

City Lecture Series – **City Lights**

Concept Note and Schedule

The Calcutta Research Group (www.mcrgh.ac.in) proposes a series of 10 popular lectures, in collaboration with cultural and educational institutions in the the city of Kolkata, to explore various aspects of the city - as sites and citadels of modernity, in imagination and as destination, as geographical place and affective space, as sites of refuge and crime, and above all as site of contentious claim makings, revolts, new collectivities, trust, and mutual protection.

Drawing its name from Charlie Chaplin's iconic 1931 ode to the poetics of precarious lives lived in the interstices of wealth and prosperous spaces of the city, the lecture series *City Lights* will concern itself with the creation and recreation of the city in its phenomenological complexity, historical specificities of labour and wealth, its materiality and mobility, and with its present life as a palimpsest of the pasts, at the same time as a site of logistical reorientations and infrastructural activities as part of a frenzied and continuous envisioning of a future. The future of the urban takes place in the city through the interaction between technological innovation and imaginary planning, and enacted fantasies of change and enforced closures and reclamations of planned space. The urban future, governed and upended by politics of the city and the urban political, is also caught between aggression and care, violence of plans and regulations and the contingencies of the informal, visions of the future and imaginations of the past, between generations, between greed of property accentuated by practices of profit making and assertions of justice, care, and protection. Lectures in the series will reckon with the making and unmaking of the city - in history and space.

Organised between September 2024 and August 2025, *City Lights* will contribute to the burgeoning field of urban studies, bringing academic research in an accessible, popular mode, drawing on CRG's extensive corpus of research in the field. It will bring out the dynamics of the making and unmaking of the city.