

South Asia Anthropology Group UK (SAAG) 2019 Call for Papers

“Narratives of Transition: Everyday Politics and Social Change”

For SAAG 2019 we propose to focus on ideas of transformation, change and transition. This is to draw attention to how powerful historical processes are experienced, negotiated and embodied in empirical scenarios and in ethnographic writing, and to move towards new analytical concepts. Rather than just focus on the ways in which historical categories, power structures, relationships and rituals are maintained, we ask how they are being transformed or modified in contemporary South Asia. What has shifted in the context of the seemingly immutable socio-political categories, like religious nationalism, political factionalism, tribal identity, ritual or caste? What can moments of change, and voices claiming new transitions, tell us about the societal and cultural dynamics on the subcontinent today? How do contemporary South Asians imagine futures beyond historically rooted categories? And what are the limits of these narratives of transition?

In the current cultural political moment, contested constructions of the past and projections of the future are central to popular and academic ideas of politics, identity, community and social relations. Whether in the contexts of caste hierarchies, gender politics, religious nationalism, reform movements, new media, diasporic South Asian community-making, ethnic conflict, communal violence, terrorism or tribal insurgency, anthropologists have proliferated representations of history being remade in the present, and in doing so made important contributions to our understandings of South Asian society.

With an emphasis on everyday lives and experiences of political, social, religious and economic challenges, “Narratives of Transition” invites scholars of South Asia to reflect on continuity and change across the region. We invite papers that challenge, complicate or substantiate the narrative that South Asia is a region bound to its past, as well as papers that address empirical social change and everyday politics. We welcome contributions that show the intimate effects of public discourses, historicized narratives and processes of change, and, more ambitiously, contributions that seek to develop new analytical framings for South Asia today.

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The SAAG annual conference will be held at LSE Anthropology Department on the 19th and 20th of September 2019. The theme for this year will be “Narratives of Transition: Everyday Politics and Social Change”. To participate, please send a paper title and an abstract of up to 250 words to s.i.fuchs@lse.ac.uk and t.herzmark@lse.ac.uk by the 27th May 2019. A limited number of travel grants will be available for students and colleagues from South Asia and for scholars and PhD students with lower incomes.