

EuroSEAS panel proposal: Christianity and Development in South East Asia

Abstract: Christianity and development have a complex, interdependent and ambivalent relationship; indeed, the modern concept of development itself has been traced back to Christian origins (Beard 2007). South East Asia has historically been subject to numerous Christian mission and development projects, to varying – but often limited – degrees of success. While literature on religion and development tends to emphasise the role of faith-based NGOs, this limits our understanding on how religious conversion can also influence social and economic relations. This panel combines anthropological and political science perspectives to explore the developmental impact of Christianity within South East Asian societies where it is a minority religion, both through international organisations and local communities. By assessing the extent to which Christianity is transforming economic attitudes, empowering marginalised groups or reinforcing poverty, we can also contribute to exposing the political nature and uncertain trajectory of development in South East Asia.

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Confirmed discussant: Professor Oscar Salemink (University of Copenhagen)

Confirmed presenters:

- Seb Rumsby, “Alternative routes to development? Political and economic impacts of Christian conversion among the Hmong of Vietnam”
- Dr May Ngo (National University of Singapore), “The religion, politics and development nexus in Cambodia: case study of Catholic faith-based organisations”