

POLITICAL ECOLOGY IN ASIA 2019

Plural Knowledge and Contested Development in a More-Than-Human World

📍 Faculty of Political Science,
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

📅 10-11 October 2019

Keynote Speakers:



**"Reflection on Vijñana of
Religion: New Animism in the
Age of the Anthropocene"**

Thanes Wongyannava

Retired Professor, Faculty of
Political Science, Thammasat
University



**"The Political Ecology of
Climate Change, Uncertainty
and Transformation in
Marginal Environments"**

Lyla Mehta

Professor, Institute of
Development Studies,
University of Sussex

Co-organized by Center for Social Development Studies (**CSDS**); French Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (**IRASEC**); French Research Institute for Sustainable Development (**IRD**); French Institute of Pondicherry (**IFP**); **IRN-SustainAsia**; Patrimoines Locaux, Environnement et Mondialisation (**PALOC**); **POLLEN** Political Ecology Network

With the support of Chula Global Network (**CGN**); The French National Center for Scientific Research (**CNRS**); **French Embassy** in Bangkok; Faculty of **Political Science**, Chulalongkorn University



Visit www.csds-chula.org/political-ecology-in-asia for more details

Organisers presentation	6
Foreword	8

DAY 1: Thursday, 10 October 2019

08:30-09:00	Registration	
09:00-09:30	Welcome Remarks · Prof. Dr. Pironrong Ramasoota, Vice President for Social Outreach and Global Engagement, Chulalongkorn University · H.E. Jacques Lapouge, French Ambassador to Thailand · Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ake Tangsupvattana, Dean, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University	
09:30-10:30	KEYNOTE SPEECH: “Reflection on Vijñāna of Religion: New Animism in the Age of the Anthropocene” (Thanes WONGYANNAVA)	10
10:30-11:00	Coffee break	
11:00-12:30	Session I	
Session 1A	PARTICULATE MATTERS: THE EMERGENCE OF A POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF HAZE IN ASIA	Chair: Karine LÉGER 11
	· Making an 'Indian' Air Pollution Technoscience” (Rohit NEGI with Perna SRIGYAN)	14
	· Positioning Indonesia’s Oil Palm Smallholders in the Anthropocene Debates” (Rini Yuni ASTUTI with Andrew Mc GREGOR and David TAYLOR)	15
	· How to break the political barrier to act on air pollution control with open information?” (Sarath GUTTIKUNDA)	16
	· Haze crisis and upland/lowland relationships in Chiang Mai (Olivier ÉVRARD with Mary MOSTAFANEZHAD)	17
Session 1B	FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY IN ASIA	Chairs: Bernadette P. RESURRECCIÓN and Kanokwan MANOROM 18
	· Gender professionals in environment and development. Theory and praxis through feminist political ecology (Bernadette P. RESURRECCIÓN)	20
	· Feminism Political Ecology and Land broker State in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the Mekong (Kanokwan MANOROM)	22
	· Beyond Recognition of Adat Forest: Feminist Political Ecology and Resource Frontier on Customary Forest in Indonesia (Siti MAIMUNAH)	23
	· Towards a Feminist Geopolitical Ecology of Environmental Change, Land Grabs, and Migration (Sara VIGIL)	24
12:30-13:30	Lunch	

13:30-15:00 Session 2

Session 2A **RESOURCE POLITICS AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

Chair: Naruemon THABCHUMPON

26

· Demarcating the public and private in land and environmental governance in the Mekong Region (Phillip HIRSCH)

27

· The hybrid public sphere in Myanmar and implications for civil society (Tay Zar MYO WIN)

28

· A Rising Indifference To Law: environmental reporting in the age of Narendra Modi (M. RAJSHEKHAR)

29

Session 2B **ASIA'S URBAN POLITICAL ECOLOGIES**

Chair: Olivier CHRÉTIEN

30

· Water Management in Bangkok and Uneven Vulnerabilities (Niramon SERISAKUL)

31

· Managing the (sinking) City of Jakarta (Irvan PULUNGAN)

32

· Marginalizing policies: rethinking the modernization of the waste sector in Delhi (Rémi de BERCEGOL and Shankare GOWDA)

33

· Governance of seaside tourist resorts areas confronted with environmental challenges in Southeast Asia (Christine CABASSET)

34

15:00-15:30 Coffee break

15:30-17:00 Session 3

Session 3A **POLITICAL ECOLOGIES OF LAND IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: BEYOND THE TECHNICAL-REGULATORY GAZE**

Chair: Miles KENNEY-LAZAR

35

· The maize boom in northern Laos: Impacts on land use and access (Robert COLE)

36

· The Relational Governance of Land: Contested Plantation Concessions in Laos (Miles KENNEY-LAZAR)

37

· Migration and women's land tenure rights and security in the Greater Mekong sub-region (Soimart RUNGMANEE)

38

· Alternative Land Management in Thailand: a Case study of the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT) (Supatsak POBSUK)

