



Call for Papers

Young South Asia Scholars' Meet (Y-SASM 2020) Geneva (Switzerland), 3-5 June 2020

Everyday State

Everyday forms of state formation reveal how the state manifests itself while also elucidating how people engage with the state. This conference seeks to unpack the role and authority of the state in everyday lives, with a particular focus on South Asia. A careful unpacking of the everyday state, through an interdisciplinary approach, would enable us to gauge the complexity and paradoxes of state power, and the ways in which it affects everyday life and the art of governance.

Current developments in South Asia suggest the need to pay close attention to not only the processes in which contemporary forms of Foucauldian governmentality may manifest but also expose the limits, fissures and frictions of governmental rationality. The history and specificities of South Asia provide ample scope to investigate the distinct yet intertwined means through which colonial and post-colonial everyday state has reconstituted itself alongside the development of peculiar kinds of governmental rationality.

Consequently, for the 6th Y-SASM conference, we invite papers that examine and explore the strategies, processes and practices employed by the everyday state— both material and symbolic. The papers should also draw attention to how populations resist, negotiate and/or intervene in such processes and practices.

In recent decades, scholars have approached the study and theorisation of the everyday state by focusing on the production and circulation of bureaucratic documents, the role of archival records in categorising populations and rendering them visible, the flow of labour and capital, the conceptualization and nature of citizenship, and the ways in which colonial institutions materialized the state, resulting in the production of specific kinds of knowledge. With a focus on South Asia, Y-SASM 2020 hopes to provide an interdisciplinary forum for a vibrant discussion on these issues by building upon, and extending, the existing scholarship. Therefore, we invite PhD candidates, early career scholars, and postdoctoral scholars to present their research related to the “Everyday State” in a wide range of contexts.

The conference aims to facilitate an intellectual exchange and conversation between researchers from different backgrounds such as anthropology, geography, history, political science, sociology, and media studies. Y-SASM 2020, hence, provides a platform for comparative discussions, conceptual and theoretical debates, and interdisciplinary exchange.

Paper proposals may be based on, but may go beyond, the following themes:

1. *Everyday state and practices of representation*

How does the everyday state make its presence known? In this sub-theme, we would like to encourage participation of scholars who explore how mundane practices and techniques such as writing, record-keeping, mapping, census, image capturing, biometrics, indexing etc., represent the manifestation of the state in everyday life. For instance, what role do practices of inscription (cadasters, for example) play in the governance of populations? How do these inscriptions transform, influence or mediate our understanding of the everyday state and the ways people relate to it? How may practices of representation obscure or reveal the presence of the state? How do we situate techniques of e-governance and digital media in furthering our understanding of the everyday state? Further, how are such representations contested or appropriated by people? And finally, what do these representations tell us (or not) about the material qualities of the state?

2. *Everyday State and Memes*

There has been an explosion of memes in the past few years. In this sub-theme, we invite papers that explore the production, circulation and mediation of memes in the social and political, and how they shape and are shaped by the everyday state. While memes are and were considered expressions of humour, their growing relevance in the political, economic and social sphere suggests the need for a deeper engagement with them. Moreover, memes, in a certain way, have demonstrated how they can disrupt the state's control of the production of narrative by the use of counter-imagery, thereby creatively taking ownership of stories and retelling them. We, specifically, welcome papers which elucidate how memes may, through the ease of repetitiveness and replicability, persuasively push specific kinds of rhetoric in the everyday, thus triggering a strong set of desires, aspirations and fantasy, and belief in 'knowledge'. Consequently, memes and their permeation in our everyday creates a fascinating space for engagement, thereby furthering our understanding of the everyday state.

3. *Bureaucracy and the Everyday State*

From the works of Weber to that of Kafka, the bureaucracy has revealed itself to be intimately connected to state power. Everyday practices of the state are oftentimes associated with the practice of bureaucracy: the way plans, policies and programmes are made, implemented, monitored and shelved. Recent research has highlighted how the bureaucracy remains an important object of analysis and study. We are interested in not only learning more about how the bureaucracy engages in practices of monitoring and audit but also how and why they act and function the way they do. In doing so, we ask how and what the bureaucracy may reveal about 'extraordinary events', the 'everyday maintenance' of the state, and how and why well-meaning policies fail.

4. *Mobilities and the Everyday State*

Migration and mobility have been central to the creation of nation states and their boundaries. This sub-theme seeks to explore the role of the state in regulating mobilities of not just labour or refugees, but also of capital. State control over the mobility of labour across and within state borders for economic production, of refugees and diasporas for control over citizenship, and of capital, remittances and investment, are especially of interest for this theme. We also welcome proposals looking at globalization, networks of ideas and knowledge, and financial investment.

5. *Caste, Class and the Everyday State*

The relationship between the state and the society can seem blurred. Nonetheless, affected castes and communities assert their agency by redefining their identities and claiming physical or political space. State intervention in creation of caste categories was seen during the colonial era, and beyond, through knowledge production such as census, or arbitrary classification of castes and *jatis*. This sub-theme aims to flesh out the ways in which the state creates socio-economic categories of caste, class, tribe etc., in addition to discussing state policies regarding affirmative action. Proposals may also examine the politicization of class or caste categories; or the relationship of caste with the nation state and politics with an ethnographic or historical perspective.

6. *Everyday Nationalism*

Recent state intervention in the syllabus is an example of inculcation of nationalism through changing history, as is the act of playing the national anthem in theatres or the recent repression of free speech in universities. In the colonial era, the knowledge of the oriental was a means to controlling the colonised. This sub-theme investigates the different ways the state attempts to establish authority and nationalism in everyday activities, both in the present and in the past. Governmentality has existed and exists in various everyday activities; this theme particularly looks at ways of establishing nationalism through knowledge, education, or everyday activities, and instances of backlash against this.

Format:

By providing a forum for young scholars to present papers on different aspects of the everyday state, we aim to support them by means of comments and discussions from established scholars and, accordingly, wish to create a platform for productive discussions. We ask accepted presenters to provide a written version of their paper in advance so that commentators can prepare substantial feedback that will be pre-circulated among the participants, which will facilitate the dissemination of fruitful insight among participants and idea exchange during the meeting. We hope that such a platform can enrich individual studies, broaden research scopes and provide participants and attendees with ideas for further scholarly projects.

Contact and Application:

Please send your application, including an abstract of max. 500 words together with a short CV (1 page) in one document to y.sasmconf@gmail.com by **15th October 2019**. Files should be named as follows: "Name_Family Name_Short Title_ysasm20". Full papers are expected to be submitted three weeks before the conference.

Please note that while we aim to secure funding by early next year, we are currently unable to guarantee financial support to participants with regard to travel and accommodation. We will be in touch by late February 2020 to provide more information.

For any questions, please contact the organisers below:

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