GCSC Seminar Series

November 29, 2016
4:00-5:00 PM

Manisha Anantharanam
St Mary’s College, Justice. Community, & Leadership

"Class, poverty and urban sustainability in Bangalore, India"

210 ASB
(Aline Skaggs Building)

ALL ARE WELCOME

Refreshments & meet the speaker at 3:45

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Abstract

Sustainability scholarship is increasingly focusing on individual behaviour change and sustainable consumption as crucial components of engendering more sustainable societies. Practices like bicycling to work, recycling and reusing goods, eating organic food, or buying used clothes are heralded as both integral to and generative of larger societal transformations. Scholars and practitioners have begun to identify the individual and societal conditions that can help engender such practices, studying attitudes, social norms, and infrastructures. Less attention has been paid to the situated relational class politics of greening lifestyles, which is especially important as most “green” lifestyle practices are also the very quotidian acts that sustain and support the livelihoods of the poor, especially in developing countries. In this paper, I draw on an ethnographic study of bicycling and waste management practices in Bangalore, India to ask critical questions about the links between class identity, poverty, and sustainability. I ask how elite and middle class practitioners of bicycling and waste management in Bangalore relate to those poor others who bicycle and recycle, and define themselves in relation to both the urban poor in Bangalore, and to cyclists and recyclers in the USA and Europe. I argue that as middle class groups adopt and promote these practices, class distinctions are both transformed and reinforced. Class relations are mediated in new spatial territories like bicycle lanes and recycling centres, and around new discourses on global environmental problems like climate change. At the same time, familiar and embedded cultures of servitude and distinction pervade these new practices, limiting their radical potential.

Bio

Manisha Anantharaman is a tenure track Assistant Professor in Justice, Community and Leadership at Saint Mary's College of California. Her research and teaching interests straddle the interconnected spheres of sustainability and social justice, applying participatory and ethnographic methodologies to understand how sustainability initiatives in urban India do, or do not, address social justice concerns. She received her PhD from the Department of Environmental Science Policy and Management at the University of California Berkeley (2015), before which she worked as a program officer at the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, India. In 2016, Manisha was recognized with an Early Career Scholar award by the Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative (SCORAI). You can read more about her research and teaching here: http://www.manishaanantharaman.com/