

Limits of Archives: Mapping Urban Spaces in Modern South Asia
One-Day International Conference
Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta

R-1, Baishnabghata-Patuli Township
Kolkata 700094
SEMINAR ROOM 2
31 January 2020

Modern cities and urban spaces have set unique challenges to archivists and archival practices globally. Archivists, in response, have reimagined their institutional mandates, articulated new categories, reconfigured their own internal hierarchies, learned methodologically from quotidian urban practices such as *flânerie* to understand and map urban formations. Engagements with archives have led to the articulation of new categories and such categories have critically informed the way we look at cities and suburban spaces. Archives thus underpin both modes of surveillance and resistance, and the agenda of research and agitation. However, self-reflexive archivists are acutely aware of the limits of their explanatory powers and this sense of lack has often pushed them to redesign the very material infrastructure of archives, and legislate new institutional norms of use and access. Consequently, these redefinitions have led archivists to engage with newer technologies and the emergent legal regimes that seek to govern them. Here, the local context comes to critically define an otherwise global phenomenon, and the registers of identitarian differences such as race, caste, gender, and class inflect and play on these processes. In this day-long international conference on the *Limits of Archives: Mapping Urban Spaces in Modern South Asia*, we seek to engage with some of the questions that have been outlined above. Our participants would draw on their historical and anthropological research on urban formations in South Asia such as Jaipur, Karachi, Kolkata, and Thane to reflect on how their respective projects have pushed the limits of urban studies and on the methodological challenges they have faced in seeking to understand cities and suburban formations. The event would also feature presentations on how archival practices focused on urban spaces have sought to use new technologies and modalities of record-keeping to build new material infrastructure for archives, and to address the critical question of the ethical imperative.

PROGRAM

10.30 am – 10.40 am: Welcome Address: **Rosinka Chaudhuri**, Director, CSSSC

10.40 am – 10.50 am: Introductory Remarks: **Rajarshi Ghose**, CSSSC

TEA

11.00 am – 12.10 pm: Panel 1

Documenting Urban Spaces

Chair: **Manabi Majumdar**, CSSSC

Laura A. Ring, University of Chicago: *The Politics of Documentation: Thinking Beyond Conflict in Karachi*

Priya Sangameswaran, CSSSC: *Unraveling the Bundle of Urban Property Rights: Multiple Claim(ant)s from a Mortgage in Thane*

12:20 pm – 13.30 pm: Panel 2

Cities and the Question of Belonging

Chair: **Tapati Guha-Thakurta**, CSSSC

Garima Dhabhai, Presidency University: *Imaginations of Heritage: Collectors and Chroniclers of Jaipur*

Zaid Al Baset, St. Xavier's College (Autonomous): *Performing Class, Inhabiting Religion: Middle Class Belonging in Contemporary Kolkata*

13.30 pm – 14.30 pm: **LUNCH**

14.30 pm – 15.40 pm: Panel 3

Reimagination of Archival Practices

Chair: **Rosinka Chaudhuri**, CSSSC

Sudeshna Banerjee, Jadavpur University: *Archiving Kolkata Differently: How different is it, really!*

Abhijit Gupta, Jadavpur University: *Print into Digital: Gains and Losses*

15.40 pm - 16.20 pm: Presentation

Archival Imperatives - what we record and what we don't: Notes on the *CSSSC Archive* and *Endangered Archives Program*, *British Library* collaborations

Chair: **Debdatta Chowdhury**

Rajarshi Ghose, CSSSC and **Tapan Paul**, CSSSC

16.20 pm - 16.30 pm: **TEA**

16.30 pm - 17.30 pm: Panel Discussion

Challenges of "Open Access": Reflections on the *South Asia Materials Project*, *South Asia Open Archives*, and the *CSSSC Archive*

Chair: **Prachi Deshpande**, CSSSC

Panelists:

Ellen Ambrosone, Princeton University

Abhijit Bhattacharya, CSSSC

Laura A. Ring, University of Chicago

Mara Thacker, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

17:30 pm - 17:35 pm: Vote of Thanks
