

Experiences, technologies and politics of imprisonment – legacies of detention in Myanmar.

Convener: Tomas Max Martin, DIGNITY – Danish Institute Against Torture

Applying an ethnographic sensibility this panel explores penal practices in Myanmar to illustrate the dynamics of change during the ongoing transition from an authoritarian regime towards democracy. Prison practices offer a pertinent window on to practices of state configuration as they illustrate in stark terms the (changing) relationship between state and subject. On the basis of ongoing fieldwork, the papers each grapple with the concept of legacy in order to map penal changes as concurrent and co-constitutive processes of institutional and political persistence and mutation. The papers illuminate detention legacies across three interrelated dimensions: Experiences, technologies and politics. These three dimensions help us understand i) how detention actually affects people and communities; ii) by what means this is brought about; and iii) with which intentions, through what logics and in what contested terrains? The papers will take point of departure in life stories of former political prisoners, water and sanitation reforms in prisons and contestations around notions of political imprisonment. Together, we aspire to contribute new understandings of the relationship between changing prison practices and political transformations that may well be relevant in the region more broadly.

Single session: 3-4 papers

Discussant: Nick Cheesman (tbc)