or "I



DETAIL OF A JOINTLY DESIGNED WALL DRAWING IN THE PREMISES OF THE INSTITUTION MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLE, WHICH RECEIVES UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH ARRIVING IN BERLIN. COPYRIGHT BY NAGEHAN USKAN

was expecting Germany nice as we see in films, but I heard something about racism but since I came here I didn't find racism." Some other participants who had a longer experience in Italy or Greece before arriving to Berlin had a more suspicious approach: "Before I came here, I thought I was going to have better education and to go to school. But since I came to Italy I haven't been in schools over four years, and I was so disappointed.", "(..)Most of us, we have a lot of talents, like me, my friends, our people. They are really smart, but the vision that European people have of us is 'okay, this guy is like a caveman, this guy didn't go to school, this guy comes from another country with a different culture!'"

Almost all of the participants based their future in Europe on studying and obtaining a better education. However, the idea of their homeland still remains. There is hope that one day their home will be safe, allowing the possibility of returning, but until that day arrives, they strive to do their best to become successful in their "second home," help people in need, and raise children who care about others and provide assistance. Additionally, the idea of supporting their hometown is still significant.

The visual representation of the migration issue has always been a challenging topic. On one hand, there is an urgent need to address this issue, but on the other hand, there is a risk of victimizing people on the move or creating heroes

out of their stories, romanticizing their experiences. Moreover, there is a risk of creating a new category of "migrants," which homogenizes different ways of existence and confines them to a single identity. That is why many people who have experienced forced migration do not wish to be labeled as migrants, as the system associates migration with numerous negative connotations and this category is subjected to systematic institutional racism. Perhaps our aim should be to eliminate this category altogether. When migrants are treated as equals, with justice and rights, we believe there will be no need to create films solely based on this topic. Self-representation, in our belief, provides a space to reflect upon and challenge these categorizations. These films are attempts to transcend these limitations and explore new ways of expression, thought, and representation through the medium of film.

Due to data protection rules, we are unable to share our film publicly. However, we have prepared a booklet containing quotes from the interviews and introductions of the production team and workshop organizers.

AUYERO, J. (2012). *PATIENTS OF THE STATE: THE POLITICS OF WAITING IN ARGENTINA*, DURHAM, NC: DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

KHOSRAVI, S. (2014). WAITING. IN B. ANDERSON & M. KEITH (EDS.), *MIGRATION: A COMPAS ANTHOLOGY* (PP. 74–75). OXFORD: COMPAS.

SCHWARTS, B. (1974). WAITING, EXCHANGE, AND POWER: THE DISTRIBUTION OF TIME IN SOCIAL SYSTEMS. *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY*, 79(4), 841–870.



READ THE BOOKLET



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NAGEHAN USKAN

Nagehan Uskan lives and works on Lesbos Island where she is part of different grassroots migrant video collectives. She completed her PhD on the topic of Kurdish documentary cinema in Turkey. She is a RePLITO visiting research fellow and lecturer at GAMS. She also works as film programmer and as independent documentary filmmaker.



I HAVE EXILED MY HEART FOR I LOVED ACROSS BOUNDARIES

tonight I can write the
saddest lines
write for example, "The night
is shattered and the blue
stars shimmer in the distance."
The night wind revolves in
the sky and sings
Tonight I can write the
saddest lines
I loved her and sometimes
she loved me too
Pablo Neruda.

„TONIGHT I CAN WRITE (THE SADDEST LINES)“ BY PABLO NERUDA - ONE OF AYUSH'S FAVOURITE LOVE POEMS, WRITTEN DOWN BY ARSHI JAVAID
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In the twilight hours of a rainy March evening in 2022, a security alert popped through the computers of the police and surveillance grid in Kashmir. It was an SOS call that needed to be addressed quickly. Allegedly a seventeen-year-old boy from the Kashmiri Pandit community was kidnapped by militants. He had left home for school, but did not return at the scheduled hour. After the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, there was a new wave of targeted killings of Kashmiri Pandits by unknown gunmen. In Kashmir, unknown gunmen are a shadowy phenomenon. With such a thick ratio of armed personnel vis a vis civilians, unknown gunmen appear and kill people like wanton boys kill the flies. And in this world's largest security zone, none of the unknown gunmen could ever be traced.

The boy had left home for tuition in the morning, but did not return at the scheduled hour. The family called the school to know the whereabouts of the boy but he had never reached the school that day; his friends were called but nobody knew where the boy was. Where could have a seventeen-year-old gone, if not kidnapped or taken hostage by the militants. Soon the news spread across and was carried by news portals. Within no time a hashtag campaign by the Pandit community outside Kashmir was start-

ed. The community members in Kashmir expressed fear and resentment at not being provided ample security by the state.

The next morning the IG police addressed a press conference congratulating his team and the IT cell for rescuing the boy within no time. He also revealed that the case was not militancy related. However very soon the favorable hashtags began peddling hate against the boy. "Punish the boy", "Shame on you" were some keywords.

Sometime in November the same year, Ragini walked me to the house of Ayush, the boy who was allegedly kidnapped. We entered a newly constructed house where the boy's mother was mopping the floor. With her frail structure she was rearranging the shoes on the front balcony, putting them in a queue like disciplined students. One look at us, she tells Ragini everything in the house needs to be sorted and systemized regularly, "each and everything requires my careful attention". We offered to visit later, but she directed us to a room where she will join us after she finishes the chores. Meanwhile her sister-in-law who is drenched in water arrives to tell her she is cleaning the washrooms of the house. "Our children make this space a garbage house. We find it so hard to tidy everything" she chips in be-

»Ayush ensured he walked around Rosheeba's house each day to have a glimpse of her or wait at the bus stop which Rosheeba passed through. The love blossomed through shared horoscopes, food recipes, favorite songs and inspiring quotations on Instagram.«

»With their mobile phones off, they had disconnected from the madness of the practical world, to slip into a surreal corner.«

fore heading to clean again. The Razdan brothers have worked very hard to construct this house recently after they brought down the worn-out structure they inherited from their father. The new house consisted of several rooms, overcome by objects, wearing its own viscera on the outside-utensils, tape recorders, DVD player, LED television, a computer monitor revealed what went into creating this house. The family did not think of migrating out in the 1990s because the ailing old mother wanted to spend her last years in Kashmir. The Razdan brothers also envisioned a certain financial prosperity in staying back. They were in jobs and were skillful too, so they could get private assignments after their work hours. A migrated life would not have been as useful, as the Razdans would often tell their children. We enter a room and find Ayush sitting there. He seems to be distant from the cleaning choir. With his symmetrical chiseled

features, wide forehead, well-groomed clean skin, Ayush bears a striking resemblance to Asim Azhar, Pakistani singer and actor. As he begins to introduce himself, his educational journey, a certain innocence radiates from his eyes. He whispers about the need to be focused on his goals and how important it is to make up for the lost time for he has just returned from the juvenile home. Another stark realization he shares is to listen to parents and prioritise them over everyone else. He asks Ragini if he can confide in me and share his story. Apparently Ragini, my interlocuter, had taken a tough position against the community when difficult times fell on Ayush.

In 2016, Ayush met a girl on Instagram. Weeks and weeks of talking converged into a secret love affair. Passions ran high with each passing day but for the two it was difficult to meet in person as Srinagar rarely opened in the first months of their court-

ship. They had begun talking after the commander Burhan Wani was killed in a firefight, and for months Kashmiris couldn't open. When things began getting normal, they decided on meeting but their backgrounds were too contentious to meet in open. After all, everyone in the mohalla knew Ayush was from one of the few remaining Kashmiri Pandit families and Rosheeba had a Muslim background. If spotted together they could arouse unnecessary attention. So, the two decided to delay the meeting as long as possible, but Ayush ensured he walked around Rosheeba's house each day to have a glimpse of her or wait at the bus stop which Rosheeba passed through. The love blossomed through shared horoscopes, food recipes, favorite songs and inspiring quotations on Instagram. As it became difficult to not meet, the two decided they should perhaps meet in the Civil Lines area where nobody knew them. The two started meeting frequently in cafés in this area

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„THIS IS A PICTURE WHICH WE TOOK TOGETHER ON THE DAY I MET HIM. HE CALLS THIS PICTURE HEART OF A TREE.“



HEART OF A TREE

defying the familiar gaze and becoming part of the invisible matrix of the outer part of the city.

As the relationship went along, both had a clarity that they would elope as soon as they were legally adults. There was no other future for them other than eloping as the families and communities would not have accepted the relationship in any case. But the plot did not move as expected. Someone from Rosheeba's extended family spotted her with Ayush in the Civil Lines. They had suddenly become visible through the invisibility. To make things worse, the identifier knew Ayush by face and family name for he has seen him strolling in the mohalla. The news reached both the families and there was an uproar. Rosheeba was locked in, her phone snatched by the family, not allowed to meet anyone.

Days and days passed without any news of hers. Ayush was consumed and devastated when a new idea struck him, to fake a breakup so Rosheeba's movement out of the house will be restored. And elope as soon as things plunge to normalcy. They could not wait to become adults legally; the circumstances had changed for them suddenly. Soon a break

up was faked and a cooling period of some months was put in place so that Rosheeba's family would stop monitoring her. As soon as their grip loosened, the two decided to leave for school and fly over to New Delhi. Ayush had kept logistics ready, he had saved some money over the years, stolen a piece of his mother's jewellery and pawned it to buy the air tickets and to pay for other expenses.

The plan was to reach Delhi and get married as soon as possible. The second step was to find a job in a call centre which hired people on the basis of matriculation. The morning the two were supposed to take the flight, it started snowing. Ayush joked to Rosheeba when Shiva and Parvati got married, it snowed, so it's a good omen. However, it was not so good an omen, all the outbound and inbound flights from the Srinagar airport were cancelled that day. In Kashmir life comes to a standstill with slightest weather changes. The two decided to take the first flight next morning and took refuge in a hotel nearby. With their mobile phones off, they had disconnected from the madness of the practical world, to slip into a surreal corner. Tears trickle from Ayush's eyes as he

vends the memory of the moment. "Whenever we held hands before we were scared to be spotted by relatives and acquaintances. This was the first time we held hands without any fear. It felt our skin was burning and liberating itself of the baggage too."

