

EuroSEAS Panel Proposal

1 - Title: Southeast Asia's 'creative turn': Reconfiguring power and partnership

2 - Convenors:

Deirdre McKay, Keele University (d.c.mckay@keele.ac.uk)
and
Laurie Parsons, Royal Holloway, University of London

3 - Brief description of panel:

From shadow puppetry to contemporary dance, film to fine art, Southeast Asian culture is loved and lauded the world over. But cultural production is never easily disentangled from the political context which it generates and shapes and vice versa. From colonial representations of the other to the security-driven cultural agenda of ASEAN, culture has long been an instrument of Southeast Asian nation-building, deployed as a way of 'integrating social, political, artistic, and cosmic order' (Roxas-Lim, 2005: 1). When creative methods and cultural production appear at the forefront of new modes of marketing, opinion-shaping, collaborative research, and development outreach driven by interests in the global North, it is time to interrogate what this emphasis on creativity may mean.

In the current era of economic boom, rising inequality, and tightening authoritarianism, what the 'creative turn' means for Southeast Asia raises a series of pressing questions. While Southeast Asia's current cultural effluence is lauded, there may be a 'dark side' to it and the creativity that sustains it (Cropley et al., 2010: 1) for those living in the region. Do creative approaches to art, dance, theatre, film, sculpture, music and digital production play a role in processes that fuel inequality or justify authoritarian regimes? Who can harness 'creative power'? Do the processes and products of creativity in Southeast Asia drive some people apart and pull others together? How are creative methods being called upon to interpret the current situation in Southeast Asian nations?

Questions of creativity and collaborative partnership are increasingly coming to the fore with shifting expectations of research funders and development agencies. Southeast Asianists thus need to think carefully about the role of creativity - broadly understood - plays in their research collaborations. What does it mean, in practice, to co-create research? Southeast Asian academics, governments, and colleagues in the third and creative sector find themselves increasingly asked to engage research design focussed on creative processes and outcomes intended to deliver social impact. Does this new emphasis on creativity work to decolonise research relationships? Or is the creative turn generating new risks, expectations, obligations, and forms of bureaucracy that have the effect of undermining equitable partnerships?

We invite papers that reflect on how creative methods structure relationships and narratives in research and governance. This reflection could encompass co-created projects using innovative approaches to film, theatre, art, digital media, dance, photography and exhibitions. We especially encourage perspectives from scholars who have experience as research partners in Southeast Asian institutions and charities.

4 - Double session: 2 x 90 minutes

Presenters:

(indicative - can expand or collapse authorships based on further interest)

Deirdre McKay (Keele University) and Mark Johnson (Goldsmiths, University of London) and Gabriela Nicolescu (University College Dublin)

Amanda Rogers (Swansea University)

Laurie Parson (Royal Holloway, University of London)

Jowel Canuday (Ateneo de Manila Univeristy)

5 - Discussant: Neal Garcia (University of the Philippines, Diliman)