

Embracing neoliberal ethics under a ‘charismatic’ governance: Reflexions on governmentality, power and citizenship experiences in the Sultanate of Oman.

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In this paper I am trying to comment on neoliberal ethics embraced by the Sultan Qaboos of Oman in the frame and policies of governmentality, involving bureaucrats and citizens. For this purpose we are focusing to the analysis of two different governmental policies regarding citizenship and economic development: that of ‘faminocracy’ (promoting family ethics for economic development and citizenship), and the other of ‘omanisation’ (priorities to professionalization of the people originated from Oman). Both are raising issues of conceptualization about ‘work’ and ‘belonging’ (ethnicity, class, nation, religion), reframing commitment and submission to political and economical power, challenging neoliberal principals or empowering them, at the same time. We will analyze the institutional frame and the neoliberal inspiration of these policies at the same time we will examine the impact of them to the citizenship experiences.

This paper is based in ethnographic fieldwork accomplished sporadically for the last 5 years in the city of Muskat and the village of Ras al Had. During those missions we were looking for the ways the so called by people living in Oman ‘charismatic persona’ of Sultan Qaboos connects with citizenship experiences, both giving birth to a new “culture of the state” for the sultanate of Oman.