They were anguished that the flight did not take up but hopeful that next morning they will be away from here to a place, where their religious differences identities would not be a problem. They waited for the night to pass. However, the happiness was short-lived. Soon there was a knock on the door and all antics of love were lost for them. Ayush's family informed the police that their son had gone missing for some hours and they suspected he had been kidnapped by the militants. The high alert was initiated and the community vigil was launched through digital media. So that the office of the home minister for the Indian State got involved and directed the case should be taken on priority basis. Ayush and Rosheeba were located the same night and by midnight they were under the police custody. Both were taken to a magistrate where Rosheeba cried out loudly that she loves Ayush and the day she

becomes an adult, she will marry him under the Special Marriage Act. She also deposed that she had eloped consensually and was not kidnapped by Ayush.

While Rosheeba was taken by her family, troubles weren't over for Ayush. Ayush's family was worried about the Muslim community coming out to take their revenge. However, something else happened: the Pandit community wanted to punish Ayush for trespassing. He had brought shame and dishonor to the community. The family was outcasted. His parents feared if Ayush was taken home, he might be attacked by the remaining Pandit community. They appealed the judge to lodge Ayush in a juvenile center till the community rages comes down. A meeting was organized in the nearby temple complex to teach a lesson to erring youngsters like Ayush. The family had to discontinue their visits to temple for the scorn they met there.

Everything came crashing down and both of them became strangers to one another. The love was crystallised in religion, from an infidel's love to a transgressor's love. I look at Ayush's eyes mirroring supernovas by now. "It's per-

fect emptiness, the ideal vacuum, but someday my community will have to answer me why did they boycott me and my family. There have been rare instances where people were involved in cross religious relationships, but maybe some of them are braver than us. Age and class are on their side."

He ends the conversation with this sentence, "I have exiled my heart for I loved across boundaries".



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ARSHI JAVAID

Dr Arshi Javaid is an Einstein Junior Scholar at the Department for Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region at IAAW, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, for the next two years (2023-2025). She is also a keeper of myriad stories like her grandmother and would like to disseminate the same for knowledge production.

»Everything came crashing down and both of them became strangers to one another. The love was crystallised in religion, from an infidel's love to a transgressor's love.«



PUBLICATIONS

PUBLIKATIONEN

»Women's Movements in Turkey: A Historical and Intersectional Perspective«
»A Documentary about the Architects Shankar Kanade and Navnath Kanade «
»Postnational Perceptions in Contemporary Art«



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LEARNING FROM A BOOK

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN TURKEY: A HISTORICAL AND INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

This essay aims to narrate how the publication process of an edited volume titled as *Women's Movements in Turkey: A Historical and Intersectional Perspective* has become a collective learning process based on women's solidarity. The book is going to be released in September 2023 by Orlanda Verlag. Unfortunately, this essay which is on a flourishing subject is written in dark times; between May 14th and May 28th, 2023. On May 14th the general election in Turkey was held. The hope of the different colors of the opposition was to change the existing government which has been ruling since 2002 and becoming more authoritarian particularly in the last 8 years and oppressive for more than 10 years. Even though the election campaign of the opposition was viably vivid, they did not have sufficient votes to win the election in the first round and on top of this they had much lower votes than expected. If the already existing government with its new coalition partners wins the election in the second round,

irreversible consequences will take place particularly for the Kurdish population and for women. Because at this point the majority of national assembly belongs to the existing government's new coalition and this fact is not changing in the second round. The second round of the election will determine the president of the country. The AK Party's coalition has 322 MPs as opposed to the opposition coalitions (Nation Coalition and Labor and Freedom Coalition). The two opposition coalitions constitute 278 MPs. However, the gravity of the situation is not limited to the quantitative dominance the status quo coalition has but it is also related to its content. The 322 MPs belong to AK Party, MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi- Nationalist Movement Party), YRP (Yeniden Refah Partisi-New Welfare Party) and Hüda Par. AK Party has 267 MPs, MHP has 50 MPs and 5 MPs belong to YRP (Yeniden Refah Partisi-New Welfare Party). Among the 267 MPs of AK Party 3 MPs belong to Hüda Par. Very shortly put, AK Party

has been oppressing almost all the oppositional people in Turkey in the last 10 years, it's a right-wing neoliberal, Islamist and nationalist party changing its conservative tone in these three axes depending on political context of Turkey in the last ten years. The second largest volume of MPs belong to MHP which is the Turkish-supremacist, fascist party in Turkey. YRP is the historical continuation of the political Islamist party of Welfare Party from the 1990s and they directly oppose to the Istanbul Convention and to the most important law against the violence against women numbered as 6284. Lastly, Hüda Par is the legal body of the Turkish Hisbollah which was organized as a paramilitary organization in the Kurdish region and it is a fundamentalist Islamist party targeting mostly the Kurdish people and the women. Hüda Par and YRP insist on the necessity of "adopting" single women in the society by men as women according to them should not live by themselves and they explicitly claim that women's

role in the society is being a spouse and mother. Forming solidarity relations in dark times is more important than in good times because they are more difficult to form and they are more permanent. In this article we would like to share with you what we have learned during the publication process of our book. This learning process has flourished in dark times but in a peaceful land (Germany) three years ago and based on a collective production and women's solidarity. Our book is based on the con-

ference we organized on 24 November 2021 - in reference to the International Day to Eliminate Violence against Women on November 25th. When we had organized the conference we did not have the idea of the book. But the impression the conference had on us motivated us to share the results of the conference with a wider public. The number of the participants was much higher than we had expected and the audience had not left the conference, thus we had long discussions that day. After having

received positive responses from everyone to publish the results in an edited volume, we started working on the editorial process.

The *subjects* of the book are the people who situate themselves at the intersection of academia and activism; women who aim to bring together the speech of the academia with the action of activism. All of them are people who work for/in the women's movements and are part of the feminist politics for this reason, and the common aim of everyone was to transfer their experi-



ence in a relational way as much as possible. The *aim* of the book is to elaborate the activities, principles and relations of the women's groups/movements within the context of the post-1980s. For this reason, the book has two *methodological preferences: a historical perspective and intersectionality*. Intersectionality is a useful conceptual tool to reveal the differences and intersections between phenomena, events and subject positions. While thinking about the women's movements in Turkey since 2000s, we preferred to describe the different subject positions of women through intersecting categories and to use intersectionality as a tool to understand the commonalities and differences among the movements within a historical period. We also believe that the women's movements in the 2000s can be understood if their priorities, activities and principles can be read through continuities and breaks within the context of 1980s and 1990s. This is why the historical perspective has become an indispensable methodological approach.

The historical perspective in the book stretches back mainly to 1980s. However, thinkers and writers such as Deniz Kandiyoti and Fatmagül Berktaş have preferred looking at the 2000s from 19th Century onwards. Thus, intersectionality has helped us to reveal the differences and commonalities within a particular era and the historical perspective enabled us to determine the continuities, breaks and the conflicts since 1980s.

Furthermore, the choice of our publication *language* can be considered as an additional part of the methodological preferences of the book. There are three reasons that have motivated us to publish the book in German: First, Germany hosts a considerable amount of women from Turkey. 1980s faced a political migration wave from Turkey to Germany. 1990s was an era when particularly the Kurdish population has migrated to Germany due to political oppression. The female activists/politicians who have migrated to Germany due to this political forced migration have built new relationships with the already existing women's movements in Germany. With this book we therefore aim to form a new connection with these activists. As these women have not only brought their political experience to Germany but also formed a bridge from Germany towards the women's movements in Turkey. Our first desire is to strengthen the already existing chain that has been continuing for more than 40 years between the women's movements in Germany and in Turkey via the Turkish and Kurdish activists who have migrated to Germany from Turkey. The second aspect that determined the language of the book is our hope to reach out to the third generation of young women from the so-called guest worker migration from Turkey and from other countries with similar contexts. Because we think that the book is not exclusively related to the feminist activists but also to people who are directly affected

by problems such as women's labor, violence towards women and militarism. For this reason, NGOs and democratic mass organizations primarily composed of women, journalists, academics are within our target group. Along with these groups we hope that this book constitutes a bridge with migrant women and the LGBTIQ+ movement in Germany. The migrant women we have in mind are the ones who have been migrating to Germany from particularly Middle East, Africa, Balkans and recently from the (post-)Soviet geography. We have considered these possible bridges among different groups and geographies as a decolonial experience transfer which reverts the already existing historical direction of the knowledge/experience transfer from West to the East to the opposite direction; i.e. from East to the West, from periphery/margins to the center. Lastly, us living in Germany in the last couple of years can also be considered among the reasons that affected the language of the book. We found it meaningful to produce in German, the language of the country that hosts us, that flourished our friendship and solidarity and in the language of our neighbors, friends and colleagues.

Until this point we have just written about our hopes for the book. But there are certainly many things that we have learned from the publication process of this book. First of all, we have learned from the articles in this book about the multiplicity of the women's/feminist move-

ments in Turkey. Different parts of the women's movements elaborated in this book have shown us how the movements have been formed historically and intersectionally in concrete examples. On the one hand, we have seen the intersectionality of the subject positions among different movements, i.e. that the same woman can belong to more than one group due to the multiplicity of her subject positions and that these kinds of grey areas can be considered as linkages among the women's movements. On the other hand, we have seen that a movement may contain internal cleavages that are sometimes related to generational differences, other times to class or ethnic differences, which can be revealed through a historical perspective, because we noticed that women organizing in the same decade may have more commonalities even though they do not belong to the same movement/group. Similarly, one can claim that women activists from younger generations may have more commonalities with their peers from different movements and they may share less with women from an older generation in the same movement. Thus, Turkey's and the Kurdish women's movement contain various multiplicities that need to be revealed meticulously.

Moreover, this was the first time we have edited a book that requires translation. We have worked with three different translators. The translators have translated the texts from Turkish and English. In this process, it was significant for

us to think about the differences of these three languages and we have learned how to make a text reader-friendly both for the translators and for the readers. As two editors working with three translators requires quite a lot of communication, we have tried to distribute the communication evenly within the team and keep the communication alive.

