

In and Out of South Asia: Race, Capitalism, and Mobility

What does mobility mean in seemingly immobile times? Global pandemics, surveillance regimes, and border fences engender old and new forms of captivity and incarceration throughout South Asia. At the same time, analytical and conceptual frames for studying the region have sought to break out of the gilded cage of methodological nationalism and embrace regional and transregional spatial units, such as the recent turn towards Inter Asia, Africa-Asia, and the Indian Ocean. A rich and productive scholarship, emphasizing the deep and enduring connections that link South Asia to places as far afield as Malacca and New England, has emerged from this transregional turn, providing new vocabularies for understanding polity, economy, and sociality in South Asia and beyond.

This conference aims to bring together a set of scholars and practitioners who are thinking across scale and time to explore the particular tension between mobility and immobility in shaping conceptual and methodological itineraries in and out of South Asia. We are also especially interested in participants who explore the histories and futures of race and capitalism, including notions of racial capitalism in South Asia. This event aims at building on and setting new intellectual agendas that befuddle the boundaries of land/sea as well as divisions between academic and public scholarship.

We welcome papers that engage with some of these specific questions on the broad themes of mobility/immobility and the conceptual possibilities and limits of race and racial capitalism in South Asia:

- How might a focus on things/people/ideas that move “in and out” help us conceptualize new ways of imagining and engaging South Asia?
- How do we grapple with the knotty realities of im/mobility in ways that do not privilege or assume egalitarian ideals?
- How do ethnic, caste, and racial hierarchies in South Asia interact with those elsewhere as people, ideas, and goods move in and out?
- What vocabularies can we use to describe the immobilities of those who are “left behind” by migrants, in South Asia?
- How can we rethink im/mobility across the Indian Ocean in ways that move beyond fixed binaries of “home” and “overseas”?
- How have Indian Ocean networks of trade, culture, and kinship responded to these “immobile” times?
- What are the regimes of law, surveillance, and mobility control that we see developing in response to present-day immobilities? What spatialities and transregional units emerge in the foreground or recede to

the background as a result, and how might this complicate the category of “South Asia”?

- What are the particular histories of race and racism in South Asia?
- How are anti-racist activism efforts converging with anti-caste rhetoric, and against other markers of social differentiation? Where are these efforts happening? Who are the activists making these connections?
- How are flows and networks of capital reconfigured within existing and new hierarchies of im/mobility?
- Can the pandemic serve as a method? What methodological itineraries become possible and impossible in pandemic times, and what visions of South Asia and the Indian Ocean emerge as a result?

This conference also wishes to interrogate the flows of academic and conceptual knowledge production and especially the origin and directionality of knowledge flows in our concepts and vocabularies of mobility and immobility. We specifically encourage participation from graduate students, early career scholars, and those based at institutions in the Global South. This conference will be held over two days on February 25 and 26, 2022 and will be held in an online format. Please submit an individual paper abstract by Dec 15, 2021 through [this online form](https://forms.gle/PTRKtnLbTCUbDrX59) (<https://forms.gle/PTRKtnLbTCUbDrX59>).