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## Editorial Note: Reconceptualising Civilisation

The term civilisation, from an etymological perspective, emerges from the Latin word ‘civitas’ meaning a city. There have been innumerable attempts to define and re-define the concept of ‘civilisation’ over the course of last few centuries. The concept, in its modern connotations, traces its origins around the Renaissance period of European history which saw the ‘emergence of European self-perception’ (Bugge, 2000). The gradual development of European self-perception and their perceptions on the cultures of Asia and Africa was shaped by the cultural interactions enabled by the trade and commercial activities of the several ‘companies’ and trading firms. This exchange combined with academic contemplations gave rise to a complex idea of civilisation by the mid-eighteenth century, a century marked by the development of Enlightenment philosophy.

The concept of civilisation came to be based on three dimensions *viz.* universal, spatial, and temporal (Bugge, 2000) (Ifversan, 1998). However, the conceptual understanding of civilisation was rooted primarily in a European perspective, or what has been broadly termed later from the late nineteenth century as the ‘Western’ perspective. With the onset of colonisation, in its multifarious forms, the concept of civilisation often got negative connotations as it was interpreted or rather, mis-interpreted with racial and spatial ideas of superiority and inferiority. The hegemony of this thought process continues to pose challenges to our attempts for unravelling the conceptual meaning of civilisation.

In the last few decades there has been an increase in social conflicts, wars between nations, attempts to bring uniformity in place of pluralities. These setbacks to our social co-existence are in stark contrast to the advances made by the human species in the domain of science and technology, such as the advent of several Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and advancements in Machine Learning (ML). As human beings who are acquiescent of these contradictions, it is our duty to engage into a dialogue on reconceptualising ‘civilisation,’ the scope of which in the recent past has narrowed to alleys of clash and conflict of civilisations (Huntington, 1993), and the ideas of peace, cooperation and co-existence seem to be lost in the maze of human civilisational journeys.

It is pertinent to note that the initial conception of civilisation was not only Eurocentric but also indirectly implied human exceptionalism. Thus, the exercise of re-conceptualising civilisation will also have to involve recognising the role of the non-human species to make the concept more inclusive.

At this moment of our social existence, there is a need to discuss and debate on the questions of ‘What Now?’ and ‘What Next?’ in the context of civilisations; its evolution and its future. The inaugural issue of Transarea Journal aims to address these questions, and seeks to initiate a critical inquiry in the diverse fields affecting civilisations. We attempt to understand the past, present, and future trajectories of civilisations and strive to critically examine the concept to expand pathways which will broaden the field of study.

Transarea Journal attempts to reconceive the traditional approaches to area studies and move in a new direction of understanding the inter-connected nature of disciplines, area and the fluidity of ideas. It marks a shift in examining the concepts of area studies and civilisations

from its colonial past to its labyrinthian existence. The journal encourages multifaceted approaches that bridge the narrow alleys of academic disciplines, geographical domains, and methodologies. The inaugural issue of this journal endeavours to reconceptualise civilisation in multifarious ways, and to problematise the concept for a nuanced understanding of the present and the future. I am grateful to all the distinguished scholars who have contributed to the inaugural issue of Transarea Journal.

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