Lastly and maybe most importantly, we have learned from our co-writing experience. In the book we have written the Introduction chapter together and this piece was the result of a collective thinking and writing process. Taken as a whole, the publication process was based on genuine women's solidarity as a gentle relation that values the "other" and the relationship formed with the other as much as oneself.



İCLAL AYŞE KÜÇÜKKIRCA

İclal Ayşe Küçükırcıca's research field can be summarized through two inter-related axes: gender/sexuality studies particularly feminist/women's movements in Turkey; and space with a particular emphasis on homelessness and homemaking practices in conflict-induced displacement contexts with an intersectional perspective. Currently she works at the Department of Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region conducting her research "Making Sense of Homelessness and Homemaking in the Context of Conflict-Induced Displacement: A Feminist Perspective on Sur, Nusaybin and Berlin 2015-21".

HANDAN ÇAĞLAYAN

Handan Çağlayan is a feminist activist and political scientist. She has pursued her academic works at the Institute for Asian and African Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (2020-2023); Otto Friedrich University of Bamberg (2017-2019), Ankara University (2011-2017). She has also worked for trade unions and women's organisations. She is the co-founder of the **ISTANBUL GENDER MUSEUM**. Her research interests include gender, nationalism, women's work, the Kurdish women's movement, migration and sociolinguistics. *Goddesses* is based on this research. Her areas of interest are women's political participation, women's workforce and their participation in trade unions, migration and sociolinguistics.



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HOUSING AS DWELLING

KANADE - A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THE ARCHITECTS SHANKAR KANADE AND NAVNATH KANADE



„Yes, this is our house. As soon as the sun sets, a space that draws me back in – that’s the kind of home I want, that’s what I had told Navnath and Shankar. That’s not in the walls alone or just the windows, not in a ventilator, but wholly captivates me as a dwelling. That is what poetry evokes too. Reading a sentence by itself is futile, or even a stanza alone, but on reading it as a whole, there is curiosity experienced – that experience is poetry (Kanade 30:27-30:59).”

This is how the actor, playwright and English professor Lohithaswa T.S., who passed away in November 2022, expresses his intimate relationship with the residential building that the two architect-brothers Shankar and Navnath Kanade designed and realized for—and together with him. He is one of the central figures who share their experiences in detail in the documentary film *Kanade* made by the film collective Teepoi from Bengaluru (2021) and who describe both their special relationship to the two brothers and to their unique architecture.

A particular focus of Teepoi’s work is on the architectural documentary film, which they use specifically as a non-commercial medium for disseminating knowledge and discourse about architecture in India. As they describe on their excellently designed [WEBSITE](#), the collective came into contact with the architecture of the two brothers Shankar and Navnath Kanade rather by chance in 2012, when they were looking for a suitable location for a short fiction film: „WE HAPPENED TO FIND A RESIDENTIAL UNIT

WITHIN AN UNCONVENTIONAL HOUSING COMPLEX, WHICH SEEMED PUZZLING AND SEAMLESS.”

This place was Keremane, built in 1995, a coherent group of independent row houses bordering a lake (*kere*) and exhibiting some of the distinctive features of the architecture of the two Kanade brothers, through which, according to Teepoi, “the Modern movement in Bangalore city” can be explained: “THIS WAS NOT JUST A PHASE BUT A COMBINATION OF THE RIGHT SET OF PEOPLE, PRESENT AT THE RIGHT PLACE, AT THE RIGHT TIME. SUFFICIENT WITHIN ITS CONTEXT - WITH NOTHING LEFT TO ADD OR REMOVE”. Although they were rooted in the Modern movement, “the Kanade brothers allowed their work and lifestyle to be guided by the environment around them (ibid.)”

A key feature of this local influence on their work is the use of locally available building materials, such as *chapid* (granite stone), which was still abundant in Bengaluru at the time. Wherever possible, they tried to avoid concrete and use materials that were commonly available and ac-

cessible. Inner courtyards within the units are also characteristic of the Kanade brothers' style. They facilitated cooling and ventilation of the buildings. Cooler air can enter through the windows built deeper into the walls, while warmer air can exit through the openings in the roof. This allows continuous ventilation of all rooms and floors in the house, which are open and interconnected. As the well-known architect Sanjay Mohe, who has known the two brothers very long and well, reports in the film, he asked Shankar and Navnath Kanade many times if they did not consider it a certain limitation to always use the same materials (39:27min), "but they just believe in that and it has to be local and if it has to be brought from somewhere they would say no, we would rather use something local (39:37)."

As one resident (31:50min), (late) Ms Sumithra, in Keremane mentions in the film, she was often asked why the red bricks were visible and the walls of her apartment were not plastered, which apparently not all visitors liked. "These bricks being visible and very little plastering, I liked that a lot (33:31min)," she points out, and adds that this aspect, as well as the fact that it was a "low-cost house" for which the family paid no more than 5 lakh rupees at the time (about 5700 EUR) (33:48min). Contrary to the widespread belief that an architect unnecessarily increases the cost of building a house, she therefore advises that

an architect should always be consulted for any building project.

The film portrait takes us very close to Shankar Kanade's simple life and the central role of architecture in it. For Shankar in particular, everything revolved around architecture throughout his life, so that architecture literally shaped a way of life for him. Born in Nagaj in the federal state of Maharashtra (Shankar in 1937, Navnath Kanade in 1944), the two brothers grew up in deprived circumstances, and the period of Shankar's architectural studies at the **SIR JJ SCHOOL OF ART** (Architecture Department) in Bombay was also marked by a precarious situation. In the late 1970s, Shankar Kanade set up his first architectural practice in Bengaluru, where his younger brother Navnath followed him after having spent several years in the USA. During this time, Navnath collaborated with Italian architect Paolo Soleri, who coined the term *arcology* (composed of architecture and ecology). Although they realized a number of striking buildings (in addition to Keremane, Jal Vayu Vihar, completed in 1991, is also presented in the film, as are several other earlier and later works by the two architect-brothers), it becomes clear, especially through the interview statements of Sanjay Mohe, that the Kanade brothers have not received the recognition, either in terms of the number of their commissions or attention, that they would have deserved

due to their outstanding work and abilities. Interestingly, in Mohe's view, this would also have made a significant difference to the city of Bengaluru itself and to the city community. What prevented this recognition is a question that is not clearly answered by the film, but which may preoccupy viewers beyond it.

As becomes once again very clear at this point in the film *Kanade* (39:38), the architectural documentary film can hence play an important role in the preservation and communication of knowledge about architecture and architects. Furthermore, the Kanade brothers now also receive more public recognition for their important contribution as educators through the documentary as well as the accompanying information materials provided on the

TEEPOI WEBSITE:

„The role of Shankar and Navnath Kanade as teachers has had its effect on generations of students who now practice with the wisdom imparted by them. Students benefited most from them while in the impressionable age as first and second years, unlearning years of textbook knowledge. Beyond that even architectural institutions expect less exploratory, and more presentation driven outputs from students, which they could not connect with.”

We also gain a valuable insight into the forms of professional networking and knowledge sharing



KARISHMA RAO UND VISHWESH SHIVA PRASAD (TEEPOI) DURING THE SCREENING & CONVERSATION WITH THE AUDIENCE ABOUT "KANADE" IN MAY 2023 AT IAAW, HU BERLIN. COPYRIGHT BY NADJA-CHRISTINA SCHNEIDER

among architects in Bengaluru at the time, as both found their binding framework in the BASE group. According to Teepoi, BASE stands for 'Beer and Slides Evening' and it is therefore perhaps no coincidence that the special sonic and visual pleasure that comes with the projection of slides also plays a role in the film *Kanade*. As can be read on the Teepoi website, the BASE group of young architects met every week on Tuesdays in one of the participants' homes or offices, they showed each other slides of their current projects or recent trips and discussed them together. Among the guests regularly invited to the BASE group meetings were also well-known persons such as Charles Correa, MF Hussain and BV Doshi. Together with Doshi, the group

visited the construction site of the Indian Institute of Management in Bengaluru, which he had co-designed.

„There was mutual respect for each one's work and a spirit of sharing. Apart from working on competition projects together, one would seek the expertise of another in executing live projects - a scenario that is hard to imagine today (ibid).“

This text is an excerpt from:
Schneider, Nadja-Christina (2023). **CRITICAL REGIONALISM AS AN APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY HOUSING IN INDIA: ARCHITECTURAL IMAGINATION IN THE TWO DOCUMENTARIES "KANADE" (2021) AND "BUILDING VISIONS" (2022)**. In *Reimagining Housing, Rethinking the Role of Architects in India*.

NADJA-CHRISTINA SCHNEIDER

Nadja-Christina Schneider is currently professor of Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region (GAMS) at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her disciplinary background is in South Asian and Islamic Studies as well as Modern and Contemporary History.



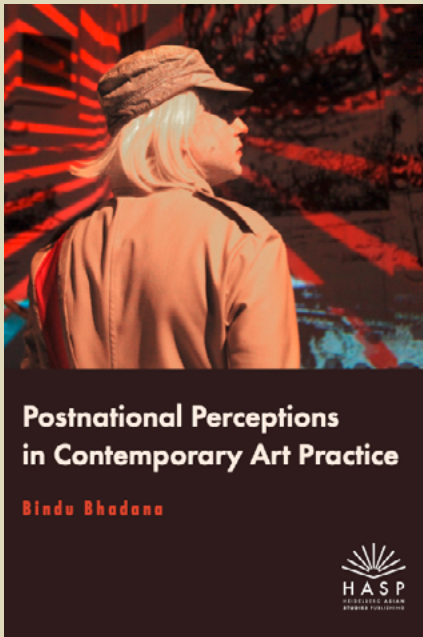
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POSTNATIONAL PERCEPTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY ART

By **BINDU BHADANA** (RePLITO Visiting Fellow at GAMS)

*Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing (HASP) -
Media and Cultural Studies, Vol. 3, June 2023.*



ABOUT THIS BOOK

This publication focuses on the works of Chitra Ganesh (b. 1974), Tejal Shah (b. 1979) and Nikhil Chopra (b. 1976) in order to highlight the changing relationship of the gendered body with national identity in contemporary art practice. Ideas of national belonging are challenged precisely through a concerted focus on identities marginalized by the nation. It proposes the 'postnational' as an empowering term to mark the shift away from the nation, and, employing a post-structural framework, it argues that the nature of national identity is in itself a construct.

