EUROSEAS 2024 Panel Proposal

**1.** **Title:** Myanmar’s Post-Coup Borderlands

**2.** **Format:** Laboratory

**3.** **Conveners:**

Dr. Terese Gagnon, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, tgagnon@unc.edu

Dr. Shona Loong, University of Zurich, shona.loong@geo.uzh.ch

**4.** **Description of the chosen format:**

The purpose of this laboratory is to bring together scholars working on Myanmar’s borderlands, with an emphasis on shifting dynamics within and between these territories in the wake of the February 1, 2021 coup in Myanmar. The aim of the laboratory is to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing across these areas.

Scholarship on Myanmar has historically been state and Bamar-centric. This has been to the exclusion of perspectives from borderlands, including autonomous and semi-autonomous territories. In the wake of the coup, and the ongoing struggle for political legitimacy, the importance of these borderlands has come into sharper focus. This is as political activists from central Myanmar, as well as members of the National Unity Government, have sought haven and military training in borderlands, which currently and historically have provided a space from which to oppose authoritarianism in Myanmar. These recent developments are in addition to decades-long struggles for self-determination on the part of ethnic and Indigenous peoples situated in Myanmar’s borderlands.

These struggles are as pertinent today as ever, yet scholars working on the country’s diverse borderlands have rarely had opportunities to engage in extended conversations with one another. The coup has also exacerbated the need for Myanmar-focused scholars to find safe spaces to engage with one another, given the threats that researchers and activists face within the country.

These laboratory format and free-flowing discussion will allow the participants to identify cross-cutting themes in their work that could form the basis of future collaborations. There will also be time designated for further discussion and planning about the structure of the Myanmar Borderlands Studies Collective. This builds upon groundwork laid for the formation of the collective during a workshop on Myanmar Borderlands at the University of Copenhagen in Spring 2023, which Terese organized. The aim of the collective is to provide a collaborative space to center critical and de-colonial scholarship on Myanmar’s borderlands.

**5.** **Description of the laboratory:**

The format of the laboratory will be made up of two parts. The first half of the laboratory will seek to create a dialogue between participants about how we, as a collective, approach Myanmar’s borderlands, and establish a supportive, safe, and collegial environment for all present. Using drafts circulated in advance, participants will be tasked with presenting another person’s work, and in so doing, reflect on questions that will help us to build a collective together. For example: “What excites me about this work, and how it approaches borderlands?” “What possibilities for collaboration emerge from it?”

The second half of the laboratory will be dedicated to free discussion, intended to generate productive dialogue to open the door to ongoing scholarly collaboration. The laboratory format—in-depth and in a closed setting—is ideal for facilitating this work.

In proposing this laboratory, both convenors draw on their experience organizing Myanmar-focused events,, at which we found there to be a great interest in bringing scholars focused on Myanmar’s borderlands together. Terese organized the Myanmar Borderlands workshop in Copenhagen in 2023 as well as the Laboratory on Myanmar’s Uphill Battle: Prospects for Federal Democracy at EuroSEAS 2022 in Paris, while Shona co-convened the International Burma Studies Conference 2023 in Zurich. This 2024 laboratory will further existing scholarly collaborations on these important and timely themes.

Key takeaways of the laboratory will be shared with the larger group by the convenors. This will facilitate a broader conversation around Myanmar’s Borderlands Post-coup at the EuroSEAS 2024 meeting. Up to eight laboratory participants will be selected based on the fit of their research with the laboratory theme. In inviting participants, we aim to ensure that junior scholars and scholars from Myanmar and its borderlands consist of at least half of the laboratory.