

Euroseas 2017 Panel Proposal

Beyond the State? The Everyday Politics of Development in Southeast Asia

Double panel

Convenors: Annuska Derks (University of Zurich) & Minh Nguyen (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology)

Discussant: TBA

This panel explores the everyday politics of development, drawing on what Tania Li (2007) refers to as the “will to improve”, a concept that captures well the spirit that drives people and nations in Southeast Asia today – but that at the same time points to the inevitable gap between what is attempted and what is accomplished. Li focuses in particular on interventions that are part of programs implemented by development agencies or the state. Yet, in the context of neoliberal restructuring and what has been called the ‘afterlife of development’ (Rudnyckyj and Schwittay 2014), attempts to better lives are now more and more relocated to a range of non-state actors and movements, as the role of the state is being recast in multiple ways. This panel explores the ways in which these actors and movements seek to overcome poverty, provide safety nets, reduce environmental degradation, modernize infrastructures, expand knowledge and address social needs. It focuses on the politics arising from their daily practices and interventions at local level. Which tools, technologies and operative logics do they employ? What are their goals and what are the social and political outcomes of their interventions? How do their interventions play out in local life and social relations? What kinds of partnership and alliance, what kinds of competition and conflict arise? Panelists are also encouraged to interrogate how non-state actors and movements are governed, how their interventions are linked to or defy the state’s attempts to govern, control or regulate the lives and wellbeing of citizens, and what these dynamics matter for state governance in Southeast Asia.