



CENTRE FOR ASIAN AND
TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES

SOUTH ASIA
INSTITUTE



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

Lecture Series on Governance and Politics in South Asia
Department of Political Science

Special Lecture on

**Struggling to See: How the Politics of Sight Configures
Social Welfare in Contemporary India**

by

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Starting in 2004, India enacted a series of laws that expanded a right to economic security and social opportunities for its most disempowered citizens. A striking feature of this new welfare regime was its emphasis on the nexus between corruption, transparency and accountability. On the one hand, many rights campaigners believed greater transparency would expose the failure of public institutions to grant basic entitlements due to corruption. Thus, social activists demanded a right to ‘see the state’, manifested in the Right to Information Act (RTI), 2005, and via the right to participate in local social audits in other many schemes. On the other hand, many public officials highlighted the need to reduce ‘leakages’ by corrupt middlemen and unintended beneficiaries. Hence the establishment of Aadhaar in 2009, providing unique biometric identity cards to target cash transfers and social entitlements to deserving recipients, allowing government to ‘see like a state’. Why is the politics of sight a crucial dimension of India’s new welfare architecture? How are the sources and mechanisms of corruption, transparency and accountability conceptualized, justified and operationalized by each side of this debate? And what have been the ramifications of these struggles to date? This paper addresses these questions by analyzing the assumptions, implementation and consequences of these two competing visions of social welfare in India.



Dr. Sanjay Ruparelia is an Associate Professor of Politics, and inaugural Jarislowsky Democracy Chair, at Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada. His books include *Divided We Govern: coalition politics in modern India* (Hurst and Oxford University Press, 2015), a study of the rise and fall of the broader Indian left; *The Indian Ideology: three responses to Perry Anderson* (editor; Permanent Black, 2015); and *Understanding India’s New Political Economy: a great transformation?* (co-editor; Routledge, 2011). Sanjay has also published a range of essays in edited volumes (Harvard, Oxford, Routledge), scholarly journals (*Comparative Politics*, *Economic & Political Weekly*, *International Journal for Politics, Culture and Society*, *Pacific Affairs and South Asia*) and periodical magazines (*Dissent*).

Monday, December 14, 2020

Time: 14:15 – 15:45 (CET)

Online -Via Zoom

Zook link: <https://bit.ly/37HQyTX>

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