



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

### The Political Economy of ‘Traditional/Local’ Knowledges in the Global South *Existing and Possible Solutions to the Climate Crisis*



**Professor Madhulika Banerjee**

*University of Delhi*

Since the mid-1980s, some critics of the development discourse have advocated for the potential of ‘traditional/local/indigenous’ knowledges as ‘alternatives’ to destructive modern technologies. While on the decline globally, they have not only survived but thrived in the Global South, by adapting to, and often, by contesting the dominant terms of discourse of production, consumption, or distribution. In the last two centuries, as India transitioned into modernity and development, the experiences of application of ‘traditional/local’ knowledges and practices in areas such as medicine, agriculture, building techniques, water management, and production of textiles and pottery, have been remarkable. Especially how they evolved to serve large markets without giving in to the temptations of ‘scale’, creating sustainable mechanisms to prevent ‘abuse’ of natural resources, and dealing with budgetary constraints of the common consumer. Yet, because of their location at the margins of a ‘developing economy’ and assumed to be on the brink of extinction, there is little scholarly attention paid to them. Professor Banerjee offers a preliminary analysis formulated from insights from a broad range of ‘political-economy’ frameworks. She argues that in the framework of how solutions to the climate crisis are envisaged today—in terms of adaptation, mitigation, and resilience—these knowledges offer already available solutions best in terms of resilience and adaptation. She concludes by showing how this caters to a majority of the population in the world, and how they could be part of a portfolio of response types in the larger space of climate resilient technologies.

**Professor Madhulika Banerjee** teaches politics at the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi, and is currently a Fellow at The New Institute, Hamburg.

**Date:** Monday, May 15, 2023

**Time:** 14:00 – 16:00, CET

**Venue:** CATS; room 010.00.06; building 4130)