



96 Years

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INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM

# PANDEMIC AND THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE

INDRAPRASTHA COLLEGE FOR WOMEN  
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI  
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

□ □ JANUARY 23 - FEBRUARY 27, 2021  
□ □ ON EVERY SATURDAY  
□ □ @ 2.30 PM | ON GOOGLE MEET

## CONCEPT NOTE

*"The geography of social structure is a geography of class relations, not just a map of social classes; just as the geography of the economy should be a map of economic relations stretched over space, and not just, for instance, a map of different types of jobs. Most generally, 'the spatial' is constituted by the interlocking of 'stretched-out' social relations."*

*- Doreen Massey*

For several centuries space was an unattended analytical category. It was through the consistent efforts of the critical thinkers of the 20th century both social sciences and humanities, that one witnessed, what is known as, the 'spatial turn'. The globalization paradigm, once again, brought back the myth of the death of space- 'the irrelevance of space' and the 'death of distance', the 'end of geography'. It reinforced the understanding of space as flat. But space did not wither away; the attempt rather appeared to marginalize the spatial questions. While space as an analytical category can be set aside it cannot be dismantled forever. As Massey put it, by invoking Raymond Williams, "you're taking a train across the landscape- you're not traveling across a dead flat surface that is space: you're cutting across a myriad of stories going on. So instead of space being this flat surface it's like a pincushion of a million stories: if you stop at any point in that walk there will be a house with a story." Therefore, "space is not a scientific object removed from ideology or politics. It has always been political and strategic. There is an ideology of space. Because space, which seems homogeneous, which appears as a whole in its objectivity, in its pure form, such as we determine it, is a social product" as argued by Lefebvre. Space and time are not neutral, preexisting frames for human events, or the way in which we experience other things. Space and time are produced and shaped through actions and reactions, experienced in themselves.

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has posed threats not only to the health system but also to the spatial structures of the contemporary world order. The mighty capital and state came to a standstill for a while. This entirely endogenous pandemic, as pointed out by Desai, has brought neoliberal capitalism as a form of social production to the point where it has no other way of keeping its workers alive than shutting itself down. Worse, it cannot open back up without risking new outbreaks. This was a shock to the imagination for establishing 'an unbalanced world by reshaping the economic geography' as envisioned by the World Development Report 2009. The report urges for promoting transformations along the dimensions of higher densities as cities grow; shorter distances as workers and businesses migrate closer to density; and fewer divisions as nations lower their economic borders and enter world markets to take advantage of scale and trade in specialized products. The pandemic posed threats to all the three dimensions density, distance, and division.

The vulnerabilities inherent in the cities- the engines of modern economic growth and in the world of work got exposed by the pandemic. The cities emerged as the centers of the pandemic crisis and vulnerability across the world, including in India. The mass exodus of workers from the metropolitan cities of India back to their hometowns and villages was manifestation of this vulnerability. This further unraveled the dehumanized world of work erected by the neoliberal capitalism over the decades. In this world order, whereas the salaried middle class had a choice to work from home with all its regressive implications, the informal workers' options were limited between pandemic, destitution, and death. In this context, the Department of Geography of Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi proposes to host a Lecture Series on the 'Pandemic and the Production of Space'. The broader objective of the series would be to historicize the present crisis and link it with the process of production and organization of space.

# Program Schedule

## 23 January, 2021

02.30 pm: Introduction

**Dr. Meena Bhargava**

OSD, Department of Geography, Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi

02.40 pm: **Welcome Address**

**Prof. Babli Moitra Saraf**

Principal, Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi

02.50 pm: **Inaugural Keynote Address**

**Prof. Janaki Nair**

Former Professor

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

## Panels

### 30 January, 2021

02.30 pm: 'Transient Labour Spaces in Geographies of Production: The India Context'

**Prof. Sucharita Sen**

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

### 06 February, 2021

02.30 pm: 'Visions of the City in India in a Historical Perspective'

**Dr. Nandini Gooptu**

University of Oxford, UK

### 13 February, 2021

02.30 pm: 'The City, the Countryside, and the Spaces in Between: Labour Migration as Space Making'

**Dr. Subir Sinha**

SOAS, University of London, UK

### 20 February, 2021

02.30 pm: 'Caste and Coloniality in the Global Urban: Notes on Pandemics and the Making of Calcutta/Kolkata'

**Dr. Srilata Sircar**

King's College London, UK

### 27 February, 2021

02.30 pm: 'Gay Men and the Pandemic: Negotiating Everyday Geographies'

**Dr. Dhiren Borisa**

O. P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat

01.30 pm: **Vote of Thanks**



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