



Unfixed Lane the making of Contemporary India



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As we face climate change, our relationship with nature needs rethinking. Nature is impacted, even constituted, by human activity. However, societies are also co-constituted by nature. My research explores the subject-centrality of nature through land and the making of contemporary India. For centuries, we have believed that land is a fixed asset. I propose unfixed land. Interdisciplinary, qualitative research in India shows humans physically reconfiguring, legally redefining, politically re-labeling and discursively reimagining land in growth and investment-led policies. For instance, riverbeds are mined, ponds built over, and national territory securitised and then commercialised. In turn, unfixing land shapes our institutions. Legality and illegality blend in states, markets and politics with vast shadows. Here, middlemen and musclemen unfix and re-fix land, keeping it in circulation. Unfixed land is not merely the holder of India's growth story. It is that story, and one that needs urgent telling.

Nikita Sud is Associate Professor of Development Studies and a Fellow of Wolfson College. She is author of *Liberalisation, Hindu Nationalism and The State: A biography of Gujarat* (OUP, 2012). Her book *Unfixed Land* is in progress. Initial musings from that research can be found in the journals *World Development*, *Development and Change*, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Environment and Planning C*, and *Geoforum*, as also in accessible formats in *The Conversation*, *Scroll.in*, *The Wire.in*, BBC World Service's *The Forum*, etc.

All are welcome

Convenors: Faisal Devji, Polly O'Hanlon, Kate Sullivan de Estrada, Nayanika Mathur, Mallica Kumbara Landrus and Ali Jan.

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