

**Panel 44:** Kerala's Development in Context: Emerging Realities, Historical Vistas, Comparative Scope

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**Abstract:** Kerala's remarkable development keeps drawing the attention of scholars, as this Indian state remains uniquely placed up high in listings of health and social development indicators, despite a low per capita income.

It has been called a "model", to be exported to other parts of the "global South". The state's specific trajectory since India's independence, including the politics of left party governments, has been held responsible for this. Yet Kerala has also been deemed an anomaly, for its development must be linked to the state's specific history and demography as well. Not only has the sustainability of the "Kerala Model" been questioned, but – more precariously –, the normative dimension entailed by defining it as a "model", and the rhetoric which it precipitates, require critical attention.

Within the last two decades, social scientists have amassed a rich and diverse body of scholarship – ethnographic, historical, political and economic – on Kerala which makes the state appear as a site in which various processes of globalization, late modernity and political reform can be disentangled in unique detail. Has Kerala become a social scientists' "laboratory"?

For this panel we invite scholars from all these various fields of inquiry to present and reflect upon their work in regard to Kerala's development more generally. We are particularly interested in contributions which broaden the panel's scope, both geographically as well as historically. Perspectives illuminating Kerala's specific development from diverse viewpoints such as religion, caste, health, environment as well as science and technology would become crucial concerns of analysis.

Local case studies are particularly welcome. In a joint discussion we would like to explore these findings in regard to contemporary concerns around globalization, both theoretically and ethnographically.

The panel convenors anticipate an edited volume out of the selected papers presented in the conference.

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