

*Call for Papers*

**National Conference  
on**

**Space and Territoriality  
in North East India**

*Exploring New Avenues  
in Border Thinking*

**9- 10 February 2023**

**Govt. T. Romana College Campus, Aizawl**



**To be organised by**

**Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research**

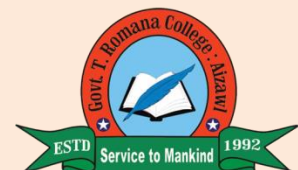
**Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi**

**&**

**Department of Political Science**

**Government T. Romana College**

**Aizawl, Mizoram**



## **Concept Note**

Humans have an intrinsic need for space, whether physical or emotional. The notions of space and territoriality are deeply imbued in the processes of identity making throughout history and thus are inherently linked. Space has multiple meanings in our lives as we make sense of the daily mundane realities of our existence, from home to workplace and from rural to urban. In fact, as Henri Lefebvre argues, “we are confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within”. In contemporary times, both space and territory evoke varying sentiments for different individuals, groups and communities and hence understanding these concepts often require specific contextualization. The use of advanced technology in the current age has also contributed to the changing notions of space and territory.

Today, diverse spaces and territories are easily bridged and connected through advanced communication devices using the internet. Modern modes of transportation by road, air and sea also make it simpler to commute and travel between physical places and locations within a shorter duration. At the same time, new social and cultural spaces are digitally constructed, bringing together diverse peoples, opinions and ideologies especially among the younger generations. Along with these, old cultural norms and practices are questioned and debated upon. However, the underlying tensions and contestations within the frameworks of border and territoriality continue to linger and persist. This is because borders marking geographical spaces are often transcended and territories encroached. This phenomenon is familiar particularly in remote outlying areas inhabited by communities essentially considered to be outside of the ‘mainstream’. Such community arguably occupies “a distant dot in the national mindspace” due to their marginal existence as viewed from the so-called mainland.

In the North East part of India, the term ‘territory’ is almost coterminous with identity and is also closely associated with the notion of indigeneity and homeland. At the same time, residency and citizenship are also frequently defined in terms of legality and of one’s belongingness to a particular territory- which could be a village, town, district or state- depending on the situation. State policies and government actions are often shaped and determined by such definitions and redefinitions from time to time as seen in the recent undertaking of National Register of Citizens in Assam as well as the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019 wherein ‘indigenous voices’ from the region protested against the latter in unison.

Territory is a deeply contested notion and territoriality can be said to be its outcome to the extent that it is understood as one’s identification with and claims over a fixed territorial space in line with Sanjib Baruah’s argument. The erstwhile culture of raids amongst tribesmen to preserve their traditional hunting grounds against colonial intrusions and

advances subsequently paved the way for the cartographic mapping and indirect administration of their hill territories by the British. However, from being dubbed ‘Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas’ to the granting of autonomous district statuses and statehoods to the same, ethnic, territorial and political landscapes in the North East have undergone massive transformations in the contemporary times.

In this context, territoriality also stands in contrast to the recent reconceptualisation of the North Eastern region from an erstwhile ‘frontier zone’ to a ‘gateway zone’, or as a transborder and trans-regional space due to the fluid and porous nature of its borders. The colonial and post-colonial reordering of indigenous spaces created “new notions of spatial identity” and “people living within such re-territorialized spaces often have conflicted relationship to these state-defined lines”. It also resulted in the division and fragmentation of common ethnic tribes into multiple states, countries and/or nationalities. This has compelled many to routinely navigate the ‘in-between spaces’ while being labelled ‘outsiders’ or ‘foreigners’ based on nationality laws. Thus, ethnic identity, citizenship and nationality are continuously in flux in these newly carved transborder spaces.

Remarkably, the main concern in contemporary North East continues to be territorial spaces and their juxtaposition against ethnic and cultural landscapes. The post-colonial reorganization of the region, into hill districts, union territories and states had created a sense of new territorial attachments. The hill-plain divide embedded in the colonial philosophy of ‘inner lines’ continues to influence much of the social and political dynamics in certain parts of the North East while fervent demands for autonomous economic and political spaces continue to persist in other areas. As Willem van Schendel observes, territoriality is inherently conflictual and tends to generate rival territorialities which necessitate the social reproduction of borders and territorial spaces.

Despite extensive geographical and cultural inter-penetrations, there remains a lingering sense of insecurity and protectionism amongst the states and communities of the region that often escalated to expressions of xenophobia and even outright conflict. How, then, do we make sense of the complexities and contestations underlying the concepts of border and territory particularly in the context of North East India? Is it possible to reconcile colonial and post-colonial practices of spatiality with post-modern border thinkings? Can we, as individuals, tribes and communities, rapidly undergoing socio-cultural and political changes derive local meanings from our new technology-induced spatial interactions and the blurring of territorial lines in a highly globalized world that we currently live in?

**In exploring these questions in the backdrop of the above discussion, we invite interested scholars, thinkers and researchers working on related fields to submit original abstracts of about 250 words dealing with, but not limited to, any of the following pertinent themes.**

- ❖ Colonial Cartographies
- ❖ Post-Colonial Boundaries
- ❖ Spatiality and Technology
- ❖ Marginality and Space
- ❖ Hill-Plain Dichotomy
- ❖ Identity and Belonging
- ❖ Border Contestations
- ❖ Tribalism and Territory
- ❖ Citizenship and Immigration
- ❖ Regionalism and Autonomy
- ❖ Conflict and Territoriality

### **Submission Guidelines**

1. The manuscript submitted must be in **MS Word format** and contain the title, name of author(s), affiliations and detailed contact information of corresponding author.
2. Full length papers should ideally be between **6000- 8000 words** including references, notes, tables and graphs.
3. The **referencing style** of *Economic and Political Weekly* must be strictly followed.
4. All incoming manuscripts will be thoroughly evaluated by a **screening committee** based on a set of criteria including quality of the content, relevance to the theme or sub-theme etc and subjected to a similarity/plagiarism test which should not be more than 10%.
5. Only selected manuscripts will be considered for publication in an **edited volume**.

### **Travel Grant**

A limited number of travel grants, including airfare for out-station participants, will be provided on a selective basis. For joint/co-authored papers, only one author will be accommodated due to limited funds while participation at one's own expenses is welcome.

### **Important Deadlines**

- ❖ Last date for submission of abstracts/ proposals: **21 December 2022**
- ❖ Notification of shortlisted abstracts: **31 December 2022**
- ❖ **Submission of Final Papers (mandatory for presentation)- 31 January 2023**
- ❖ Submission of abstracts and full papers should be made to Dr. CV Lalmalsawmi [ceevy\\_ms@yahoo.com](mailto:ceevy_ms@yahoo.com) & Dr. Joseph K. Lalfakzuala [jkzuala@gmail.com](mailto:jkzuala@gmail.com)