ABOUT HASP

HASP supports Open Access as a publishing model for the dissemination and advancement of knowledge and learning. It offers scholars in Asian Studies across the world the opportunity to publish their research results electronically, promptly and free of charge, thus increasing the visibility and impact of their publications.

ABOUT THE MEDIA AND CULTURAL STUDIES SERIES

The "Media and Cultural Studies" series publishes original research results in the area studies that deal with questions of media and cultural studies. An additional focus is laid on innovative research at the interface of media culture and gender studies. In particular, the series serves as a publication platform for transregional and South Asia-related projects, for instance, PhD dissertations or edited volumes. The series is edited by Nadja-Christina Schneider.

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هذا الكتاب يخص صاحبه فتح الله سعد
 اشتراه من ماله اذار سنة ١٨٩٢

This book belongs to its owner Fathallah Saad. He bought it with his own money at the beginning of March 1892.



TEAM UPDATES

Lara Kauter
Bindu Bhadana
Arshi Javaid
Kaustav Padmapati



LARA KAUTER

The past two years as a student assistant at the Department of Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region have been very rewarding to me. Although I started working in the middle of the pandemic, I have felt as part of the team from the very beginning. I have learned many new skills by being part of different projects: from website management, to graphic design, research, and event organization. I have really appreciated the responsibility trusted upon me throughout my time at the institute and the valuable insights on working at a university. Also, I am grateful for all the wonderful people I have met over the course of the last two years, and the many interesting events we have organized together. Working as part of the GAMS team has been fun, and I am thankful that I was able to bring in my ideas and creativity, and to feel valued through encouragement and constructive feedback. Coming from a non-academic family with Russian-German migration history myself, this opportunity and experience is very valuable to me. I would like to say special thanks to Nadja, Julia, and Fritzi, who have always taken the time to instruct me patiently with new tasks and who have always trusted and supported me. In light of recent developments at the Institute, it is very disappointing to see the important role of the department overlooked and the position of Prof. Schneider discontinued. The loss of the progressive, critical and intersectional research department, and especially the loss of a great and passionate professor is very regrettable. Nevertheless, dear GAMS team, thank you all very much for the last two years. I will always think back positively to my time at GAMS and I hope our paths will cross again. I wish you all the best and keep up the good work!



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Dr. Bindu Bhadana (RePLITO Visiting Research Fellow at GAMS) is an independent scholar and Visiting Faculty at Anant National University in Ahmedabad. She has a PhD in Transcultural Studies from the University of Heidelberg in Germany. Following her Master of Arts in Medieval Indian History from Jawaharlal Nehru University Delhi with a course in Journalism and Mass Communications, she has been working extensively within the field of arts and culture for the past 30 years. Her book based on her PhD thesis, titled *Postnational Perceptions in Contemporary Art*, has been published by Heidelberg Asian Studies Publishing within the series on Media and Cultural Studies edited by Professor Nadja-Christina Schneider.

Current Post-Doctoral Research Project:

Queery-ing the Aesthetics of Art in the City

According to the anthropologist Marc Augé, if a “place” can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity will be a “non-place.”

Non-places are devoid of cultural reference points. There is only movement, transit – without reflection, without roots. Alluding to the city street as one such non-place – as both a place of travel and a space for critical discourse – this study will examine how street artists confront tensions between the public and the private, across mediums and formats, both materially and digitally – as they lay claim to visible spaces – inscribing social justice on, and around the

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BINDU BHADANA

Dr Arshi Javaid is an Einstein Junior Scholar at the Institute for Asian and African Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin for the next two years (2023-2025). Her project seeks to create a digital memory archive for the old city of Srinagar in the Kashmir Valley, which is undergoing a dramatic transformation in terms of architecture, infrastructure, demography and ownership patterns. The project is called **YAADGAH** (abode of memories) and will be hosted at **DOWNTOWNSRINAGAR.COM**. Through this project she aims at preserving the alternate forms of living as they existed in the city before they are exterminated by the designs of state and market.

Prior to this, she has been a critical residency fellow with Academy in Exile at Freie Universität Berlin where she compiled several first-person narratives about as to how the everyday coexistence of Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits before 1989 existed. Before her academic journey brought her to Berlin, she earned her PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University with a dissertation on the “Contestation of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ in Kashmiri Nationalism” where she looked at the civic and ethnic dimensions of Kashmiri Nationalism.

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ARSHI JAVAID

KAUSTAV PADMAPATI

Dr. Kaustav Padmapati is currently working as Assistant Professor (Senior Scale) at School of Modern Media, UPES, Dehradun. Kaustav is also a Cross Cultural Fellow 2023 at Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region, Institute for Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany.

He has nearly 12 years of experience in the areas of teaching and research, international relations projects, media, public policy, content writing and project coordination. He is also a recipient of the prestigious Fulbright Nehru Doctoral Research Fellowship and worked from August'11 to May'12 at Center for Asian Studies, School of International Service, American University, Washington DC, USA as Visiting Fulbright Research Scholar and Adjunct Faculty. He completed his Ph.D from School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in 2021. He has published widely on international relations specifically on India- US Relations, Taiwan, Look East Policy, etc. and gender and queer identities. His research areas include China, the United States, Taiwan, East Asia, and Southeast Asia, ASEAN, International Relations, gender, and queer sexuality. His upcoming edited volume "Queer Voices from the Periphery: A Collection of Perspectives from Northeast India" is a humble attempt to bring the voices from academia and members of the queer community to focus on the challenges and highlight the struggles faced by the members of the community.



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RESEARCH PROJECTS

FORSCHUNGSPROJEKTE

X-Tutorial Digital Positionality

»A Journey of Reflection and Empowerment in the Digital Age«



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X-TUTORIAL DIGITAL POSITIONALITY A JOURNEY OF REFLECTION AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

As students navigating the complexities of the digital age, we experienced the convenience and opportunities that come with the rapid advancements in information and communication technology (ICT). However, we also witnessed the perpetuation of social inequalities and inequities that leave historically marginalized groups at a disadvantage. These contrasting experiences motivated a two-semester research and learning project called Digital Po-

sitionality: Designing a Qualitative Map Towards Epistemic Justice from the Bottom-Up. Located at the Gender and Media Studies Department at the Humboldt University's Institute for Asian and African Studies, our objective is to explore and tackle the effects of ICT on life chances and the inequalities that arise from it.

At the core of our project is the concept of digital positional-ity, which refers to how our social

identity and position uniquely shape our online environment and the challenges and opportunities we face in the digital age. Unfortunately, most people are unaware of their digital positional-ity and can only access a simplified version of these complex structures through their personalized interfaces. We, a diverse group of student co-researchers, are creating an educational tool to address knowledge gaps surrounding ICT use and social ine-

quality. The tool aims to promote reflection on digital positionality to advance digital self-determination and responsible, sustainable technological development and governance from the bottom up.

To this end, we drew inspiration from Participatory Action Learning and Action Research. Our approach prioritizes collaboration, listening to, and understanding lived experiences. Moreover, we measure success by the level of digital self-determination achieved by both ourselves and everyone involved. Starting in October 2022, we launched a cyclical action research process. Our initial focus was exploring the theoretical foundations of digital positionality and reflecting on our experiences with ICT. Then, in January 2023, we shifted to understanding the digital positionalities of individuals from diverse and often underrepresented backgrounds in Berlin.

First, using an electronic can phone developed by the Design Research Lab in Berlin we gathered needs, questions, and comments on the digital sphere from about sixty individuals in various social milieus. Next, we conducted a focus group discussion with seven people from diverse positions in the social hierarchy, ranging in age from 24 to 72, with different identities and physical and mental abilities to explore similarities and differences in their digital positionalities. Finally, we organized two creative

»At the core of our project is the concept of digital positionality, which refers to how our social identity and position uniquely shape our online environment and the challenges and opportunities we face in the digital age.

Unfortunately, most people are unaware of their digital positionality and can only access a simplified version of these complex structures through their personalized interfaces.«

workshops for digital natives at a community school in Berlin, teaching them about ICT and providing them with a space to reflect on their experiences.

During the first semester, we made significant progress towards developing a reflexivity tool, gaining valuable insights into how people perceive and interact with ICT. A particularly noteworthy finding was the influence of the dominant European discourse, which creates a tension between the perceived benefits of using ICT for convenience and the critical or fearful narratives surrounding it. Participants praised technology's superiority and rationality while mirroring concerns about its implications for humanity and social interaction, citing fears around surveillance, big tech companies' dominance, dependency, and the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Despite these concerns, participants continued to engage extensively with ICT due to their belief in its superiority.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged that the resulting dependence on ICT comes with a perceived loss of self-efficacy and shame. Rather than critically reflecting on technology use, people rationalized it as a necessary aspect of modern life. This type of avoidance took many forms, such as downplaying the negative aspects of technology, finding comfort in knowing others are in the same boat, or easing withdrawal symptoms when separated from their devices. One participant aptly summa-



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rized the dilemma by saying, "it's convenient. There's just no other way to live anymore, but there's also skepticism because you know that data is power. You give away knowledge and power over yourself - you must be aware of that."

This ongoing cycle of using ICT without critical reflection underscores a pressing need for greater self-awareness. Developing a reflexivity tool is crucial to foster these skills, and during the 2023 summer semester, we

» *Rather than critically reflecting on technology use, people rationalized it as a necessary aspect of modern life.* «

are creating a tool that builds on our research insights. The tool will guide users in creating their digital positionality profile, enabling them to understand how their technology use intersects with their identities and social contexts. We believe it is essential to highlight ICT's positive and negative aspects to encourage balanced and nuanced reflection. We also aim to make the tool easily accessible to promote self-reflection and self-awareness as widely as possible.

As debates surrounding the development and application of AI tools and chatbots continue, we recognize that our observed pattern applies to AI use in daily life. While it simplifies routine tasks, it may erode our sense of self-efficacy for feeling like we are not doing the work ourselves. With growing awareness of the biases and limitations of AI, we might also feel guilt and shame. However, we must pause, reflect and act. Taking cues from Italy's temporary ban on ChatGPT and compliance measures, similar steps may be necessary for other contexts. To use these tools more intentionally, we must regulate AI mindfully rather than blindly relying on its convenience for the privileged. We believe that our research holds the potential to foster a more informed, thoughtful approach to technology use and development, and we eagerly anticipate sharing our work.

