

Title: Imagining the "West" in Southeast Asia: Construction, Deconstruction and Contestation

Convenor:

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Panel Format--Double Sessions:

We want to bring together an interdisciplinary panel of scholars and researchers with different geographical focus. The broad theme of this panel aims to construct new interdisciplinary understanding and facilitate research imaginations beyond the neo-colonial and comparative gaze with and from the West. To this end, we would like to propose a double panel and invite scholars whose works have contributed to scrutinizing Westcentralism in Southeast Asia, especially under the force of globalisation and internationalisation to join the panel. The double session format will ensure that the panel can include a multitude of perspectives from Southeast Asia.

Brief description of the panel:

Despite decades of calls from scholars to move away from the ongoing forms of western-centric knowledge production (Nandy 1983, Hall 1992, Comaroff & Comaroff 2012, Cooper & Morrell 2014), the force of neoliberal globalisation has intensified the desire for "the West" in the "rest". In Southeast Asia, states' global aspirations and outlook have driven them toward the so-called "western standards" in governance, economic development, and everyday practices. Within the region, various economic, social, and political transformations have been shaped by ideals of "the West" as the model for nation-building, modernisation, and knowledge production. Promoted largely under Western and/or international tags by many scholars, policymakers and citizens alike, these new ideas, practices, and values often mean different things and advocate different values to different stakeholders. Yet, they also evoke certain imaginaries of what the "West" is. Aspirations toward idealised versions of the West as models for societal advancements intrinsically reveal the underlying imperial and colonial indoctrination that continues to exist in Southeast Asia, in which imaginations of the West continue to perpetuate an imperialist hierarchy between the global "core" and "peripheral", and among the "peripheral".

Acknowledging and calling attention to the need to move the conversation beyond a neo-colonial and comparative gaze from the West, this panel welcomes contributions that examine how the West is perceived, imagined and practised across Southeast Asia and discipline; as well as de-colonial and de-imperialising approaches aiming at dismantling the Western-centralism that has constituted the prevailing structure of desire and knowledge to construct new research understanding and imaginations.

Presenters

1. Ms. Jessica STEINMAN, Universität Leipzig, Germany.
2. Ms. Kim Anh DANG, Universität Bielefeld, Germany
3. Prof. Le Ha PHAN, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei and University of Hawaii at Manoa, USA

Chair: Prof. Christina SCHWENKEL, University of California Riverside, USA

Discussant: Prof. Minh NGUYEN, Universität Bielefeld, Germany.