ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the experience of working on a social movement and the methodological aspects which emerged during the process. The movement in question, known as the People’s Science Movement was started by a group of scientists, science writers, college teachers in the early 60s in Kerala with the avowed aim of ‘taking science to the people.’ Over the years the movement went on to intervene in the field of education, environment, heath, and local level planning in the state.

Here I look at how the process of carving out the object of study was a departure from the path usually followed in social anthropological fieldwork in the form of ‘an intensive study of small areas.’ In fact the carving out of an object of study was constituted through several active and deliberate strategies, practices and methods, due to a dispersal of sites. Therefore the dynamics of knowledge production became mediated and more nuanced than before. The paper will also talk about multiple methodologies in the production of ethnographies, and the politics of location in the making of anthropological knowledge.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Dr Shoma Choudhury Lahiri is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, St. Xavier’s College, Kolkata, India. She completed her post graduate and subsequently her doctoral studies from the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics. Her doctoral thesis, was on the People’s Science Movement in Kerala, where she looked at ways in which a social movement articulated a relation between science and society. At St Xavier’s College she teaches papers on Social Stratification, Social Challenges and Movements, Introducing India to undergraduate students. Her research interests lie in the field of Sociology of Science, Social Movements, Sociology of Environment and in Qualitative Research. She has just submitted a book manuscript on qualitative research methods and is now looking towards turning her doctoral work into a book.