

Panel Proposal for the EuroSEAS Conference

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Future Making along Southeast Asian Frontiers

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Single session panel

In this panel we explore frontiers as sites of future making. Frontiers constitute spaces where intense and often highly conflictual negotiations between various actors from different scales are taking place – struggling over access to resources, identities, development goals and different visions of the future.

Initially introduced by Turner (1893) to explore the specific situation of territorial conquest of the American Middle West, the frontier concept is used by numerous scholars to analyze social, political, economic and environmental transformations in rural and remote regions in Southeast Asia. Frontiers are thereby understood as processes of territorial expansion, as actual borderlines or in terms of social relations and hence as socially constructed. Focusing on specific actors, Li (2014) explores an “indigenous frontier” while other authors distinguish e.g. between “capitalist frontiers” (Tsing 2005), “frontiers of control” (Geiger 2008) or “conservation frontiers” (Acciaioli and Sabharwal 2017). Most accounts of frontiers focus on the attempts of powerful administrators, politicians or entrepreneurs to inscribe their visions of development into an allegedly wilderness with abundant resources. But the people inhabiting these regions imagined as frontiers also have their own aspirations for the future.

We invite papers that provide examples of future visions expressed by rather marginalized voices along frontiers all over Southeast Asia to develop a more comprehensive account and a comparative perspective on future making along Southeast Asian frontiers.

References

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