

EUROSEAS Panel proposal:
REEL Democracy – Southeast Asia

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People learn about, engage with, negotiate, inhabit and embody democracy—its principles, assumed ways of being and acting in the world, its institutions and canonical processes, in myriad ways. This is what constitutes the everyday world and possibilities of democracy in particular times and places and it is how democracy reproduces, renews, and transforms itself. REEL Democracy will focus especially on one central aspect of this process, namely, the relation between the imagination of democracy, on the one hand, and its representation and imaging via (audio)visual media on the other. The panel title, REEL Democracy, foregrounds the idea of ‘screen’ and screening democracy in the sense of exploring the ways through which what is imagined as democracy is visualized and made to appear—or equally importantly, ‘screened out’. We will consider the aesthetics, aspirations, and contestations of democracy across a range of (primarily) visual and digital media geared to and productive of different publics across the Southeast Asian region. The panel is inspired by an argument developed in Patricia Spyer’s forthcoming book, *Orphaned Landscapes: Violence, Visuality, and Appearance in Indonesia* regarding “the work on appearance,’ as a central, indeed, fundamental aspect of significant sociopolitical change (Fordham University Press 2021).

Single session