**Panel: Creativity and Innovation in Vietnam**

**Conveners:** Annuska Derks and Esther Horat, University of Zurich

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**Panel description**

Innovation has become the buzzword of our time. Innovation is seen as essential for accelerating economic growth, improving standards of living and achieving sustainable development goals. Behind the exaltation of innovation is a strong belief in the need for technological improvements and progress to solve the pressing social, economic and environmental problems of our time, and in people’s ability to innovate, work and think creatively, and implement their new ideas through entrepreneurial practices.

Vietnam offers an interesting case for studying the makings and meanings of innovation. During the past years, the concept of “creative innovation” (*đổi mới sáng tạo*) has gained prominence among those promoting the country’s move towards the Industrial Revolution 4.0. This idea about progress has been linked to a range of creativity and innovation practices, from the emergence of innovation labs and creative hubs, investments in digitalization and the adoption (and adaption) of smart technologies to the promotion of renewable energies. Yet, little is known about how these creativity and innovation practices work out for people on the ground. As Appadurai and Alexander (2020) point out, the promises of such innovation-driven capitalism inevitably entail failures and exclusions.

In this panel, we take a critical look at creativity and innovation practices and promises. We will discuss ethnographic accounts of creators and innovators, innovations and their connections to improvisations and traditions, as well as the failed attempts of innovation in different sectors of Vietnam. The aim is to reflect on the analytical value of innovation for anthropology and related disciplines, and to ask: How is innovation made in different sectorial, historical and social contexts? Who participates in this process, and how? Who is excluded? When and why is something considered an innovation? When is it a failure? And what are the consequences?

**Panel:**

*Creative Renovations in Dai Bai Craft Village, Northern Vietnam*

Nguyen Tuan Anh, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi

*Makerspaces and the dream of one million entrepreneurs: The promise of innovation and creativity in the Vietnamese start-up culture*

Esther Horat, University of Zurich

*"Be more, together": Community building in Space-as-a-Service startups in Viet Nam*

Nguyen Ha Phuong, UZH

*The Spoken and the Spark: The Social Life of Poetry in Vietnam's Creative Economy*

Tara Westmore, UC Riverside

*Technologies, Milk Metrics, and Cows' Bodies: Changing dynamics in North Vietnamese dairy production*

Nadja Kempter, University of Zurich

**Double session:** We will send out a CfP to complete the panel

**Discussant**: Kirsten Endres, MPI Halle