ANNA LENA MENNE

Anna Lena Menne is a Master's student in Global Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where she works as a tutor and a co-researcher of digital positionality. Her research explores digitization's historical and contemporary social context, unveiling the complexity of digital transformation, domination and inequality. She holds a Bachelor's in Media and Communications from Freie Universität Berlin.



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MAKĒDA GERSHENSON

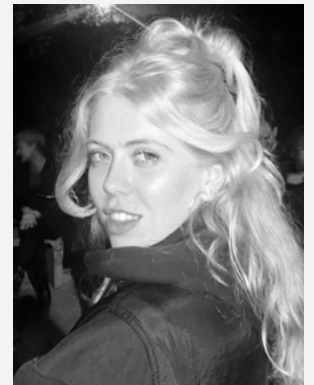
Makēda Gershenson is a co-researcher of digital positionality. She is a Master's candidate in the Futures Research program at Freie Universität. She holds Bachelor's degrees in Psychology and German Studies and a Master's in Education from Stanford University, as well as an Executive MBA from Quantic School of Technology. Her work focuses on emotional intelligence and equity in education to create community-based interventions.



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ALISSA STEER

Alissa Steer is a co-researcher of digital positionality. She is a master's student in Media and Political Communication at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research focuses on critical theory, platforms, and hegemony. She holds a bachelor's in Media Research from Technische Universität Dresden and currently works as a student assistant in the research group Politics of Digitalization at the Berlin Social Science Center.



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GRADUATIONS

STUDIENABSCHLÜSSE IM SOMMERSEMESTER 2022 UND WINTERSEMESTER 2022/23

UYEN THY LE

BA Regionalstudien Asien/Afrika

»Wie weiten urbane soziale Bewegungen demokratische Handlungsräume aus? Demokratiereformierende Potenziale durch den Berliner Neuen Munizipalismus«

Erstbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

Zweitbetreuung: Dr. Saskia Schäfer

SARAH DZIEDZIC

BA Regionalstudien Asien/Afrika

»Wo liegen die Grenzen zwischen kultureller Aneignung und kultureller Wertschätzung? Eine Analyse der Dior Cruise Collection 2020«

Erstbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

Zweitbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Susanne Gehrmann

ALINE TOMETY

BA Regionalstudien Asien/Afrika

»Calling Out White Saviorism - Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der medialen Debatte um den White Savior Complex«

Erstbetreuung: Stefan Hoffmann (M.A.)

Zweitbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

MICHÈLE FIGUR

MA Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien

»Hallyu in Indien. Kulturelle Nähe in koreanischen Dramen«

Erstbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

Zweitbetreuung: Dr. Fritzi-Marie Titzmann

TERESA MARLEEN BECHTOLD

MA Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien

»Soziale Medien im Friedensprozess. Wie soziale Medien in den Friedensbemühungen im Konflikt um die Rohingya genutzt werden«

Erstbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

Zweitbetreuung: Dr. Fritzi-Marie Titzmann

EMMA FRANCES FOSTER LO

MA Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien

»Asia as Musical Method: sound-based collaborations in Berlin as sites of 'trans-Asian' knowledge production«

Erstbetreuung: Dr. Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo

Zweitbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

CHUNG-YEN CHANG

MA Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien

»Escaping from Cross-Border Marriage: Body, Mobility, and Agency«

Erstbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

Zweitbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Claudia Derichs

SINA CARINA RAUCH

MA Global Studies

»Different stories of climate and justice. Decolonial (un)learning options with global climate justice movements and perspectives from the South«

Erstbetreuung: PD Dr. Andrea Fleschenberg dos Ramos Pinéu

Zweitbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

XIN LIN

BA Regionalstudien Asien/Afrika

»Geburt und Nation, Flüchtlingslager und Kritik der modernen Souveränität. ‚Crimmigration‘ und Einbettung des Rassismus in den staatlichen Machtmechanismus«

Erstbetreuung: Dr. Daniel Bultmann

Zweitbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

ALEXANDRA MATTHIES

MA Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien

»The Social and Economic Status of Women in Rural South Asia«

Erstbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Claudia Derichs

Zweitbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

CHANDRIKA YOGARAJAH

MA Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien

»On the traces of trauma and memory. Constructing the 'Other' Self in autobiographical documentary films in the Eelam Tamil Diaspora context«

Erstbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

Zweitbetreuung: Dr. Nagehan Uskan

NGOC LIN MAI

MA Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien

»Vietnamesische Diaspora im Wandel – Narrative, Heimat und Identität«

Erstbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

Zweitbetreuung: Dr. Fritzi-Marie Titzmann

MAREIKE BECKERT

MA Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien

»'Keine Ahnung, was da gerade rausfließt... von dort.' Eine Diskursanalyse von Menstruationsinformationsvideos im indischen Kontext«

Erstbetreuung: Dr. Fritzi-Marie Titzmann

Zweitbetreuung: PD Dr. Andrea Fleschenberg

dos Ramos Pinéu

HANNA SCHNEIDER

MA Gender Studies

»Systemrelevant, aber unsichtbar? Eine Diskursanalyse zur Sichtbarkeit der sogenannten 24-Stunden-Betreuung im öffentlich-rechtlichen TV-Programm«

Erstbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

Zweitbetreuung: Dr. Meike Brückner

ROBERTA MANDOKI

Doktorarbeit im Promotionsfach Ethnologie

Universität Heidelberg

»Kathmandu Valley's Elderscapes. An Ethnography of Ageing in Nepal's Urban Middle Classes «

Erstbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Christiane Brosius

Zweitbetreuung: Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

WIR GRATULIEREN HERZLICH!



EXCERPTS FROM MASTER'S THESES AT THE GAMS DEPARTMENT

We are pleased to present excerpts from three master's theses that were completed and successfully defended last year at the Department of Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region (GAMS) as part of the Modern South and Southeast Asian Studies program.

For her master's thesis, titled "Escaping from Cross-Border Marriage: Body, Mobility, and Agency," CHUNG-YEN CHANG empirically investigated on-site in Taipei the reasons why women from Vietnam who entered into transnationally arranged marriages with men in Taiwan chose to break out of them, and how they subsequently mastered and reflected on their situation. The master's thesis also looks at the media portrayal of these so-called commercially arranged transnational marriages (CATM) in Taiwan and sheds light on the perspective of the husbands as well as their families. In her master's thesis on "Hal-

lyu in India: Cultural Proximity in Korean Dramas", MICHÈLE FIGUR uses the example of the hit series "Crash Landing on You" (2020) to examine which factors could be decisive for its great success in India. Apart from the partition theme, which is likely to make this series set in South and North Korea particularly interesting for a South Asian audience, Michèle Figur identifies important aspects for the mediation and perception of cultural proximity between South Korean and Indian society above all in the portrayal of the family, gender roles, and relationships between generations.

"On the traces of trauma and memory. Constructing the 'other' self in autobiographical documentary films in the Eelam Tamil diaspora context" is the title of CHANDRIKA YOGARAJAH'S master's thesis. She presents her autobiographical documentary film practice and reflects on the methodological approaches

that it opens up for area studies research on traumatic experiences and memories in South Asian diaspora communities.

The master's theses presented here by the three graduates exemplify the impressive diversity and range of research interests and topics that students pursue with a media and gender focus.

Nadja-Christina
Schneider



THE GOOD DAUGHTER, WU YU-YING (TAIWAN, 2019)

ESCAPING FROM CROSS-BORDER MARRIAGE BODY, MOBILITY, AND AGENCY

Excerpt from Chung-Yen Chang's master's thesis (MA Modern South and Southeast Asian Studies)

Since the Southwards policy, a large number of Vietnamese women have come to Taiwan through commercially arranged transnational marriages (CATM). Their husbands are mostly from a relatively marginal group in the Taiwanese marriage market. In order to maintain traditional values and continue kinship, these men choose to go to Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam, to find a wife through marriage agencies. However, many Vietnamese women have been lured into prostitution by unscrupu-

lous agents. This has led to discrimination against Vietnamese spouses and to a stigmatization of escaped Vietnamese spouses by the media as “fake marriages and real prostitution”. Most studies see escape as a result of resistance, but do not discuss in depth and analyze the reasons for escape. Through snowball sampling I found CATM Vietnamese spouses who had run away in Taiwan. These escaped spouses without residence permits are hiding in the big cities with stable jobs. There are several findings in this research:

First, CATM is a gamble for Vietnamese spouses.

Because of the poor living en-

vironment, many Vietnamese families see the marriage of daughters as a survival strategy. The transnationally married daughters provide remittances in order to give their families a better life quality. The whole family can have spatial hypergamy. Thus, the rural girls see the CATM marriage as a gamble, sacrificing themselves to help their family while hoping for the approval of a “good daughter” identity. Although their CATM marriages are entered into with agency, it is mixed with pressure of filial piety, inequality in the domestic field due to the son preference and the one-sided information from abroad, that which is learned

from relatives and neighbors.

Second, the main reason for escape is the inequality in the field.

Because CATM comes with a price, it is easy for the Vietnamese spouse to be seen as the husband's and his family's property and to be financially and operationally controlled by them. The gender roles and the responsibility of wife/daughter-in-law in tradition include the endless supply of intimate and emotional labor. In addition, the language barrier of foreign spouses prevents them from being fully understood in the marriage. All this leads to discontent with the nature of intimacy in these marriages. Therefore, some spouses run away in order to provide their families with a different type of financial support. Some escape because of pursuing romance. Some run away because they want to resist the inequality in their husband's family, but are worried that they will make their family "lose face" and lose the recognition as "filial daughters" when they return home. Escape is a form of resistance achieved through exercising agency.

Third, the escape network builds on relatives in Taiwan or the extramarital Taiwanese boyfriend. The relatives from Vietnam have been rooted in Taiwan and have their own social network. Sometimes there is more than one extramarital boyfriend. This becomes the escape social capital for the spouses. The most beneficial assistance in escaping is the intertwined network between the relatives in Taiwan

and the Taiwanese boyfriends.

