

Alumnus of the Month

Understanding the various dimensions of property rights, whether as land or water rights, has been the focus of Varun's work for the last six years. Beginning with his thesis during his MPP, which highlighted linkages between irrigation management and property ownership in rural Maharashtra, Varun has sought to focus on the centrality of property to the lived experience of human beings.

After his graduation from the MPP program worked for a short time at B.PAC, a Bengaluru-based urban advocacy group. He then joined the Centre for Land Governance at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, where he undertook research and consultancy projects. His work at IHS focused on a wide range of topics from land records modernization and real estate regulatory practice to customary land rights. This work materialized in policy advisories to state governments, research papers, reports and policy briefs. Since leaving IHS in 2019, Varun has been researching the ways in which the social function of property institutions can be preserved in urban settings. This has culminated in a project funded by the Nudge Foundation, where Dr. Sony Pellissery and Varun are working collaboratively.

The MPP program at NLSIU helped nurture Varun's intention to build a career in academic research and continues to be a base he keeps returning to. The imaginative pedagogy at the MPP program is what helped him to look beyond the bounds of his earlier training in law. The research methods courses in particular were "eye-opening" to the potential for interdisciplinary research between law and the social sciences. Similarly, his foray into human geography was initiated by elective courses on Land Policy and Urban Planning and Law which were a part of the MPP curriculum.

Varun has been accepted at the PhD program at the Geography Department at the University of British Columbia, due to begin in September. His intended research seeks to highlight how diverse property institutions affect the social citizenship of various urban population groups.



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Master's in Public Policy '16