

MIND THE GAP
CONVERSATIONS ON SPACE IN ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY
AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

Venue: Shiv Nadar University, Greater Noida

Date: 9-11 August 2020



Above: ‘*Space* before and after the establishment of Shiv Nadar University’

Space has ceased to be a mere metaphor in historical studies and has acquired a new salience in archaeological studies. The comfort of temporal distance, so close to the heart of the historian and the archaeologist, is being challenged. Today it is agreed that space is as much a determinant for comprehending techniques of studying the past, as it is to discerningly explore the embeddedness of disciplines like archaeology and history in temporal conceptualizations. For

once, historians and archaeologists are critically aware that the temporal and the spatial dimensions are more than simply the perspective to be followed. What were temporal quests are now spatial practices—archival for history and the field, for archaeology. In archaeology, the conceptual understanding of space emerges through the practice of field work, which includes surveys and excavations. Traditionally, exercises such as mapping sites, distributions of artefacts, architecture, and landscape changes have informed archaeologists about land use, occupation histories of settlements, and available resources that were potentially exploited in the past. Recent theoretical developments in archaeology, mainly inspired from anthropological theory and critical geography, have made archaeologists conscious of interpretive frames that allow for material pasts to be framed within spatialized pasts. In other words, behaviour patterns are interpreted as having spatial logics, in addition to and different from, temporal logics. This spatial turn has allowed archaeologists to investigate people's perceptions of both the natural and the built landscapes.

Individually, history and archaeology have responded to the spatial turn by engaging with the global turn. Regional pasts of archaeology have ceased to be a deterrent for global commitments to heritage questions. But the question that these developments beseech us to answer is how this spatial orientation has revised historical or archaeological practices of inquiring into the social relations of knowledge production. Has it, in response to the spatial turn, been able to go beyond spatial connections and ask how it informs the respective framing of the social? This conference aims at bringing the two disciplines to speak to each other, in studying space as a disciplinary object of inquiry. We also recognize that conversations on space are happening in other social science disciplines, and thus, we invite engagement from these disciplines to join the conversation.

Archaeological terms that are explicitly spatial such as levels, layers and landscapes, after Michel Foucault's intervention, are also discursive formations. However, we need to be cautious about what Henri Lefebvre calls the fetishization of the 'philosophico-epistemological notion of space' where the 'mental realm' envelops the 'social and physical' ones. In this collective exercise, we aim to engage with space not as a metaphor but as a constitutive factor in the production of social science knowledge.

Themes (this is not an exhaustive list)

- 1) Mobility and Urbanity
- 2) Place and Place-making
- 3) Regions and Landscapes
- 4) Mapping and Topology
- 5) Borders and Frontiers

Programme of the conference

9 August 2020: Session opens with keynote by Professor Lynn Meskell (Shirley and Leonard Ely Professor of the Humanities and Social Sciences in the Department of Anthropology, Stanford University and AD White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University), India International Centre, New Delhi.

10, 11 August 2020: Panel presentations at Shiv Nadar University campus, Greater NOIDA.

11 August 2020: Valedictory address by Professor Sudipta Sen (Professor, Department of History, University of California at Davis, USA)

For Participants:

We invite faculty and research scholars to send their **abstracts (300 words) by 15 May 2020**. The email ID to send these and any queries is: spaceconference2020@gmail.com

Selected participants will be informed over email by **31 May 2020**.

Accommodation and local transportation will be provided to all participants on Shiv Nadar University's campus.

Limited travel funds will be available to research scholars pursuing their PhDs.