Fourth, their job after escape is about intimate labor.

Discovered through snowball sampling, my interview participants worked in a club and nail salon in the Wanhua District, Taipei. They use their intimate labor to earn living expenses and to financially support their natal families. As hostesses in the club, they have to provide care work and entertainment work to the customers. Sex work is an extra work that is done only if the hostess agrees. The interviewed manicurists had an empowerment course before they got married. Such a skill makes the daughters independent so that they don't need to worry about relying on bad marriages. The manicurists must make a priority of customers' comforts and provide emotional labor to them.

Fifth, the social mobility after escape is downward, but realization of their subjectivity and their agency is complete.

Escape is a strategy of resistance and a demonstration of agency. These escaped brides are fully aware of their situation. The social mobility brought by the escape is downward. But after their escape they are no longer restricted by their husbands. By getting rid of their status as CATM spouses, they are not only good daughters who can send money home, but they are able to master their own mobility and have more autonomy in deciding how to use their bodies and to do their actions.

CHUNG-YEN CHANG

Chung-Yen Chang, a Taiwanese author, editor, and designer, holds a Master's degree in Modern South and Southeast Asian Studies from HU Berlin. She is known for her two published music-themed novels, "By Rock" and "7300 Miles Fire Road," which delve into the historical intersections of Taiwanese music. Through meticulous fieldwork and insightful interviews, Chang brings to light forgotten stories of Taiwanese rock music and underground bands, making her novels distinctive contributions to the genre of "music novels."



© CHUNG-YEN CHANG



CRASH LANDING ON YOU, LEE JUNG-HYO (2019-2020, SOUTH KOREA)

HALLYU IN INDIEN KULTURELLE NÄHE IN KOREANISCHEN DRAMEN

Auszug aus der Masterarbeit von Michèle Figur (MA Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien)

Die Darstellung Nord- und Südkoreas in der Serie kann übergeordnet als Diskurs zwischen Modernität und Tradition verstanden werden. Stellen die nordkoreanischen Akteur:innen eine idealisierte traditionelle Form der Familie dar, die der jungen Frau Schutz, Sicherheit, aber auch Liebe und Zuneigung bieten, bedeutet dieses Umfeld für sie jedoch gleichzeitig Immobilität, die Beschränkung auf den häuslichen Bereich, Passivität und Liebe sowie Sexualität, die lediglich im privaten und

ehelichen Kontext möglich ist. Darüber hinaus impliziert dies für junge Frauen die Unterordnung in hierarchische Strukturen. Der kapitalistische und moderne Süden Koreas hingegen ist in der Serie durch eine dysfunktionale Familie gekennzeichnet, die keinen Schutz und Liebe für junge berufstätige Frauen bietet und geprägt ist von Konkurrenzverhalten und Egoismus, aber dennoch alle Annehmlichkeiten einer modernen, konsumorientierten Nation liefert. In dieser Gesellschaft ist es Frauen aufgrund der hohen Konkurrenz gestattet, stark, unabhängig, selbstbewusst und mobil zu sein und ebenso Luxusprodukte

zu konsumieren, einen globalen Kleidungsstil zu haben, Reichtum zu besitzen und diesen offen zur Schau zu tragen sowie Entscheidungen über Liebe und Sexualität eigenständig zu treffen. Mit anderen Worten, es werden die Vor- und Nachteile einer traditionellen kollektiven und modernen individuellen Gesellschaft für Frauen in Bezug auf Familie, Liebe und Gender gegenübergestellt und ausgehandelt. Das Ergebnis ist, dass eine Idealgesellschaft für junge Frauen gezeichnet wird, in der es ihnen an nichts fehlt, in der sie sich frei entfalten können, wodurch ihnen Glück und Erfüllung in Aussicht gestellt wird. Die Gesellschaft

wird dabei folgendermaßen imaginiert: weniger restriktiv, aber dennoch ihrer Funktion nachkommend schützend und inklusiv zu sein. Liebesbeziehungen können unabhängig von arrangierten Ehen existieren und junge Frauen können ihren Partner unabhängig von der Herkunft und auf der Basis von Liebe wählen. Eine Partnerschaft ist durch Gleichberechtigung zwischen Mann und Frau charakterisiert im Sinne von gegenseitiger Fürsorge, gleichberechtigter Verteilung der Haushaltsaufgaben und von einem Männerbild geprägt, welches sensibel, aufmerksam und unterstützend ist. Darüber hinaus verhindern beruflicher Erfolg und finanzielle Unabhängigkeit junger Frauen nicht die wahre und grenzenlose Liebe und Partnerschaft und bedeuten auch nicht den Ausschluss innerhalb der Familie, sondern werden mit Anerkennung belohnt. Überdies kann die selbstbewusste und -bestimmte Frau räumlich mit ihrem Partner getrennt von der Familie leben, ohne dabei jedoch emotional getrennt zu sein und den Kontakt zu ihr zu verlieren. Die Mobilität von jungen Frauen wird durch Familie und Ehe nicht eingeschränkt. Zudem werden die patriarchalen Strukturen der Familie nicht gänzlich aufgelöst, aber dennoch weniger strikt und restriktiv für junge Frauen gehalten. Die Familie soll jungen weiblichen Familienmitgliedern gegenüber nett, fürsorglich, selbst-

los, geduldig, unterstützend und nicht habgierig und egoistisch sein. Ebenso soll es ihnen gestattet sein, die Annehmlichkeiten einer konsumorientierten, kapitalistischen, modernen Nation genießen zu dürfen und so äußerlich einem globalen Lebensstil pflegen und weiterhin innere Werte wie Höflichkeit, Respekt, Selbstlosigkeit und Fürsorglichkeit in sich vereinen. Zusammengefasst können Parallelen zwischen dem populären Hindi-Film und dem [süd]koreanischen Drama *Crash Landing on You* beobachtet werden. Die Untersuchung hat gezeigt, dass die Themen Liebe, Familie geknüpft an Genderrollen und die Einbettung in die Frage nach der perfekten Balance zwischen Modernität und Tradition in beiden Medien von Zentralität ist.

MICHÈLE FIGUR

Im Rahmen des Masterstudienganges Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien am IAAW habe ich meine Abschlussarbeit zum Thema „Hallyu in Indien: Kulturelle Nähe in koreanischen Dramen“ verfasst. Ich habe so die Möglichkeit genutzt, zwei Popkulturen, die mich persönlich sehr interessieren und faszinieren, miteinander zu verbinden. Ziel meiner Masterarbeit war es, herauszufinden, aus welchem Grund südkoreanische Popkultur (auch Hallyu oder K-Wave genannt) und im speziellen K-Dramen in Indien besonders seit 2020 erfolgreich sind. Die Arbeit wurde dabei von der Annahme getragen und durch die Analyse der K-Serie „Crash Landing on You“ bestätigt, dass eine konstruierte und empfundene kulturelle Nähe und besonders die Genre-Ähnlichkeit zum populären Hindi-Film einen entscheidenden Faktor zum Erfolg beiträgt. Im Oktober 2022 habe ich dafür den Masterabschluss erhalten.

Das Studium hat es mir ermöglicht, meine Leidenschaft für die indische Filmlandschaft akademisch zu vertiefen. Der Bereich Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region (GAMS) hat mich dabei stets begleitet und einen Schwerpunkt gebildet. Ursprünglich als gelernte zahnmedizinische Fachangestellte habe ich bereits während des Bachelorstudiums Regionalstudien Asien /Afrika am IAAW die Chance genutzt, mich auf die Region Südasien zu fokussieren und mich in der Welt des indischen Films wissenschaftlich zurecht zu finden. Besonders hilfreich war es, am IAAW Hindi-Sprachkenntnisse zu erlangen, um so einen besseren Zugang zu diesem Medium herstellen zu können.



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The shame of not belonging.

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ON THE TRACES OF TRAUMA AND MEMORY CONSTRUCTING THE 'OTHER' SELF IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL DOCUMENTARY FILMS IN THE EELAM TAMIL DIASPORA CONTEXT

**Excerpt from Chandrika Yogarajah's master's thesis
(MA Modern South and
Southeast Asian Studies)**

I believe that the stories from below, provide new insights and profound realities about abstract discourses such as class and caste differences, and social, sexual, and racial inequalities. The family as a catalyst of trauma is my object of investigation using intensely home videos. My films show the personal as political. Private and intimate family stories

can be stories of classism, racism, sexual violence, and homophobia, but they can also be stories of privilege, survivorship, sisterhood, resistance, and healing. I am a filmmaker and my motivation for making films is to understand my parent's situation as refugees from Sri Lanka and asylum seekers in Germany. I want to show through my films that personal and intimate stories are relevant, revealing important information about social and political structures and systems. I am investigating how their reality

has affected me and my siblings, attempting to find traces or hints in their memories, narrations, and behaviour to understand my reality as a second-generation Eelam Tamil growing up in the diaspora in Germany. Furthermore, through filmmaking, I attempt to find an expression of pain, mourning, and survival guilt of a history that I have never really experienced and to find sense and meaning in this confusing diasporic disorientation. Through film and videos, I feel the inconceivable and unspoken

materialize in the images and the audio. For these reasons, I started filming my parents in 2020. I am writing this master's thesis from different roles and perspectives. As a working-class child with a migrant background, I belong to the small percentage of working-class children with a migrant background in Germany who manage to write a master's thesis and complete the master's programme. I am also writing this master's thesis as a diasporic Eelam Tamil who is researching with an inside perspective into the Eelam Tamil community and would like to contribute to political and social discourses in the Eelam Tamil community and Germany. Furthermore, I am writing this master's thesis as a daughter and a sister, exploring my family history, and writing for my family and myself. In this master's thesis, I will discuss two of my published films, referring to unpublished film works of mine. The Phantom was made in June 2021 and was shown as part of the Junge Kunst Festival Neukölln at the Neukölln Arcaden. *My Father, Electrician*; *My Mother, Nurse* was made in September 2021 as part of the Asian Performing Artists Lab (APAL). Both films were created from footage taken from previously unpublished works. The visual images of *My Father, Electrician*; *My Mother, Nurse* were created from the footage of the unpublished film *Paradise Europe* (2020). The Phantom was created from unused footage from the film *The Taste of Blood and Iron* (2020). In all my films, the focus is on fami-

ly intimacy, demonstrating that the nature of family functioning and the parental communication about traumatic memories and experiences are important in trauma transmission and hence to understanding one own's diasporic situation. With my film practice, I have found a life-affirming way, a strategy, a medium and a method to express my diasporic existence in the Eelam Tamil Diaspora in Germany.

