



ZMO-Colloquium Winter Term 2015/2016

*The Future of the City: Contested Urbanism
in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*

Thursday, September 24th, 2015, 5 pm

India's GIFT: The Hubris of Technotopia in India's Smart Urbanism

By Dr. Ayona Datta (University of Leeds)

Venue:

Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33

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In May 2014, the Indian government embarked on its most ambitious urban planning programme so far – the creation of 100 smart cities for the next decade. The legitimisation of this programme relies upon a narrative around a crisis of urbanization and rural-urban migration and therefore the need for a digital urbanism in India. GIFT (short for Gujarat International Financial and Tech-city) is now widely reported as the 'first' smart city in India – a mega-enclosure spread over of 886 acres – a space of exception with over 400 acres of its land under SEZ (Special Economic Zone) regulations. Examining the future of India's digital urbanism through GIFT, I will argue that the technotopia which GIFT loudly and unapologetically aspires to, heralds the onset of a menacing urbanism in India where citizenship will be manufactured through data and real estate. GIFT heralds the rise of a globally oriented young urban middle-class in India hungry for a share in its economic prosperity and brashly showing off their social mobility as 'smart' citizens. It shows the coming of age of a generation with no first-hand memory of riots or rationing, who can then claim their rights as citizens from the comfort of the technotopia that is a smart city.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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Ayona Datta is Senior Lecturer in Citizenship and Belonging in the University of Leeds. Her research and writing broadly focuses on the gendered politics of citizenship and urbanization across the global north and south. Her most recent research on smart cities and social justice in India and South Africa has led to the publication of number of articles in peer reviewed journals and popular media. Ayona is co-editor of '*Translocal Geographies: Spaces, places, connections*' in 2011 and author of '*The Illegal City: Space, law and gender in a Delhi squatter settlement*' in 2012 published by Ashgate. Her forthcoming co-edited books '*Fast Cities: Mega-urbanization in the global South*' by Routledge and '*Ecological Citizenships in the global south*' by Zed Books will be published in 2016. She is author of over 30 articles in peer reviewed journals as well as two films 'City bypassed' and 'City forgotten'.