

## **Launch of the Centre for Urban Studies, MSU Baroda, October 2015**

Ladies and gentlemen. Distinguished guests.

It is a great honour to be invited to speak as Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for International Affairs at the University of Leicester, along with my colleague Dr Prashant Kidambi from our Centre for Urban History. Leicester's Centre, which opened 30 years ago, will twin with MS University of Baroda's new research Centre for Urban Studies that we are gathered here today to launch.

This partnership between MSU and Leicester has developed over a 3-year period and has been an exemplary model of what universities should seek from international collaboration. The two institutions have learnt from each other intellectually, culturally and practically. We have come to a deep understanding of the breadth of our subjects, as well as the urban environments in which our two historic universities have grown over the 20th and early 21st centuries.

Our collaboration on Urban Studies not only builds on our mutual research and teaching strengths, but also addresses national policy priorities and basic human needs in India and South Asia. This is also a priority area for Europe and the UK, as the European Union seeks to better understand the movement of peoples across the continent and the consequences of migration and settlement on different kinds of cities.

The future work of the new Centre for Urban Studies will help us deepen our regional and international networks, inspiring comparative models that respond to historical and cultural differences, but that are united in our mutual concern for heritage, sustainability and identity.

We are very grateful to the British Council (India) for granting us funding for our 'Urban Sustainability in South Asia' project via its Knowledge Economy Partnership scheme. This scheme provides seed funding for research and enterprise projects between Indian and British universities. This funding has enabled MSU and Leicester to conduct business and planning meetings and to hold two interdisciplinary workshops on the built environment (in Baroda last December) and migration (hosted by Leicester's School of Museum Studies and the Centre for Urban History this March), as well as this historic launch today.

The collaboration has allowed us to build alliances and friendships across our arts, humanities and social-science subjects. It has also enabled us to explore future possibilities, including triangulating research initiatives with one of our mutual partners, the University of Buffalo in New York, which also has strengths in urban studies, and in potentially developing a project on diabetes which would link Leicester's Diabetes Research Centre and the Department of Biochemistry at MSU. Leicester's work on diabetes within local British Asian communities is well known and has led to an award from the National Institute of Health Research. Further investment would help us extend the research into the Gujarat region and explore the impact of urban living on health.

The partnership is also very important for increasing mobility between the two universities, via undergraduate student exchange as Leicester launches its new BA degree in Global Studies in 2016, in opening up new international opportunities at Masters and PhD level, and for staff visits as we explore new research projects on the Gujarat diaspora which joins Baroda and Leicester in a unique transnational story.

I want to close my speech by thanking a number of people on behalf of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Leicester, Professor Paul Boyle. Our sincere thanks go to the Chancellor of MSU, **Her Highness Rajmata Gaekwad**; the Acting Vice-Chancellor of MSU Professor **Parimal Vyas**, and **Manjula Rao** from the British Council for attending this ceremony.

Prashant and I also wish to thank the MSU colleagues who we worked with most closely: Professor **Sharad Bansal** from Commerce, Professor **Adhya Saxena** from History, Professor **Deeptha Achar** from English, Professor **Krishnan Krishnan** from Archaeology and Dr **Jyotsna Phanse** from German. This range of disciplines gives you a sense of the rich intellectual texture of our project. Lastly, I would like to thank all the MSU students who have looked after us so well on our four visits to Baroda.

This collaboration has been an inspiration to us all. I look toward to deepening our friendship and cooperation over the coming years.

**Professor Martin Halliwell**  
**University of Leicester**