**Geographies of Litigation in urban Punjab**

Kanchan Gandhi

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In this talk I will focus on the “Geographies of Litigation” employed by the civil society actors in cities of Punjab as a way to achieve environmental, social and spatial justice from the state and from the private sector. For example, the capitalist logic of housing production has led to a landscape of substandard leaky built environment in the satellite city of Zirakpur in the tri-city region of Chandigarh. Private builders have built a housing stock which lacks completion certificates and basic building standards causing their residents to engage in litigation as a means to achieve housing justice in the city. Zirakpur has a high number of cases filed in the court with regard to housing justice leading to several builders being jailed or penalized. This presentation will discuss the case of Zirakpur as one of “informality from above” (Roy, 2009) where politicians are also prime real-estate actors leading to a politician-builder nexus and the urban chaos that Zirakpur represents. It has led to the emergence of what I describe as the “litigant citizen” in contrast to the “consumer citizen” that Sanjay Srivastava (2014) defines in the context of Gurgaon in Haryana.

A growing number of scholars like Baviskar (2003), Bhan (2009), Ghertner (2015) discuss the impacts of middle-class litigation on the lives of the urban poor. This literature focuses on the furthering of disenfranchisement of the urban poor due to public interest litigations filed by the middle-class lawyers and activists like M.C Mehta in Delhi (1985). A case that led to the polluting industries moving out of Delhi and loss of livelihood for thousands of workers.

In Ludhiana, also known as the Manchester of India, a large number of RTI activists and environmentalists are knocking the door of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) for environmental justice in this highly polluted industrial milieu. The litigants and petitioners are largely from the middle- and upper-class groups - a phenomena Baviskar (2003) calls “Bourgeois Environmentalism”, in the context of urban Punjab, this litigation and its wins may lead to a more environmentally just city for all or shift the burden of environment further on the poor. My research aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion of how this bourgeois urbanism/ environmentalism is shaping urban spaces in Punjab. I argue that all bourgeois litigation may not necessarily be anti-poor and can have mixed impacts on their lives. This will be illuminated through the discussion of some of the key court cases that have been filed by environmentalists in Ludhiana and Jalandhar cities in recent years and their impacts on the residents of these cities.