

Preface

This volume is the outcome of an international seminar held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla, during 10–11 June 2013 to discuss the social dynamics of the urban. This seminar, the third in a series called ‘Shimla Retreat’, was a joint venture of IIAS; School of Advanced Studies, University of London; and South Asian Studies Council, Yale University. The Retreat hosted scholars, policy makers, administrators, and grassroots activists from India, France, United Kingdom, United States of America, and South Africa who deliberated on pre-circulated commissioned papers spread over eight technical sessions. Content-wise, these papers were city-/issue-specific, but deliberations on them were pitched at a meta-level cutting across cities and issues.

In all, 26 scholars participated in the seminar and 18 papers were presented. Each paper was critiqued by a discussant before it was thrown open for discussion by other participants. And each paper presenter was provided with rapporteur’s notes on the discussion on their paper, besides the written feedbacks from the discussant and the editor. Though the participants were drawn from different disciplinary backgrounds—anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, social work, and sociology—they all shared the value of crossing one’s disciplinary background in seeking to understand the social dynamics of the urban in contemporary times.

This volume contains 10 papers presented and discussed at the seminar, and all of them deal with the social dynamics of the urban space in India. A previously published paper by the editor (‘Revisiting the City: The Relevance of Urban Sociology Today’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLV [35], 28 August 2010, pp. 50–58) has been added to lend thematic focus to the volume. I thank *Economic and Political Weekly* for the kind permission to reproduce the paper in this volume.

The success of the seminar and its outcome in the instant volume is due to the conviction, commitment, and contribution of many individuals, and it is only apt that they are remembered here. At the outset, I would like to convey my grateful thanks to Prof. Peter Ronald deSouza, the then Director of IIAS, for his encouragement and support for the organisation and conduct of the seminar and persuading me to put this volume together. I would like to place on record my

grateful thanks to Profs. James Manor of School of Advanced Studies, University of London and K. Sivaramakrishnan of the South Asian Studies Council, Yale University for the valuable inputs at the stage of both conceptualisation and the organisation of the seminar. But for the continuous prodding of Prof. Manor, this volume would not have seen the light of day. I would like to thank Prof. Chetan Singh, the then Governing Board Member and later the Director of IAS for his insightful introductory remarks at the seminar and for his interest in the publication of the volume as also the speedy clearance of the paper work associated with it.

My grateful thanks are due to (a) the contributors to the volume for their labour of love and patience; besides their own presentations at the seminar, they doubled up as discussants for others' presentations, and some even took on the responsibility of chairing the sessions; (b) Profs. J. Vivian Beckford-Smith, D.N. Dhanagare, Kushal Deb, Eric Harms, Malavika Kasthuri, Philip Murphy, K. Sivaramakrishnan, and Karen Sato for their contribution to the seminar as chairpersons of sessions and/or as discussants; and (c) Mr. Mohammed Ibrahim Wani for meticulously keeping track of the seminar proceedings as rapporteur.

The seminar could not have been successful without the unstinted logistical support of the IAS administrative staff, especially those in the Academic Resource Office, Estate Section, and Accounts Office. I particularly remember with gratitude the help and cooperation extended to me by Dr. Prem Chand, the then Acting Secretary and present Librarian, and Dr. Debarshi Sen, the then Academic Resource Officer at IAS. Finally, the managers at the guesthouse and the mess extended excellent hospitality. I wholeheartedly thank them all.

The manuscript has richly benefitted from the feedback received from the anonymous referees appointed by IAS and Springer respectively; I appreciate their professionalism and thank them for enriching the volume. I would like to place on record my gratitude to Ms. Shinjini Chatterjee of Springer for her interest in this volume and her immense patience and perseverance. As always, my wife Vijayalakshmi has been a pillar of support to me.

Bengaluru, India

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