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## Call for Papers

# Young South Asia Scholars Meet (Y-SASM) 2018

Zurich, 15-17 June 2018

### Claims-Making

The theme for the conference in 2018 is 'claims-making'. While claims-making has implicitly been a major theme in research on South Asia, theoretical understanding of the concept remains rather vague. In general, claims-making is related to certain perceptions and framings of social realities. Claims are linked to assumptions about rights or entitlements, on which demands can legitimately be based. Therefore, analysing processes of claims-making can provide complex insight into social, political and economic structures and the complex ways in which they are negotiated and consolidated. It is, however, not at all clear how the relationship between claims-making and ideological formations or moral paradigms should in fact be conceptualised. When taking a closer look at the process of claims-making, various other questions emerge, such as those about the conditions under which new claims arise or how various claims-making strategies change as a result of new spatial arrangements, technologies and different socio-political structures.

Against this backdrop, the Y-SASM conference 2018 seeks to provide an interdisciplinary forum for exploring these issues. Therefore, we invite early career scholars to present their research linked to claims-making in a wide range of contexts. The conference aims at facilitating conversation between researchers from different backgrounds such as anthropology, history, geography, political science or media studies. It thereby provides an arena for comparative discussions, conceptual debates and interdisciplinary exchange.

Since 2010, [Y-SASM](#) has aimed to provide a platform for interdisciplinary exchange among junior scholars in the field of South Asian Studies, including PhD students, early career post-docs and non-tenured faculty staff. While contributions from other places are welcomed, the main idea is to strengthen both the South Asia network within Europe as well as the academic exchange between South Asia and Europe.

Although there are no limits concerning issues suggested for discussion, the following topics indicate the general focus of the Y-SASM 2018. Paper presentations relating to one or more of the following topics are particularly welcomed:

### **1. Claiming 'Truth': Claims-Making and its Knowledge Formations**

Producing certain kinds of knowledge and 'truths' is inherently linked to power relations. Colonial regimes for instance used certain kinds of knowledge to legitimize their rule. Anti-colonial movements often also engaged with these knowledge formations as a basis for their claims to power, but also questioned and dissected them. This subtheme of the conference gives room for the examination of particular truth claims (e.g. in terms of religion, modernity, ideology, and scientific knowledge), their circulation, perpetuation and transformation. While truth claims are often exclusionary, different knowledge formations and systems co-exist and interact. How can this co-existence be conceptualized? What do instances of interaction reveal about hierarchies, changing power relations or the (in-)commensurability of different knowledge regimes? What is or was the role of academic knowledge formations in the processes of truth claiming?

### **2. Claiming People: Between Community Formation, *Strategic Essentialism* and 'Being Claimed'**

Claims are often made for particular communities or groups of people. In this subtheme, we explicitly invite papers that engage with the politics of social processes relating to 'community formation' as well as contestations of 'community formation' in the wider context of claims-making and/or look at the implications of category constructions. How do group formations change in the process of political claims-making? How are categories made, unmade and contested? What role do communities — be it religious or secular, be it in itself, for itself or imagined — have in claims-making processes in South Asia? Frequently, claims are made on behalf of others. This might be the case in contexts where differences are neglected in order to create collective identities and strategic alliances, but becomes most visible when claims are made on behalf of 'third others', who are allegedly unable to speak for themselves such as orphans, disaster victims or 'the poor'. What power dynamics are implicated in this claiming on behalf of others? Which wider political and socio-religious battles are fought through the appropriation of these categories?

### **3. Claiming Resources: Access, Redistribution and Dynamics of Inequality**

Resources arguably constitute a classical theme regarding claims-making. But how can we fruitfully conceptualize resources? What, for instance, is the relation between the distribution of material (land, money, institutions, services) and non-material resources such as power, authority and recognition? Under what conditions do claims to certain resources emerge or are demands for the redistribution raised? When are claims heard and acted upon and when are they deemed ignorable? To which extent do interest groups or movements challenge, transform or reinforce asymmetrical access, inequalities and existing exclusions? This subtheme also encourages scholars to think about how and to whom claims to resources are articulated in present day South Asia and to what extent ruptures from earlier periods are observable. Traditionally, the literature of South Asia in anthropology or geography has emphasised patronage networks. What role do social relations play in contestations of resources today? How are protests and social movements formed and how do they frame their claims?

#### **4. Claims-Making and the State: A Democratic Process?**

This section explores the role of the state in the context of claims-making as well as claimants' understandings of the state. How are particular state formations and claims-making dynamics interlinked? How do states transform the repertoires of contention such as hegemonic narratives or protest strategies? What is the role of laws and legal regulations? Arguably, democratic states provide a more conducive environment for claims-making in comparison to authoritarian states; nevertheless, such claims are not always made on a rights-based approach and resources may not be redistributed strictly according to state regulations. This section, therefore, invites papers exploring the particular dynamics of claims-making in the context of South Asian democracies in a wide range of contexts from labour protest to identitarian politics. What do practices of claims-making reveal about the conceptualizations of citizenship, the state, rights and democracy? Under what conditions are claims made against the state and in which contexts might claimants prefer to address private actors, NGOs or international agencies? What role do brokers and mediators play? Finally, what role does local politics play?

#### **5. Justifying Claims: Sources of Authority**

Claims evolve in relation to particular notions of entitlements, rights, social orders and moralities. For this subtheme, we not only encourage the participation of scholars who explore the basis of legitimization and the social and moral embeddedness of claims-making, but also papers that analyse specific medias and genres that might be linked to claims making. What role do, for instance, schoolbooks, NGO discourses, particular laws, sermons or religious norms play for certain movements and political demands? Do the various contending actors use the same sources of authority for the legitimization of claims? How do legitimization strategies for certain claims change over time and to what extent does this correlate with shifting normative orders?

#### **6. Claims-Making Practices and Theory**

In this subtheme, we would like to engage with scholars who bring together their empirical research with conceptual considerations around the issues of claims-making. Which theoretical frameworks — be it from performance theory, social movement theory, social constructivism, economics or other fields — are helpful to conceptualize certain claims making dynamics? What factors influence the strategies and dynamics of claims-making? How might research from South Asia enable us to rethink existing theories of claims-making and politics? Furthermore, we invite contributions that contemplate transformations of claims-making in the age of globalization, new media and changing social structures and explore historical ruptures and continuities.

#### **Format:**

By providing a forum for young scholars to present papers on different aspects of claims-making, we aim to support them by means of comments and discussions from established scholars and, accordingly, wish to create a platform for productive discussions. We ask accepted presenters to provide a written version of their paper in advance so that commentators can prepare substantial feedback that will be pre-circulated among the participants, which will facilitate the dissemination of fruitful insight among participants and idea exchange during the meeting. We hope that such a platform can enrich individual studies, broaden research scopes and provide participants and attendees with ideas for further scholarly projects.

**Contact and Application:**

Please send your application, including an abstract of max. 500 words together with a short CV (1 page) in one document to [y.sasmconf@gmail.com](mailto:y.sasmconf@gmail.com) by **31<sup>st</sup> August 2017**. Files should be named as following: "Name\_Family Name\_Short Title\_ysasm18". Full papers are expected to be submitted three weeks before the conference.

Please be aware that while we aim to secure funding, we are currently unable to guarantee any support to participants with regard to travel and accommodation costs.

**Organizers:**

[Joanna Simonow](#) (History of the Modern World, ETH), [Mascha Schulz](#) (Anthropology, University of Zurich), [Soni](#) (History of the Modern World, ETH).

This event is organized in cooperation with the [South Asia Forum \(SAF\)](#) and the Department of [Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies of the University of Zurich](#).