

What's So Good about Good Governance? Alternative Understandings in Southeast Asia

This panel proposes to examine the meaning of good governance in contemporary Thailand/Southeast Asia with a special emphasis on recent political developments and the general trend of growing authoritarianism across the region. The Ahok blasphemy case in Indonesia, Cambodia's new lèse majesté law, Duterte's controversial war on drugs and the Thai junta's attempts to institutionalise ethics and morality into Thai politics are just a few examples of a more general trend within the region to re-define the meaning of good governance and to divest it from liberal democratic values once again. As a result, the region has seen a decline in political, civil and human rights with most of the region being marked by the Freedom House as 'Not Free' or 'Partly Free' in its 2018 democracy metrics and 'Not Free' in its 2017 freedom of press metrics.

How can we explain this trend? How/Why are the Southeast Asian leaders and their governments trying to shape the good governance discourse and the meaning of the word 'good'? What implications does this have for the prospects of democracy in the region? These are just some of the issues this panel would like to address. The convenor of this panel welcomes paper abstracts and proposals that examine the meaning and/or different aspects of good governance discourse either in Thailand or in any other Southeast Asian country.

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