

Writing Workshop Call for Paper

Care, Welfare and Government in Asia's Market Economies

The writing workshop, entitled 'Care, Welfare and Government in Asia's Market Economies' is co-organised by Minh Nguyen (Bielefeld University) and Vineeta Sinha (National University of Singapore). The workshop aims to enhance research emphases around topics of state, welfare, market economies, commodification, labour and migration. This effort prioritizes the professional development of early career scholars and seeks to equip them with research and publication skills as they aspire towards research excellence.

The workshop will work intensively with a group of 12 early-career anthropologists and sociologists whose research addresses issues related to the complex relationships between care, welfare and government across a range of substantive domains and the diverse Asian landscape. They range from state welfare and development programs and discourses, working lives, forms of labour mobility and migrant livelihoods to on-the-ground processes of globalization, privatization and financialization. Each participant will have the opportunity to present her/his work in a supportive and safe scholarly environment and get feedback. The aim is for participants to marshal feedback and ideas to develop an article or chapter based on recent empirical research to be submitted for publication in an outlet of their choice.

Led by 4 experienced anthropologists and sociologists from Bielefeld University, the National University of Singapore and other international universities, the writing workshop will be structured around the drafts submitted by the participants and discussions on 'how-to' issues of academic publishing. Inputs from participants are crucial to the organization of the workshop, and the following commitments are expected:

- A good draft of your text with a clear argument submitted prior to the workshop for the discussants and all the other participants to read.
- Close reading of all the submitted texts by the other participants.
- Attendance and active participation in all sessions of the workshop.

The workshop will take place at the National University of Singapore, Singapore between **5 August and 8 August 2024**. Refreshments and lunch will be provided on all days of the workshop. All participants will be required to submit a full paper (no more than 8,000 words) in Word format by **10 July 2024** to the workshop organizers. Papers will be circulated in advance to participants. This is essential in order to ensure that participants get the most out of this workshop. The workshop is structured into thematic panels (of 90 minutes) where participants will present their work for 30-40 minutes, followed by a substantial feedback and discussion session with peers and facilitators. Facilitators will also share some general substantive, conceptual and methodological issues on each day of the workshop, by way of highlighting themes and problematics for discussion. Finally, the workshop has a spontaneous 'practical' writing component where participants will produce a text on selected thematics which can draw on their own doctoral or post-doctoral research. These are designed to furnish participants with specific and concrete skills to creatively generate forms of ethnographic, qualitative writing.

Workshop Abstract

Care, broadly defined as the *processes of creating, sustaining and reproducing bodies, selves and social relationships* (Nguyen, Zavorretti and Tronto 2017), is a concept that could be used to analyze social relations often referred to as kinship, state-society relations, or welfare and social security. Such relations are all underpinned by human needs for care, even as care itself emerges as a discursive field that can be mobilized or manipulated to change or reproduce structures of power, and therefore is deeply political. Ethics of care writers consider it a desirable moral positioning towards recognizing human mutual dependence beyond the circle of one's intimate others and the need for public solutions to socialized needs (Tronto 1993; Held 1996). Yet, it is also a moral value that state and market actors often draw on for the sake of marketization, deregulation and exploitation, and a boundary marking mechanism that excludes as much as it includes certain kinds and groups of people into kinship, welfare system and the nation alike (Nguyen, Zavorretti and Tronto 2017, Thelen 2015).

Such ambivalence of care is especially observable in Asian countries going through major market restructuring such as India, China, and Vietnam, where authoritarian states are pushing ahead with restructuring programs premised on neoliberal logics under the banner of nationalistic development goals. In these contexts, increasing privatization of public goods, entrenched commodification of labor (i.e. submitting the workers to the whims of the market), and deepening financialization of economic life are taking place with a vengeance (Bear 2015, Lin and Nguyen 2021). Meanwhile, discourses of the caring state and government programs for basic social protection are deployed along governing structures and rhetoric that foreground self-responsibility and individual market participation in ensuring needs satisfaction and future wellbeing. As a result, labor, welfare, the social and the state itself are being drastically reconfigured in ways that reverberate throughout social, economic and political lives as well as ordinary people's self and personhoods, livelihoods and work, and desires and aspirations.

The papers to be discussed and developed in the workshop will take these different scales of transformation as a point of departure. To ensure thematic coherence of the workshop, the interrelationship between the notions of care, welfare and government will serve as a common conceptual thread for the discussion of all the papers. The authors are invited to reflect on their implications for their analyses, yet they are also encouraged to identify the best suitable conceptual tools and approaches to build their analytical frameworks. Towards the end of the workshop, we will reflect on emerging comparative empirical insights and possible conceptual innovations emerging from considering the diverse topical focuses and local contexts under the same thematic.

Notes

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