



WORKSHOP TITLE

Multiple flexibilities: nation-states, global business and precarious labor

WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

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The ‘Multiple flexibilities’ workshop brings together comparative studies of regional and transnational production and migration networks and flows, with case studies from the broad Asian region (Middle East/West Asia through East Asia, and includes Eurasia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia). Consideration will be given to the relational geographies of Asian networks and flows across borders and regions (e.g. the East Asia/Southeast Asia, Southeast Asia/Australia, and South Asia/Gulf States).

We will focus on the opportunities and challenges generated by the deepening of global production. It will examine the strategies adopted by Asian states and Asian workers as they respond to the demands of the global economy that require states and workers to be increasingly flexible.

The workshop will deal with the emergence and deepening of transnational and inter- and intra-Asia regional networks of production, the transnational migrations they are generating, and the consequences of these rescalings and restructurings for states, capital and workers across Asia.

At the heart of this workshop is the question of new patterns of economic and geographic flexibility and social precarity, and the ways in which flexibilities are generating new forms and practices of governance. The issues of flexibilization and precarity are not distinct to Asian societies, but are more widespread result because of the embedded nature of neoliberalism.

The research agenda aims to clarify the ways in which these patterns of flexibilization and precarity are emerging under specific conditions and with unique outcomes in Asian contexts. Another outcome will be the creation of a research network that can link the study of Asian flexibilization to the parallel processes occurring in other regions, particularly in Europe/Eurasia, the Americas, and Africa/Asia.

The workshop will focus on networks of production, work and the forms of governance that are emerging in response to these. Amongst a range of possible topics, we envisage papers examining:

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- Global value-chains and regional production networks, focused on trans-Asia production and investment, with attention to the strategies of Asian transnational corporations.
- Comparative studies of the role of state monetary, fiscal, taxation, investment and industry policies in shaping flexible employment strategies.
- Trans-border and regional relocation development strategies.
- Sub-regional divisions of labor.
- Production and precarious labor (such as the role of migrant workers, informal employment and contract labor).
- Articulations of agrarian and industrial transitions.
- The conditions of life of migrant workers and precarious labor.
- Economic and social justice issues associated with transnational production (such as unionization, decent work, fair globalization and notions of a living wage).
- International labor standards and rights and varieties of labor law.

Disciplinary diversity is encouraged, with the workshop open to scholars from all social science disciplines and cultural studies, Asian Studies, development studies, international and global studies. We encourage participation from practitioners, especially from migrant and labor organizations that have contributed to the flexibilization and precarity debates. The workshop directors encourage participation from multiple national/regional locations and from a mix of junior and senior scholars.