

Call for papers

Academic research in the humanities and the social sciences has come to be built around and structured heavily around the possibilities for mobility and movement created by globalisation. We travel all the time - for fieldwork, for conferences, for accessing distant sources in distant libraries and other research related pursuits or for relocating to new/foreign cities or even countries as career moves. This often involves frequent border-crossings, circuitous travel routes and long stays in countries that form our research focus and, applications for visas of different kinds depending on the nature of the various intended travels and journeys. And so a constant navigation of and negotiation with the structures and systems of control and mobility that limit as well as allow people to be on the move becomes an integral part of the 'academic' life. As the world grapples with an environmental crisis created by centuries of misuse and overuse of its resources by human beings, the debate on the extent to which academia needs to reconfigure its ways of functioning so as to mitigate its carbon footprint has been an ongoing one for some time now. And yet, the relationship between mobility and research remains enmeshed into each other in complex ways.

The COVID-19 pandemic, has plunged the world into a catastrophe for which there exists no precedent and is certain to alter life as we know it, long after it has 'passed'. A virus that essentially spread across the globe by simply attaching itself to people in transit now holds the world a hostage. It has irreversibly transformed how we shall henceforth move from one place to another, cross national borders, even venture out of our homes. As the pandemic unleashes illness and death upon millions, wreaks havoc on the economy, lays bare the entrenched inequalities fostered by unfettered capitalism and devastates and displaces the most vulnerable groups of people across nations, the need to examine, analyse and document the nature and impact on what human civilization has gone through shall be central to making sense of all that lies on the other side of this crisis. However, as academia in the humanities and the social sciences attempts to explain the forward and backward linkages of COVID-19, it is also necessary to apprehend the ways in which the academy itself stands to be affected and altered by the pandemic.

Chakra: A Nordic Journal of South Asian Studies, published by the Swedish South Asian Studies Network (SASNET) invites articles for a special issue with the dual focus on this need for studying the social-political, cultural, economic, and psychological cost of COVID-19 along with the simultaneous one of how it in turn transforms and impacts the modes, means and methods of research and dissemination in the first place. SASNET operates as a network for facilitating, disseminating and hosting research on South Asia in and beyond the Nordic region. The idea for this call for papers emanates from recent conversations with and reflections of colleagues on the function of a research network such as this and how best it can continue to operate when those constituting it can no longer be 'on the move' for the foreseeable future. These are of course not unique concerns and are shared by universities and institutions of research across the globe. Hence, an exploration of how we do research built around a certain idea of mobility and access in the times of COVID-19 and beyond is a timely one. The special issue invites short essays of not more than 2000 words on, but not limited to, the following themes:

- Mobility, movement and conducting South Asian Studies research
- Reflections on border-crossings and travel in a pandemic
- Teaching/researching South Asia in the times of COVID-19
- Re-mapping the 'field' in post-COVID-19 South Asia
- Witnessing/experiencing the pandemic on the ground in South Asia
- Decoding the environmental and ecological impact of COVID-19 in South Asia
- Degrees and differentials of displacement and emplacement in locked-down South Asia

- Globalisation, South Asia and the impact of COVID-19

The special issue is interested in soliciting both scholarly essays focusing on any of the themes mentioned above as well as more personal, experiential insights into or accounts of navigating the COVID-19 crisis of researchers who study South Asia and how it might change/impact their ways and means of approaching their work theoretically, methodologically, or even logistically.

If interested in being a part of the special issue, please send-in your contributions latest by June 15, 2020. We especially encourage SASNET affiliated researchers to contribute to the issue. However, contributions from researchers in the field of South Asian Studies beyond SASNET are also welcome and shall be considered for publication upon review.

Please send-in your contributions to isha.dubey@sasnet.lu.se . Any queries regarding the special issue can also be directed to the same email address.