

Tiina Seppälä

Her Internship Report (October 2011-March 2012)

I would like to warmly thank the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG) for accepting me as a Visiting Research Scholar in the organization, from the beginning of October 2011 until the end of March 2012.

I am extremely grateful that I have had the opportunity, the honor as well as the pleasure of working with such a group of intelligent, good-hearted, deeply motivated, and passionate people.

As a part of my post-doctoral research on social movements against neoliberal development in India, I have greatly benefited from the CRG's expertise on issues such as forced migration, development induced internal displacement, and social movements. The opportunity to be part of the research group has helped me to establish important contacts with both academics and activists who are relevant to my study.

The hospitality that I have experienced at the CRG has been beyond my expectations.

First and foremost, I want to thank Dr. Ranabir Samaddar, the Director of the CRG, for his invaluable help and encouragement that he has given me for conducting my research. I also want to express my deep appreciation for Professor Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury for assisting me with my research as well as for inviting me to give a lecture at the Rabindra Bharati University. The lecture, titled 'Critical Theory in Political Practice? Rethinking Theories of Global Resistance through the New Anti-War Movement', was based on my PhD thesis (2010), and I gave it on 30 January 2012 at the Department of Political Science.

Special thanks belong to Dr. Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, who was of great help to me when I was looking for an organization where to do some voluntary work. Anasua helped me to get in contact with Dr. Jana of the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), for which I did three small case studies by interviewing trafficked girls and women who had been rescued by the DMSC. Additionally, I wrote a funding application (draft) for the DCSC's anti-trafficking program.

From the CRG, I thank also Suhit K. Sen, Madresh Kumar, Mitlesh Kumar, Paula Banerjee, and all others, who have shown their support and interest in my work.

I want to express my warm appreciation for wonderful and amazing M. Chatterji for all the help I have received from her in regard to various practical and organizational issues.

During my visit at the CRG, I have gathered a lot of empirical material for my research on resistance against neoliberal development in India, and particularly the case of Rajarhat New Town Project in Kolkata.

I have concentrated on one of the most active and radical social movement organizations of the area – the Sanhati Collective. It is an autonomous collective which explicitly declares that it 'fights neoliberalism in Bengal and beyond'. Sanhati was founded in 2006, and ever since it has been involved in many different kinds of struggles dealing with, for example, land ownership issues, development projects, dams, and nuclear plants.

For the purposes of my study, I have conducted several in-depth interviews and discussions with the main coordinator of Sanhati as well as women activists who are involved in struggles against forced land acquisition and displacement caused by neoliberal development projects. Moreover, I have interviewed (twice) Mr. Pramod Gupta, the director of the documentary film *Aamader Jomite Oder Nagari* [Their Township on Our Land] which deals with land acquisition and displacement of people in Rajarhat. Mr. Gupta is an independent documentarist who knows many Sanhati activists, and has given the Sanhati Collective permission to post his documentary films on the Sanhati website.

I have also interviewed Mr. Nilotpall Dutta, the Secretary of the Rajarhat Jami Bachao (Save the Rajarhat Lands) Committee, and while visiting villages in Rajarhat with him, I have talked with altogether 17 (ex-)farmers, (ex-)fisherman, activists and villagers. In addition to these materials, I have collected books

and articles published by Sanhati as well as videos and documentaries that deal with development and land acquisition related struggles in West Bengal.

During my stay, I have presented two research papers. The first one I presented at the "Cultural Transformations: Development Initiatives and Social Movements" Conference, organized by the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society (IACSS) at the BRAC University, in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 17-18 December, 2011. My paper was titled 'Women against Development: An Outline for a Case Study of Grassroots Movements in India'.

The second paper I presented at the CRG research seminar on 15 March, 2012. It was titled 'Movements against Neoliberal Development in India: The Case of Rajarhat New Town Project in India'. In the same seminar also my colleague Dr. Leonie Ansems de Vries, presented a paper titled 'On (Im)mobility of Political Life'.

From Kolkata, I will now continue to Kathmandu where I will be a Visiting Research Scholar at the Nepal Institute of Peace (NIP) for the next 3 months, until the end of June 2012. While in Nepal, I will continue my research, and hope to keep in close contact with people at the CRG. I am also interested in publishing a paper on my research, for example, in the CRG's Policies and Practices -series.

I hope that the contact between us will remain close, and that in future there could be more collaboration between the CRG and the University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland.