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Title: Walking with the Subalterns': Infrastructural imaginations and ways of dialogic interpretations and representations

Authors: Sabhlok, Anu (/jspui/browse?type=author&value=Sabhlok%2C+Anu)

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Abstract: This paper foregrounds the work of the labourer in infrastructural projects. It draws upon over 6 years of ethnographic study with road construction labourers in the upper Himalayas positioning them as subaltern subjects within discourses of national development. While the subaltern studies project of the 1980s emphasized the 'writing back into history' of the non-elite, primarily peasants, tribal populations and women who too contributed to the imagination of the nation; at the contemporary moment where infrastructure defines national development we need to revisit the subaltern project to draw attention to the forgotten labourers who literally construct the nation and its infrastructure. After arguing for recognition of the labour as intrinsic to infrastructural and national constructions, I discuss possibilities for a dialogic engagement with the subaltern. Pushing the debates within subaltern geographies on the politics of representation, I argue that perhaps the way forward is not about giving voice but about making space.

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