

## **Panel Proposal for EUROSEAS conference 2019**

### **1. Title: The Political Economy of Subaltern Agency and Political Change**

**2. Convenor:** Rebecca Meckelburg (Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University)

### **3. Panel description:**

The actions of Subaltern classes are often assumed to play little substantive part in dynamic processes of social and political change taking place in Southeast Asia. Academic literature in the critical political economy tradition focuses principally on structural analyses of crisis and change while highlighting the domination of politics and formal institutions by economic and political elites. This panel presents an alternative view - arguing that subaltern classes play a significant part in the unfolding of social and political struggles across the region. We argue that despite the 'failure' to form cohesive and sustainable nationally organised movements, subaltern actors and their allies do organise themselves across multiple scales, employing diverse tactics to further their interests. These patterns of organising do not always align with the interests and campaigns of national organisations nor do they always take forms that are recognised as social movements or 'activism'. Resistance by subaltern actors often escapes the scrutiny of academic observers because they organise through temporary alliances, across scales, outside national scale urban politics, and in forms of social organisation that are often illegible to these observers.

This panel presents several empirical cases from different regions in Indonesia examining the diverse repertoires of subaltern popular action by workers, peasant farmers and urban poor people, from everyday encroachments to organised social movements, in both urban and rural spaces. These cases demonstrate a range of strategies that subaltern actors engage in to defend and extend their interests when in conflict with other social actors or class-based interest groups. In the panel we also consider how subaltern classes are constituted in the developing world today and what implications this has for developing theoretical approaches for conceptualising 'subaltern politics' or a 'politics of the poor'. Developing such an approach should allow us to examine and explain why subaltern popular struggles at times generate more progressive social relations while at other times they may be more reactionary.

### **4. Participants**

- I. Irwansyah, Department of Political Science, University of Indonesia and currently PhD Candidate, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, Australia
- II. Lian Sinclair, PhD Candidate, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, Australia
- III. Dr Agung Wardana, Faculty of Law, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia
- IV. Dr Ian Wilson, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University
- V. Rebecca Meckelburg, PhD Candidate, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University, Australia

### **5. Discussant: To be confirmed**