Guest Editor's Note

Rajiv Thakur

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In focusing on **Emerging Themes and Perspectives in the Social Sciences**, the 75th anniversary issue of the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal* brings interconnected themes from diverse perspectives within the social sciences and compels us to rethink the change we are undergoing as a community in diverse geographic locations, exposing us to the challenges of our socioeconomic systems and creating an environment encouraging creativity and innovation.

This special issue comprises contributions from anthropologists, critical human and economic geographers, political scientists, and urban policy practitioners who raise several compelling issues around the narrative of common good, displacement and social justice, progress and regional inequalities, challenges experienced by women and femmes, emerging complexities in economic development among legacy cities of the midwestern United States, and the effects of climate change on human needs in the world’s largest democracy. The emphasis is not on technology, which is constantly changing, but on the circumstances that affect the way technological solutions are realized.

In the first article, Manindra Nath Thakur examines the rising tension between capitalism and democracy indicating that today’s so-called liberal capitalism has abandoned the principle of common good and its associated unlimited freedom of choice. Thakur asserts that the liberal capitalist order has met its demise and has been replaced with the rise of the techno-authoritarian state. If anything, liberal capital institutions have in the past few decades displayed a deeper systemic crisis of capitalism itself. Readers will find this article stimulating and its suggested consequences reverberating throughout the narrative of this special issue.

The second article, by M. Satish Kumar, addresses the dynamics of “progress” as experienced in both the colonial and postcolonial worlds with profound material consequences for the future of people, regions, and spaces. One finds common denominators between Kumar’s arguments and Manindra Nath Thakur’s narrative of liberal capitalism and inequalities as they came to be deeply entrenched in postcolonial worlds. As Kumar deconstructs progress between the colonial and postcolonial, he also reminds us why space matters and that we continue to live in a highly unequal world that is becoming more, rather than less, unequal.

The third article, by Tara Fitzgerald and Brij Maharaj, highlights the interrelated themes of displacement, social justice, urban rights, resettlement, and impoverishment which are often the product of neoliberal assault that Thakur refers to in his narrative. Fitzgerald and Maharaj review and reflect on these themes from the perspectives of urban rights in the context of 21st-century urban transformations, looking critically through the pioneering works of Henri Lefebvre’s “Right to the City” and David Harvey’s *Social Justice and the City*.

The next article’s focus is the narrative of long-term structural economic changes altering the landscape of economic development of select midwestern states in the United States. Neil Reid, Sujata Shetty, and Jane Adade discuss the emerging challenges and opportunities in legacy cities as communities experience population loss and overall
economic decline. This article makes for an interesting read as it articulates the strategies that are being employed by affected communities to build resilience.

In the next article, Jagan Shah takes a practitioner’s perspective on the challenges that governments face in the world’s largest democracy as climate risks and the imperatives of planning, financing, and managing climate transitions have forced us to rethink capacity building. Using a scenario-building methodology as well as personal experiences, Shah unveils the crisis in the context of India, highlighting the underestimation of scale and complexity of adaptive capacity needed. This article will make for wholesome reading as it connects the dots between adaptation, capacity building, and management of infrastructure and displays the gaps in the context of India.

The last article in this special issue is very befitting in terms of its content, as it resides at the intersection of some critical conversations in social sciences, such as marginalization, privilege and access in anthropological research, Black diasporic feminist thought, and systemic forms of discrimination within the academy. Meryleen Mena wears multiple hats which define her positionality as a researcher, and she thus does justice to the spaces of knowledge exchange as she reminds us that a researcher’s social, cultural, and subject positions affect the questions they ask and how they frame them, the issues they are drawn to, and how they contribute to the narrative.

The editorial team at MSSJ thanks the contributors of the articles of this special issue for their hard work in preparation of dedicated articles. Each one of them is an accomplished expert who has gone above and beyond in writing for this special issue reinforcing the interconnected nature of the topics they dealing with within social sciences. We hope you will find that this special issue raises some significant issues and questions even as we navigate challenging times for the social sciences in diverse geographies.

We are grateful to our copy editor, Stephanie Stringham, and our publishing advisor, Jonathan Bull, for their diligence and untiring support. Lastly, we thank Gregg Johnson, Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, for his support of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences, and Trisha Mileham, Dean of the Library at Valparaiso University, for her support for hosting the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal* on ValpoScholar.

Rajiv Thakur
Professor of Geography and AAAS S&T Policy Fellow
Guest Editor