



International Interdisciplinary Conference

on

“Beyond Borders and Boundaries: Imaginings and Representations”

Jointly organised by

CoHaB (Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging), European Union, Marie Curie Actions ITN programme, University of Mumbai, Mumbai

and

CASII (Centre for Advanced Studies in India), Bhuj, India

2nd, 3rd and 4th March 2015

“A boundary is not that at which something stops but as the Greeks recognized a boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.” - Martin Heidegger¹

Borders have been seen by social scientists and literary writers as arbitrary lines which function as much at the level of the socio-cultural and psychic as they do at the level of the political (Brah, 1996; Rushdie, 2003)². Being able to or not able to cross such dividing lines/borders is also an indicator of power matrices.

Empires and then Nation States have drawn arbitrary lines to keep in or keep out people. Those who lived within the borders of the Roman Empire were Romans and those without it were the Barbarians. This creation of the self and the other are binary oppositions that lead to self-magnifying positive images of civilized, cultured and superior beings as opposed to the negative representations of uncivilized, savage and inferior peoples. European colonization of the non-Western world also resulted in mappings and drawings of borders, often arbitrary between cultures, which continue to haunt the postcolonial world across Asia and Africa.

¹ Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking”, in Poetry, Language, Thought. Trans. Albert Hofstadter, Harper and Row, 1975:154.

² See Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Routledge:London, 1996; Salman Rushdie, *Step Across this Line: Collected Non-Fiction 1992-2002*, Vintage: London, 2003.

Borders create simplistic images of spaces which are otherwise multidimensional and complex. The discourse of space or the discourses of postcolonial and postmodern geographies have been attempted by several theorists today (Soja,1989)³ Borders and boundaries today have become the interstices through which cultures and societies build metaphorical bridges (Bhabha, 1994)⁴.

International Airways, railways, bus services which operate across borders and boundaries often create geo-political ‘road maps’ which transform lives, economies and cultures. They map for the world today metaphors of shortened spaces and bridge interchanges.

Cross border trade has from very early times crossed borders not just in the literal sense but also in terms of culture and character. The Silk Road bridged distances between Rome, India and China. The caravans that operated on this road ultimately lead to the establishment of communities of traders from different trading countries, creating diasporic settlements too.

The socio-cultural, racial and economic trajectories of the diaspora challenge the very existence of borders as diasporics live across borders as much as they live within borders. Colonial borders often result in Postcolonial conflicts and trauma. Cultures ruptured and divided by colonial borders also continue to leak into one another and show how these border lines are often only ‘shadow lines’ (Ghosh, 1988)⁵.

Even within modern National States internal borders can become vexed issues as within a federal set-up, individual provinces/states challenge the federal sketching of borders and demand different re-orientations that are more linguistically and ethnically inclusive of the aspirations of those peoples who live within those internal borders.

Post-national and Postmodern societies also live across borders in transnational spaces which are the result of the globalization of the economy and its impact on not just national economies but also on cultures, languages and lives that elides borders.

In the context of societal mores too there are border crossings when women step across patriarchal borders and boundaries into wider spaces. There are also class and caste boundaries which are challenged in ideological and activist terms.

This interdisciplinary conference seeks to study these different aspects of living, working and writing across borders from the following perspectives:

- 1. Crossing Cultural and Literary Borders and Boundaries**
- 2. Trading across Borders and Boundaries - Economic Perspectives**
- 3. Colonial Borders and Postcolonial Conflicts**
- 4. Diasporas Old and New: Living Across Borders and Boundaries**
- 5. Negotiating Internal Borders and Boundaries**
- 6. Rethinking Borders and Boundaries in Postmodern Spaces**
- 7. Stepping Across *Lakshman Rekhas* – Gender Boundaries**
- 8. Going Beyond Caste and Tribe Boundaries**
- 9. Bridging Distances between the Humanities and the Sciences**
- 10. National and International Legislations on Borders**

³ See Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, Verso: London, 1989

⁴ See Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, Routledge: London, 1994.

⁵ Amitav Ghosh, *Shadow Lines*, Ravi Dayal Publishers: Delhi, 1988.

Keynote Speakers:

Reputed experts in the area from India and abroad will be keynote speakers to the conference. Some of the confirmed keynote speakers so far are Avtar Brah, Klaus Stierstorfer, Henry Schwarz, Harish Trivedi, Armin Wandrewala and Chandrakant Puri.

Other Speakers:

The organisers also welcome research scholars and academics from India and around the world to the conference. They should send their abstracts to the organisers and if selected they will get 20 minutes for their presentations and 10 minutes for questions on their papers. Last date for receipt of abstracts is 15th December 2014. Acceptance will be conveyed by 15 January 2015. Abstracts should be sent to Professor Sridhar Rajewaran with a copy marked to Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha.

Registration Fees:

There will be no registration fees for keynote speakers. All other participants will have to pay Registration Fees:

Enquiries regarding payment of Registration Fees and booking of accommodation should be sent to the conference directors.

Venue:

ICSSR Conference Hall, University of Mumbai, Kalina Campus, Mumbai 400098, India.

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Mumbai
21st September 2014