

Advertisement of an MSc-Thesis in Human Geography

Framing rural development on a global level: the case of farmer suicides in India and their global representation

Problems of farmers in the South are increasingly on the agenda of critical groups in the North, some of them related to “transnational agrarian movements” (TAMs). TAMs and their allies often critique the dominant framework of neo-liberal economic restructuring of agrarian economies in the South and its driving forces in the North. Their idea of this global “peasant solidarity” is to give the problems of rural areas a common dimension, leading to a joint and global struggle for an alternative to the neoliberal path of development. TAM activists argue that they authentically know and represent the problems and concerns of poor farmers in the South, and that they are able to let their concerns flow from the local to the global stage smoothly and democratically. With this, the activists try to be perceived as the authentic voice of the peasants – particularly in case of critical situations.

This is the case in India as well, where farmers face a severe agrarian crisis – even culminating in farmer suicides, and where the farmers’ concerns are taken up by organisations in India, Europe and beyond.

The MSc thesis will focus on the European activists that talk about rural development in India in general and farmer suicides in particular. The aim of the MSc thesis is (a) to find out *who talks* (in Europe) about the farmer suicides in India and *how*, (b) to examine how European activists are *linked* to Indian activists and (c) how they *use the argument* of farmer suicides in their activism.

The thesis is linked to the Ph.D. research of Silva Lieberherr, who will support the Master student. Fieldwork (interviews with activists in Europe) is planned in summer 2012. Thesis supervision is with Silva Lieberherr and Urs Geiser.

Please apply to Silva (silva.lieberherr@geo.uzh.ch).