CHANDRIKA YOGARAJAH

Chandrika Yogarajah is an independent documentary filmmaker and researcher. She holds an MA in Modern South and Southeast Asian Studies from HU. Her focus and interest during the master's program was on film, gender, activism, and social justice in Sri Lanka. She is currently preparing her PhD research. In her work, Chandrika focuses on the Sri Lankan Tamil or Eelam Tamil diaspora and on Queer Tamil history and visual cultures. During the next three months, she will conduct an explorative study on the Queer Tamil diaspora in Berlin for the RePLITO project.



© CHANDRIKA YOGARAJAH

»Through filmmaking, I attempt to find an expression of pain, mourning, and survival guilt of a history that I have never really experienced and to find sense and meaning in this confusing diasporic disorientation.«





OUTRO

Was ist eigentlich los am GAMS Bereich?

»Ein Plädoyer für den Erhalt genderrelevanter medienfokussierter
Forschung und Lehre am IAAW«

BY GRACIOUS COURTESY OF © SHANKAR KOIRALA

WAS IST EIGENTLICH LOS AM GAMS BEREICH?

EIN PLÄDOYER FÜR DEN ERHALT GENDERRELEVANTER MEDIENFOKUSSIERTER FORSCHUNG UND LEHRE AM IAAW

Prekäre Lebens- und Arbeitsumstände im universitären Alltag in Deutschland werden weitgehend als Norm gehandelt und aufrechterhalten.

Hierdurch bleiben hierarchische Strukturen nicht nur unangefochten, sondern werden auch Misstrauen und Konkurrenzdenken innerhalb kollegialer Kreise geschürt. All dies verstärkt bei Studierenden, Mitarbeitenden und Assoziierten den Eindruck der allgemeinen Intransparenz und Willkürlichkeit in Bezug auf Stellenvergaben und Entfaltungsmöglichkeiten für wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs.

Die vermeintlich angestrebte Stärkung unterrepräsentierter Positionalitäten, marginalisierter Forschungsfelder und innovativer und transdisziplinärer Ansätze bleibt von Seiten der universitären Entscheidungstragenden hierbei anscheinend nicht mehr als ein Lippenbekenntnis.

Professor Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider lehrt und forscht seit 2009 am Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften. Ab Oktober 2009 leitete sie als Juniorprofessorin den Querschnittsbereich Medialität und Intermedialität, der mit ihrer Berufung auf die befristete W-2 Professur Gender

and Media Studies for the South Asian Region im März 2017 stärker an die Region Südasiens gebunden wurde. Im April 2018 entschied der Institutsrat des IAAW einstimmig, das Ziel einer vorgezogenen Neuberufung von Prof. Schneider auf die Professur Kulturen und Gesellschaften Südasiens zu verfolgen.

Die Umsetzung des Beschlusses steht jedoch aktuell noch aus. Der GAMS-Bereich wird infolgedessen mit dem drohenden Auslaufen des befristeten Vertrags von Prof. Schneider im Februar 2024 sein Ende finden. Dies betrifft nicht nur den Bereich und Prof. Schneiders ex-

zellente wissenschaftliche Arbeit und ihr Engagement für das Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften, sondern auch die Lebens- und Zukunftsperspektiven aller Mitarbeitenden, Promovierenden, Studierenden und mit ihr und dem Bereich Assoziierten.

Im Folgenden stellen wir aus drei verschiedenen Perspektiven dar, was der Bereich Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region (GAMS) und die Zusammenarbeit mit Prof. Schneider für unsere persönlichen wissenschaftlichen Werdegänge bedeutet und welches Potenzial für einen längst überfälligen Wandel in den universitären Strukturen in GAMS steckt.



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» Aktuelle selbstreflexive, machtkritische und intersektionale Forschungsperspektiven sind besonders relevant an einem Institut, das sich mit der Erforschung 'anderer' Weltregionen beschäftigt und dessen Geschichte selbst problematischen Machtasymmetrien und Diskursen unterliegt. «

Wir, die Promovierenden des Bereichs Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region (GAMS) am Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften (IAAW) möchten über die Zukunft des GAMS Bereichs sprechen, da dessen Weiterbestehen aktuell in Frage gestellt wird. Wir betrachten die drohende Auflösung des Bereichs durch die Nicht-Verlängerung des Vertrags von Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider mit großem Unverständnis und Sorge.

Im Folgenden wollen wir unsere Perspektive auf die Relevanz der Gender and Media Studies für das IAAW, die Humboldt-Universität, aber auch unsere persönlichen akademischen Werdegänge und Zukunft darlegen.

Wir halten die Auflösung des Bereichs für einen großen Verlust für die Forschungsvielfalt und die Umsetzung der Einheit von Lehre und Forschung am Institut. Denn der Bereich steht für forschendes Lernen und innovative, transdisziplinäre Lehrkonzepte im Sinne des Leitbilds der HU und des Idealbilds einer modernen Universität nach Wilhelm von Humboldt. Einige von uns durften dies bereits seit Anfang ihres Bachelorstudiums an diesem Bereich erfahren, der uns immer an Forschungsprozessen teilhaben ließ und uns dazu ermutigte, eigene Forschungsvorhaben umzusetzen. Somit verkörpern wir die äußerst erfolgreiche Nachwuchsförderung, die der GAMS Bereich seit seinem Bestehen am IAAW leistet. Auch

unsere individuellen Promotionsforschungen fanden bei einigen von uns bereits während unseres Bachelorstudiums ihren Ursprung, was uns dazu motiviert hat, auch das Masterstudium der Modernen Süd- und Südostasienstudien und anschließend eine Promotion bei Prof. Dr. Schneider anzustreben.

Aktuelle selbstreflexive, machtkritische und intersektionale Forschungsperspektiven sind besonders relevant an einem Institut, das sich mit der Erforschung "anderer" Weltregionen beschäftigt und dessen Geschichte selbst problematischen Machtasymmetrien und Diskursen unterliegt. Hier sei sowohl auf die koloniale Vorkriegsgeschichte, die Rolle im Nationalsozialismus und die DDR-Vergangenheit der HU hingewiesen. Daher sind die oben genannten kritischen Perspektiven sowohl in Forschung, Lehre als auch in der gelebten Diversität des GAMS-Teams von großer Bedeutung.

Zudem fördert der Bereich transregionale Perspektiven, die über die Betrachtung von Süd-Asien spezifischen Themen hinausgehen. Das große Interesse der Studierenden an Lehrveranstaltungen des GAMS Bereichs und die hohe Anzahl an Abschlussarbeiten, die hier seit 2009 geschrieben wurden, unterstreichen die Nachfrage von Studierenden nach genderrelevanten, medienfokussierten Themen aus regionalwissenschaftlicher Perspektive.

Wir sind davon überzeugt, dass wir deshalb eben diese genderrelevanten, medienfokussierten Themenbereiche bewahren müssen, um das IAAW attraktiv für Studierende und Promovierende zu gestalten. Die intersektional-feministische Forschung des GAMS Bereichs halten wir für ein Alleinstellungsmerkmal des Instituts gegenüber regionalwissenschaftlichen Einrichtungen anderer Universitäten in Deutschland. Durch das drohende Wegbrechen des GAMS Bereichs werden somit nicht nur unsere, sondern auch die potentiellen Werdegänge von anstrebenden, zukünftige Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen gefährdet.

Darüber hinaus verfügt der GAMS Bereich über exzellente, internationale, interdisziplinäre Kooperationen und Beziehungen, die uns als Promovierende auch wiederholt bereicherten und welche sich in den 15 Unterstützungsschreiben für den Erhalt des Bereichs widerspiegeln. Zum Beispiel unterstreichen Dr. Schwecke (MWF South Asian Studies in Delhi) und Prof. Phadke (TISS in Mumbai) ihre Kooperationsabsichten mit Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider. Im Falle von TISS würde dies unter anderem einen engen Austausch von jungen Forschenden aus Mumbai und Berlin fördern. Weitere Unterstützungsschreiben kamen von mehreren internationalen Professor*innen, den Studierenden am IAAW, den Mitarbeiter*innen des GAMS Bereichs sowie der Off-University.

Für uns Promovierende bietet der Bereich Gender and Media Studies optimale Bedingungen, um unsere unterschiedlichen thematischen Schwerpunkte zu verfolgen. An diesem Bereich können wir unsere Forschungsvorhaben in einer intellektuell sehr anregenden Atmosphäre realisieren und profitieren darüber hinaus von den innovativen Forschungsansätzen der Mitarbeiter*innen, internationalen Gastwissenschaftler*innen und mit GAMS Assoziierten. Die vielfältigen Veranstaltungen am GAMS Bereich sowie die augesprochen konstruktive Zusammenarbeit fördern einen dynamischen Austausch, nicht nur zwischen uns als Promovierenden, sondern auch weit darüber hinaus.

Es ist somit absolut verständlich, dass die wichtige Arbeit von Frau Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider am IAAW nicht mehr fortgesetzt werden soll. Daher erwarten wir, dass sich die Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin und das Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften sofort für den Fortbestand des Bereichs einsetzen.

ALEXA ALTMANN

(Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin und Doktorandin, GAMS) promoviert zu Raum und Zugehörigkeitsimaginationen in aktuellen jüdisch-israelischen Musikkulturen.

ANNA SCHNIEDER-KRÜGER

(Doktorandin, GAMS) promoviert zu Campusräumen und Bedeutungen von Universität im gegenwärtigen Indien. Ihr Projekt wird durch das Elsa-Neumann Stipendium gefördert.



DIE PROMOVIERENDEN ANNA SCHNIEDER-KRÜGER UND DHANYA FEE KIRCHHOF WÄHREND DES VOM GAMS BEREICH ERMÖGLICHTEN SCHREIBRETREATS, NOVEMBER 2022
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REYAZUL HAQUE

(Doktorand, GAMS) promoviert zu Indienbildern und Temporalitäten in DDR-Newsreels. Sein Projekt wird von MIDA, dem ZMO und der DFG gefördert.

