**Roundtable proposal – EUROSEAS 2024**

**The Good Life in Late Socialist Asia: Aspirations, Politics, and Possibilities**

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This roundtable launches the special issue The Good Life in Late Socialist Asia: Aspirations, Politics, and Possibilities edited by Minh T. N. Nguyen, Phill Wilcox, and Jake Lin published by *positions: asia critique* (Duke University Press)in early 2024.

The emergent quest for the good life in rapidly transforming Vietnam, Laos, and China can only be understood as part of the political economy of late socialism where capitalist market expansion unfolds under the purview of Communist party states. As a collection of nine articles by Kirsten Endres (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology), Arve Hansen (University of Oslo), Roberta Zavoretti (University of Cologne), Sandra Kurfurst (University of Cologne), Jiazhi Fengjiang (University of Edinburgh), Charlotte Bruckermann (University of Cologne), Elizabeth Elliott (National University of Singapore), Fan Zhang (Peking University), Michael Kleinod (University of Cologne) and an epilogue by Li Zhang (UC Davis), the special issue is a timely critical engagement with the notion of the good life and its ramifications in late-socialist social life through the perspectives of people and communities living amid rapid political and economic transformation. While growth-based development offers vistas of possibility that are wider than ever, it has also engendered growing social inequality, ecological decline and a broad sense of moral crisis, in the face of state narratives about national dreams in the making. Here, people grapple with the question of how they can – individually and collectively – shape lives that they consider worth living.

The special issue demonstrates how the paradoxical value frameworks of late socialism generate contradictions and politics that impose limits on the possibilities of living well together. At the same time, the authors also show the moral agency of people circulating between seemingly incommensurable social orders in articulating their notions of the good and the motivations for their actions. With contributions from all three late socialist contexts, the special issue underscores how the quest for the good life is an uneven field of struggle in which people seek to build futures from differing social positions in increasingly differentiated societies. Contributors to this roundtable are the authors of articles in the special issue and two discussants who critically engage with the themes raised by the special issue and its contributions to raise further questions for discussion. It is meant to be a dialogue between the panellists and the Euroseas audience.

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