

Two-day Conference
on
On Borders and Borderlands:
Negotiating the ‘Margins’ under Globalization

February 7-8, 2017

Concept Note

A contemporary review of critical social theory suggests that there has been a ‘spatial turn’ in social sciences. Or, to put it differently, in recent times, there is a ‘re-assertion of space’ in social theory. In today’s globalized world, as social relations becomes more interconnected on a global scale, it ‘problematizes the spatial parameters in which it occurs’. As a result, ‘space ceases to be a static platform but itself becomes a constitutive dimension which is historically produced, reconfigured and transformed’. This thereby, gives rise to new spatial imaginations. Spatial analysis thus allows social science to escape the state-centric ‘*territorial trap*’ and move beyond the statist paradigm i.e. it provides social science the required ‘alibi’ to escape the bounded block entities of Cartesian imaginary. In such conditions, a critical question is whether under globalization the emerging spatial imaginaries and a sense of escaping the ‘territorial trap’ converge, overlap or diverge for the state, the market and the people (communities).

In this regards, the borders and borderlands seem to be a relevant ‘site’ for examining such a phenomenon. Borders have long being regarded as physical lines of demarcation, as a grouping mechanism that marks the ‘other’ from the immediate ‘we’. Can spatial analysis provide borders and the borderlands a more nuanced meaning as transitional spaces beyond the static, deterministic notion of political geography? Contrarily, have borders become more open and dismantled under globalization or they has been re-enforced in the name of security and order giving rise to the entire border regime through immigration controls and border check posts? Has borders been transformed as a *process* signifying the gateways for trade and commerce while they continue to persist as a rigid *institution* disabling movement of people from one part to another? More specifically do they restrict the movement of a specific group of people thus hegemonizing the legal/illegal border crossing binary? Has borders and borderlands moved beyond the territorialist epistemology of state defined markers under globalization or they continue to be peripheral elements in social science analysis? Moreover, are there any difference in different borderlands around the world regarding the interpretation of space and social relations in their respective locations?

Under contemporary globalization very few studies are available on the emerging issues of borders and borderlands as social and communitarian spaces other than being politico-economic

spaces as well. Papers with strong empirical core or original theoretical contributions only will be considered. The conference proposes to invite papers on the following and related themes:

1. **Concepts and issues on Borders and borderlands:** Theoretical understandings on borders and borderlands and the changes therein as part of emerging history. What role does space and region formations play in analysing borders and borderlands? Do the portrayal of borders and borderlands as cartographic markers often miss the social space aspects associated with the same?
2. **Analysing borders and borderlands in different locations:** Studying different borders and borderlands (both international and within the nation) with special emphasis on South Asian and Southeast Asia. Is there a dichotomy in understanding internal and international borders and borderlands?
3. **Borders and borderlands as transitional spaces:** our understanding related to borders has moved beyond the static and deterministic notions of political geography. But, have they become transitional spaces amongst all nation states around the world? Or, they are differentially manifested in different locations of the globe?
4. **Borders and borderlands as gateways:** contemporary globalization has re-enforced capitalist spatiality where borders are imagined as pathways for trade, commerce and connectivity. Under such a scenario is there a hiatus between capitals' imaginaries of space vis-à-vis the communities, particularly in the borderlands?
5. **Bordered spaces:** social relations in bordered spaces can be differentiated between the borders that are 'seen' and those which are unseen but 'felt' e.g. areas under Inner Line Permit, ethnic homelands, the river islands (*chars*), enclaves, ghettos etc. What role do social relations play in determining the bordered spaces and in the process how are social relations shaped by such a phenomenon?
6. **Transboundary issues:** our understanding of borders and borderlands are shaped by cartographic representations which do not necessarily overlap with natural entities such as rivers, desert, mountain ranges, mangroves, swamps etc. They thereby have transboundary spill overs. What has been the mechanism to deal with transboundary issues in the contemporary era?
7. **Borders and borderlands as margins:** from the perspective of the state, borders and borderlands are regarded as peripheral zones. Do the people and communities in the borderlands also perceive the state in similar terms? How are these intersections of margins negotiated? Does this lead to reimagining of the borderland and borders itself?