

Panel 32: Rethinking Economic Zones in South Asia

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Abstract: Across South Asia purpose built capitalist enclaves known as ‘export processing zones’ and ‘special economic zones’ have emerged as controversial sites of state planning and private enterprise. Critical social science has approached these zones as exemplary sites of neoliberal governance, where territorial space and working populations are managed in relation to their potential for growth and productivity (see, for example, Aihwa Ong 2006; 2007).

This panel invites papers based on current or recent research that examine the specificity of market-oriented modes of governance inside South Asia’s economic zones. In addition, we encourage papers that explore differences or continuities in governance between economic zones and other locations where national territory and working populations are administered in relation to the global market. This may include sites of mineral extraction, private sector manufacturing and state run enterprise.

We invite papers from new and established scholars working in the fields of anthropology, geography, sociology, history, political science and development studies.

Key questions and themes that papers might address include:

- Do market oriented modes of governance regulate workers in new or fundamentally different ways?
- To what extent are ‘neoliberal imaginaries’ realized in these spaces or translated into the production of neoliberal subjects?
- To what extent are disciplinary regimes that hinge on the insecurity, flexibility and precariousness of labour exceptional?
- How have local histories of social transformation and trajectories of development planning shaped the implementation of market-oriented modes of governance?
- How have market-oriented modes of governance shaped notions of competition and individuality or solidarity and mutual-aid?

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