DHANYA FEE KIRCHHOF

(Doktorandin, GAMS) promoviert zu neuen kommunikativen Figurationen, Subjektivierungspraktiken und sozioreligiösem Wandel im Anti-Caste-Kontext. Ihr Projekt wurde durch das Evangelische Studienwerk e.V. Villigst gefördert.

A photograph of a building facade with arched windows, overlaid with a large, dark, hand-painted sign that reads "CLOSED DOWN". The sign is written in a thick, black, hand-painted font. The background is a sepia-toned photograph of a building with multiple windows and arches. The sign is positioned in the center of the image, with the words "CLOSED" on the top line and "DOWN" on the bottom line. The overall aesthetic is gritty and urban.

**CLOSED
DOWN**

» Als Arbeiterkind geflüchteter Eltern war die Universität für mich zunächst ein sehr hierarchisch akademisch geprägter und weißer Ort, an dem ich als migrantisierte und rassifizierte Person vor unterschiedliche Herausforderungen gestellt wurde und weiterhin bin. Der GAMS Bereich strebt an, Machthierarchien aufzubrechen und das akademische Zusammenarbeiten zu fördern. «

Die drohende Auflösung des Bereichs Gender and Media Studies for the South Asian Region (GAMS) am Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften (IAAW) durch die Nicht-Verlängerung des Vertrags von Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider betrachte ich als immensen Verlust für eine Forschungsvielfalt *von unten*.

Ich habe von Oktober 2018 bis Januar 2023 den Masterstudiengang Moderne Süd- und Südostasienstudien am IAAW absolviert und zahlreiche genderrelevante, kritisch-feministische und medienfokussierte Seminare des GAMS Bereichs belegt, der sich durch innovative, intersektional und transdisziplinäre Lehrkonzepte auszeichnet. Während meines Masterstudiums wurde ich besonders von Prof. Dr. Schneider ermutigt, eigene Forschungsvorhaben umzusetzen und durfte an Forschungsprozessen des GAMS Bereichs teilhaben. Sie gab mir die Möglichkeit, im digitalen Wissensarchiv des

Verbundforschungsprojekts Beyond Social Cohesion: Global Repertoires of Living Together (RePLITO) im Rahmen der Special Article Collection: **IMAGINATIONS, NARRATIVES AND MEDIATED PERFORMANCES OF SOLIDARITY AND COMMUNITY** (2021), meinen Artikel **IMAGES OF RESISTANCE: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON MEMORIES AND NARRATIVES OF DIASPORIC SRI LANKAN TAMILS** zu veröffentlichen.

Während des Schreibprozesses dieses Artikels konnte ich mit Studierenden und Promovierenden von der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin und der Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi zusammenarbeiten und für mich wichtige Kontakte knüpfen. Zudem fand meine Masterarbeitsforschung *On the traces of trauma and memory – Constructing the “Other” Self in autobiographical documentary films in the Eelam Tamil Diaspora context*, die von Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider hervorragend erstbetreut wurde, ihren Ursprung am GAMS Bereich und während meines Auslandsstudienjahres

an der Jadavpur University in Kolkata. Auch nach meinem Masterabschluss geht meine Zusammenarbeit mit dem GAMS Bereich weiter. So wurde ich Anfang April zu einem dreitägigen RePLITO Writing Retreat eingeladen. Dort konnte ich zusammen mit anderen Studierenden, Professor:innen, Promovierenden und Postdoktorand:innen an meiner Forschung arbeiten und wertvolle Feedbackgespräche führen. Außerdem werde ich im Sommersemester 2023 im Rahmen des GAMS Research Colloquium die Forschung meiner Masterarbeit vorstellen.

Für mich zeichnet sich der GAMS Bereich vor allem dadurch aus, dass alle Mitarbeiter:innen wirklich an den Realitäten, Gedanken und Gefühlen junger Studierender und ihren Forschungsperspektiven interessiert sind. Sie motivieren Studierende dazu, sich machtkritisch, selbstpositionierend und selbstreflexiv weiterzubilden sowie eigene Forschungsinteressen kreativ

in die Praxis umzusetzen. Besonders am Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften ist es essenziell, Kolonialgeschichte und Machtdiskurse intersektional kritisch zu beleuchten.

Als Arbeiterkind und Kind geflüchteter Eltern war die Universität für mich zunächst ein sehr hierarchisch akademisch geprägter und weißer Ort, an dem ich als migrantisiertes und rassifiziertes Arbeiterkind vor unterschiedliche Herausforderungen gestellt wurde und weiterhin bin. Der GAMS Bereich sowie RePLITO streben an, Machthierarchien aufzubrechen und das akademische Zusammenarbeiten zwischen Studierenden, Professor:innen, Promovierenden und wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiter:innen zu fördern. Dabei werden unterschiedliche Arten von Diskriminierung und Rassismus in keiner Form geduldet.

Ich bin sehr motiviert, weiter mit Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider an meiner Promotionsforschung zusammen zu arbeiten. Durch die Nichtverlängerung ihres Vertrags und dadurch drohende Auflösung des GAMS-Bereichs ist dies allerdings nicht möglich. Das Ende des intersektional-feministischen GAMS-Bereichs und der Weggang einer so wertvollen kritischen Professorin am IAAW wie Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider, die sich stets für ihre Studierenden interessiert und einsetzt, wären somit auch ein großer persönlicher Verlust für mich.



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CHANDRIKA YOGARAJAH

is an independent documentary filmmaker and researcher. She holds an MA in Modern South and Southeast Asian Studies from HU and is currently preparing her PhD research. In her work, Chandrika focuses on the Sri Lankan Tamil or Eelam Tamil diaspora and on Queer Tamil history and visual cultures. During the next three months, she will conduct an explorative study on the Queer Tamil diaspora in Berlin for the RePLITO project.

» *GAMS made me feel that academia can be a space where innovative ideas about social justice can actually develop and thrive, rather than an ivory tower or echo chamber. It is why I wanted to do research in the first place; to contribute to societal debates about pressing problems in an informed and critical way.* «

As former Ph.D. student at the GAMS department (I defended in July 2022), I have benefited immensely from the amazing group of people it houses under the leadership of Nadja-Christina Schneider. Words such as diversity and interdisciplinarity, which in our current academic climate are sometimes wielded a little too eagerly, have acquired true meaning for me during my time at the GAMS department.

As an anthropologist working on gender and sexuality in Indonesia, I have benefited immensely from the exchange with colleagues who not only differed in terms of their disciplinary angles – from media studies and history to film studies and global studies – but also in their geographical region. The many workshops, colloquiums, and collective publications I have participated in with the GAMS team have provided me with constant opportunities for learning and critical reflection on my own work.

Perhaps equally importantly, throughout the Ph.D. process, the supportive and collegial atmosphere of the department made me feel that academia can be a safe and friendly space as well as a space where innovative ideas about social justice can actually develop and thrive, rather than an ivory tower or echo chamber. This element has helped me to remember why I actually wanted to do research in the first place – to contribute to societal debates about pressing problems in an informed and critical way – an attitude I have carried with me into my new post doc position at the visual and media anthropology department at the Heidelberg Center for Transcultural Studies. The focus on interdisciplinarity, intersectionality, and global connectedness of the GAMS department and its insistence that because no cultural phenomenon can be studied in isolation, no scholar can do their work in isolation, have been formative to my approach to academic scholarship.

It is because of this that the prospect of Prof. Schneider's position being discontinued and the concomitant closure of the GAMS department has come as an immense shock and disappointment. The departure of Prof. Schneider would mean the loss of not only an innovative, engaged, and passionate scholar, but also a dedicated, supportive, and inspiring supervisor and teacher.

The GAMS department and all its unique qualities are, in my opinion and that of many others, a direct reflection of Prof. Schneider's scholarly and personal contributions and efforts during her time at the IAAW. I firmly believe retaining her position as head of the department would be an irreplaceable contribution to the future of the IAAW as a progressive, interdisciplinary, and relevant scholarly institution.

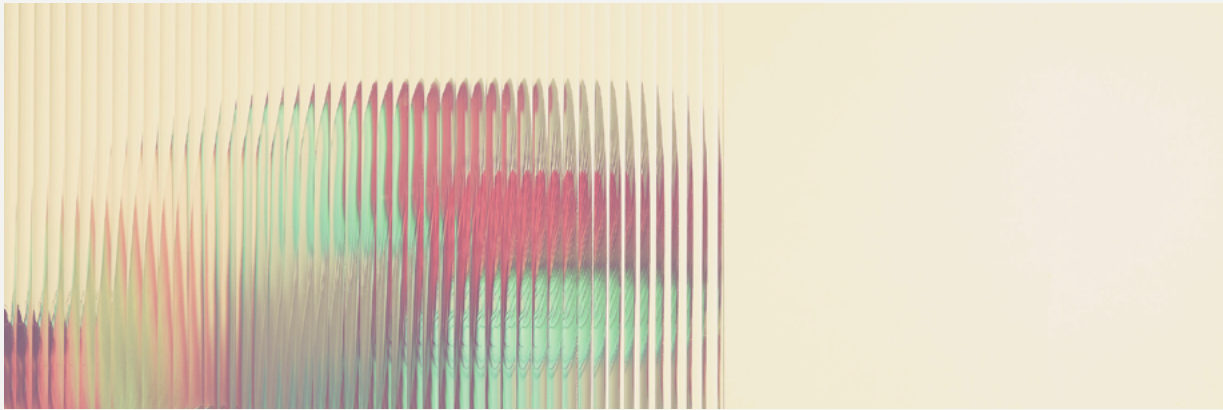


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WIKKE JANSEN

is assistant professor at the chair of Visual and Media Anthropology at the Heidelberg Center for Transcultural Studies. She received her Ph.D. in Global Studies from GAMS on the interactions of religion, activism, and everyday life among queer Indonesians.

IMPRESSUM



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Prof. Dr. Nadja-Christina Schneider

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Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften

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Invalidenstraße 118

10115 Berlin
