

Urban Ecologies: Governing Nonhuman Life in Global Cities

Four fully-funded research fellowships, under the aegis of an European Research Council Horizon 2020 Starting Grant, at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, India

Supervisors:

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About the Project

The 21st century might be described as the urban age: over half of the world's people now reside in urban settlements. Another 1.1 billion people are expected to live on earth by 2030, most of them in densely packed Asian and African cities. A 'new urban governance' agenda is emerging in academic and policy circles, dealing with frontline questions of urban habitat, resource scarcity and making cities more resilient for the poor. Yet cities are framed and have been understood in a resolutely anthropocentric manner. Animal life and their relations with people, however, have much to offer in terms of rethinking how the urban is composed, how it is governed, and how it might be made more inclusive, for its nonhuman life as well.

This project aims to investigate nonhuman lives and their relationship with the citizenry in two Indian cities, the well-established Delhi and the rapidly developing Guwahati. Its central aim is to combine ecological and ethnographic perspectives to generate understandings of how the urban is governed by regulating nonhuman life. A significant proportion of people in these cities now live in urban slums and for them rearing animals is often an important means of dealing with urban precarity and developing economic resilience. There are, however, contestations with stray cattle over access to streets and occasionally, even violence toward those involved in meat and hide trades. Poor sanitation has led to an explosion of stray dogs, with a sharp concomitant increase in dog bites and the risk of rabies. Besides these economic and health dimensions, our cultural traditions too play a vital role in animal survival and the nature of our relationship with the nonhuman in these cities.

Animal life in Indian cities does not necessarily involve only the cultivated—cows, for example—or the feral, represented by street dogs. There is also the wild: groups of macaques, for instance, whose lives are changing drastically with urbanisation, often threatening their very survival. A closer understanding of the rapid changes in the ecology and behaviour of these groups are of particular importance, not only from the perspective of their territoriality,

adaptability to alternative sources of food and other resources, as well as their remarkable resilience, but also from that of their intimate relationship with local human communities. Studies on the urban ecology of cattle, dogs or macaques have largely been neglected but are expected to provide critical narratives of how animals navigate the city and its people, carving out independent lives for themselves. Besides engaging in the nascent field of urban ecology, an examination of animal behaviour and how it changes in relation to urbanisation strongly complements recent attempts in the social sciences to rethink the urban by engaging with nonhuman life. The wider research project, of which these doctoral fellowships are a part, thus seeks to combine behavioural ecology and the interpretative social sciences to shed new light on urban governance, as presented by Delhi and Guwahati in particular, but also develop new insights for thinking about how the 'urban' is constituted in India and needs to be managed.

Approach

This research project combines both the ecological and social sciences, and is comparative in its approach.

Three of the four fellowships would focus on the behavioural ecology and adaptability of the livestock, stray dogs and macaques, particularly with reference to their territoriality, resource use and the nature of their relationship with the local people, in the two cities of Delhi and Guwahati. These interdisciplinary studies would use both quantitative observational techniques and ethnographic methods in their attempts to understand the nature of nonhuman lives in these cities.

The fourth fellowship, in the social sciences, would examine the working practices of the urban poor and their perceptions of animals from the different perspectives discussed above. These practices would be viewed in relation to broader questions concerning the political ecology of animal life and urban governance. The key methods used would be ethnographic, complemented by policy-related investigations and interviews with experts, institutions and other key stakeholders.

Eligibility and Applications for the Project

Applicants for the three fellowships in behavioural ecology, to be primarily guided by Anindya Sinha and with the possibility of the researchers registering for a doctoral degree in NIAS, TransDisciplinary University in Bangalore or elsewhere, should preferably be from any field related to animal biology, but with strong demonstrated interests in behavioural biology, human-animal relationships and/or animal studies.

Applicants for the doctoral fellowship in the social sciences, to be guided by Maan Barua and Anindya Sinha, and also with the possibility of the researcher registering for a doctoral degree in NIAS, TransDisciplinary University or elsewhere, should preferably have a background in cultural and environmental/human geography, social and cultural anthropology, or sociology, with strong interests in animal studies and/or urban studies.

Applicants must have completed/are completing a Master's/MPhil degree in any subject in the natural sciences, engineering, mathematics, social sciences, humanities or the arts, but with a strong demonstrable interest in the areas mentioned above and with a consistently proven academic record (minimum 55% marks). Some research and/or field experience in the concerned areas would be preferred. Candidates who have qualified for JRF/DST/CSIR/ICSSR/JEST fellowships are also encouraged to apply.

The four researchers would have their fellowships fully covered for four years by the **Urban Ecologies Project**. They will receive a monthly stipend of INR 25,000 per month for the first two years and INR 28,000 per month for the next two years, with an additional 24% per month as House Rent Allowance.

The selection of candidates for the project would be through personal interviews, to be held in NIAS, around 18 or 19 June 2018.

How to Apply for the Project

Applicants for this project should send in a statement of interest, along with scanned copies of their undergraduate and post-graduate degree certificates and mark sheets, and a resume containing their academic history, skills, interests, published work and other accomplishments, all collated and sent as a single PDF file to the email addresses: anindya.rana.sinha@gmail.com and maan.barua@geog.cam.ac.uk. **All applications must only be sent by email**, with the deadline for receiving applications being **April 30, 2018**.

If necessary, interested candidates may contact Anindya Sinha (anindya.rana.sinha@gmail.com) and/or Maan Barua (maan.barua@geog.cam.ac.uk) for clarifications and additional information.

Eligibility for the NIAS Doctoral Programme

Applicants, who would **also** like to seek admission to the NIAS Doctoral Programme, and work for their doctoral degree under the aegis of the Urban Ecologies project, must have completed/are completing a Master's/MPhil degree in any relevant subject in the natural sciences, engineering, mathematics, social sciences, humanities or the arts, with a consistently proven academic record (minimum 55% marks). Some research and/or field experience in the concerned areas would be preferred. Candidates who have passed the NET/SET/GATE examinations with good scores or have qualified for JRF/DST/CSIR/ICSSR/JEST fellowships are also encouraged to apply.

Selection Procedure for the NIAS Doctoral Programme

Admission to the NIAS Doctoral Programme would be based on a common entrance test and two levels of interview. Short-listed candidates would be invited for a written test and interviews on 18 and 19 June 2018.

How to Apply for the NIAS Doctoral Programme

The application form (<http://www.nias.res.in/content/doctoral-programme>) should be downloaded from the NIAS website. The completed and signed application form should be sent along with scanned copies of undergraduate and post-graduate degree certificates and mark sheets, and a resume containing the candidate's academic history, skills, interests, published work and other accomplishments, all collated and sent as a single PDF file to the email address: niasphd@gmail.com

Applicants to the NIAS Doctoral Programme, under the aegis of this project, must mention Urban Ecologies in their topic of choice in the application, as this is specific to the ambit of the project.

Please note that the Institute will only accept applications submitted through a **single email**. The deadline for receiving application with all required documents by email is **April 30, 2018**.