

Call for Papers

First Copenhagen South Asia Network Conference June 18-19th 2009

South Asian Drama: Old Actors, New Scripts

The dramatic upheavals and transformations in South Asia form a complex theme that has occupied researchers, media and policymakers alike in recent years. While unprecedented economic growth in India paralleling China has been an area of focus in itself, the recent 26/11 Mumbai attacks abruptly shifted the vision to the historically rooted India-Pakistan rivalry. Once again the questions of unresolved borders, ethnic tensions and sectarian agendas became central, even as the regional debates were now conjoined with global discourses of terror and political violence. The ongoing war in Afghanistan and its embedded intricacies within South Asian regional politics make the old fault lines even more fractious and volatile. Meanwhile, a fresh spate of violence in Sri Lanka, momentous political transitions in Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh and the growing influence of transnational actors and networks are redrawing socio-political cartographies of the region.

The South Asian drama is unfolding rapidly, rearranging clichés and inviting new descriptions. It is, at once, a performance of economic triumphalism of an expanding prosperous middle class; growing social disparities that increasingly define more than 600 million poor; military and nuclear prowess at the expense of human development; and violent communal politics homed in global discourses of religion, terror and security. A highly stratified demography of more than 1.7 billion represents both challenges and potentials at multiple levels.

The growing focus on the region is also evident in the way the South Asian food, music, films and writings are now produced and consumed globally. The Bollywood cinema, Bhangra music and the South Asian fiction with its attendant transnational flavours mark this new cultural production. These complex narratives signal a move away from the one-dimensional imaginaries and reductive explanations of the region and its constituents. In short, this new cultural repertoire opens the barely explored territory of identity making and representation of South Asia in a globalizing world.

Preparations of a new research agenda

The First Copenhagen Conference on South Asia will address how these themes change the frames for research and initialise new cross-disciplinary research agendas by the formation of targeted research groups to address these problems from multidisciplinary approaches. The conference is primarily aimed at researchers in the public or the private sector, but is open to all interested persons. We invite paper contributions on the state-of-the arts and how to proceed as well as buzz groups on the following broad themes:

- **Political violence, political stability and political futures**

South Asia's political landscape has repeatedly been shattered and reconfigured by communal violence, insurgencies, armed conflicts, terrorist attacks and other expressions of political instability. This challenges the survival and reformation of the region's old democracies and the establishment of new ones. In this panel, we explore political traditions and trajectories and their impact on the political present with the aim of identifying the potential political futures of the region.

- **The implications of Cultural Changes**

The extensive interconnectivity of the region with other parts of the world through transnational movement of population and global economic networks is visible in the new cultural formations – within the region and its diaspora. While middle class consumption patterns, modern identities, new religious movements are becoming ineluctable, the very moral register by which gendered roles and sexualities are controlled are in a conundrum. The expanse of the theme is broad, and encompasses colonial and postcolonial developments that underpin the current transformations.

- **The political economy of economic development in contemporary South Asia**

India and Bangladesh have experienced rapid economic growth, but only in certain sectors and for specific industries; more fundamental structural transformations are still required if such growth is to be sustainable in the long term, not least in the face of the current financial crisis. Elsewhere in the sub-continent political instability has undermined prospects for economic change and growth, leaving economies vulnerable to deflation and increased poverty levels as the global crisis impacts. Can the successes achieved to date survive? Is there a political will amongst governments to pursue policies that can modernize agricultural economies and create a broad manufacturing base? Who are the drivers for such change and will the present global economic environment aid or hinder it? These are some of the questions that the panel will take up.

Organisation of the conference

The plan aims at a 'flat' conference where as many of the participants as possible attend as many presentations as possible, but where there is left space for buzz groups to formulate new ideas.

Deadline for registration: **1 May 2009**

Registration via e-mail to marie.yoshida@nias.ku.dk

Please include name, institution and position

Deadline for submission of abstracts: **31 March 2009.**

Abstracts must be submitted to marie.yoshida@nias.ku.dk

The selected papers must be submitted by **1 June 2009.**

For further information, please contact the organisers:

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