

Title : Social protection: Understanding the new politics and practices of distribution in South East Asia

Organisers: John McCarthy, Gerben Nooteboom

Discussant: Ward Berenschot

Outline of theme

In Southeast Asia we have seen the rapid rise of social protection schemes that offer basic coverage to the very poor. The spread of national social protection schemes follows (global) models for providing conditional cash and basic health insurance and seeks to address the critical political and social questions posed by persistent poverty and rising inequality. While much of the academic literature has focused on the technical aspects of program development and controversies over design and implementation, to date there are few studies of the politics and social-cultural adaptation processes associated with these programmes and their effects on food security and (rural) poverty. This panel will explore the rising popularity, the effectiveness and local social-cultural adaptation processes involved in the rise of social protection. SPPs pose a number of key questions for political scientists, anthropologists and geographers. For instance, why are social protection policies spreading so rapidly? Why these particular models? How does a particular politics of knowledge within state and donor policy communities lead to the uptake of particular policy models? To what degree do SPPs provide a means of managing the politics of poverty? How does the adoption of social protection policies play into patterns of electoral populism and patronage politics? What shapes the politics of distribution at the local level? How do the rationalities of governmentalized systems shape patterns of distribution and lead to patterns of inclusion and exclusion? How effective are social protection policies in fighting food insecurity?

This panel will focus on the implications of the new rationalities of social assistance, (standardizing methodologies for targeting and implementation) that have emerged and the new politics of distribution that accompany them. We invite papers for this session that examine key themes from a social or political perspective, and/or address the question of how social protection address policies address livelihoods concerns in the Global South.

Format : Double session

Paper presentations (15 minutes each)

Three presenters have already agreed to join the panel.