39

Session 3B **PEOPLE AND THE BIODIVERSITY CRISIS: RESHAPING GOVERNANCE AND JUSTICE IN CONSERVATION**

Chair: Sarah BENABOU

40

· Indigenous Resurgence, Relational Ontologies, and the Salween Peace Park (Robert A FARNAN)

43

· Putting conservation in local hands? The Khasi Hills Redd+ project (Sarah BENABOU)

44

· How many tigers are enough? The biopolitics of tiger conservation in India (Nitin RAI)

45

DAY 2: Friday, 11 October 2019

09:00-09:30	KEYNOTE SPEECH: The Political ecology of climate change, uncertainty and transformation in marginal environments (Lyla MEHTA)	45
10:00-10:30	Coffee break	
10:30-12:00	Session 4	
Session 4A	INDUSTRIALIZATION AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE Chair: Shaun LIN	48
	· How Japan's Aid and Investment 'Offshore' Flood Management to Reduce Flood Risks in Thailand (Takeshi ITO)	49
	· Political Ecology of Thailand's Marine Plastic Pollution Crisis (Danny MARKS)	50
	· The failed promise of industrialization and of justice, Coromandel coast (Senthil BABU)	51
	· Flash points- Exploring conflict and justice issues in economic zone of Myanmar under BRI investment (Myint ZAW)	53
Session 4B	ONTOLOGIES OF INFRASTRUCTURE Chair: Jakkrit SANGKHAMANEE	54
	· Infrastructure in the Making: The Chao Phraya Dam and the Dance of Agency (Jakkrit SANGKHAMANEE)	55
	· Aggregate Ecologies: On the environmental effects of city surfaces (Eli ELINOFF)	56
	· Urban Kaleidoscopes: Chinese Construction, Scale-Making, and the Re-Design of Cambodian Cities (Casper BRUUN JENSEN)	57
	· Re-defining, Re-imagining and Re-particularising Thailand's Climate Knowledge(s): The case of climate actors and their knowledge infrastructures" (Chaya VADDHANAPHUTI)	59
12:00-13:00	Lunch	
13:00-14:30	Session 5	
Session 5A	HYDROSOCIAL RIVERS AND THEIR POLITICS Chair: Kenji OTSUKA	61
	· Ontological politics of hydrosocial territories in the Salween River basin, Myanmar/Burma (Carl MIDDLETON with Johanna GÖTZ)	62
	· Politics of urban riverbank development: the contested Chao Phraya River Promenade project in Bangkok (Thanawat BREMARD)	63
	· Flows, fragments and futures: Rethinking biophysical geopolitics in the Lower Mekong wetlands and Tonle Sap (Carl GRUNDY-WARR)	65
	· Rewilding the commons: Community Led Restoration in the Penna River Basin (Siddharth RAO)	66

Session 5B	REPRESENTATIONS OF NATURE AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENTS	Chair: Frédéric LANDY	67
	· Nature reshaped: Diffracted political engagements for recovering grabbed land in Cambodia (Frédéric BOURDIER)		68
	· Politics of water management in the Koshi plain: Modern economics versus extreme environmental factors (Marie-Amélie CANDAU)		69
	· Nature and Human in Sino-Vietnamese conceptions and practices. Articulations between Asian vernacular 'analogism' and Western modern 'naturalism' modes of identification (Christian CULAS)		70
14:30-15:00	Coffee break		
15:00-16:30	Session 6		
Session 6A	INTERSPECIES COHABITATIONS IN ASIA: NON-HUMAN ANIMALS AND POLITICAL ECOLOGY	Chair: Olivier ÉVRARD	71
	· Lizards and other Ancestors: wildlife conservation and the moral ecology of Komodo (Annette HORNBACHER)		72
	· Modern Nomadism among Thai Mahouts: a social consequence of human - elephant relations evolution in Thailand's tourism industry (Wasan PANYAGAEW)		73
	· Are some managers of Indian national parks corrupted or analogist? Relationships to nature and wildlife in Hindu India (Frédéric LANDY)		74
	· The coproduction of ecologies with more than human animals: playing with beetles, birds and fish in Thailand (Stéphane RENNESSON)		75
Session 6B	POST-DEVELOPMENT AND SYSTEMIC ALTERNATIVES FROM ASIA (ROUND TABLE)	Chair: Carl MIDDLETON	76
	· Kyaw THU, Paung Ku		
	· K.J. JOY, Society for Promoting Participative Ecosystem Management (SOPPECOM)		
	· Suphakit NUNTAVORAKARN, Public Policy Manager and senior researcher at Healthy Public Policy Foundation (HPPF)		
	· Wora SUKRAROEK, EarthRights International and Member of Thailand Extraterritorial Obligations Watch Coalition		
16:30-17:00	Concluding Remarks		
	Acces map		78

CSDS

www.csds-chula.org

The Center for Social Development Studies (CSDS) was established as a Research Unit within the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University in 1985. It was established to undertake interdisciplinary research linking across the various fields of political science within the Faculty (government, public administration, international relations, and sociology and anthropology) and more broadly in the social sciences, and to provide support in education, research, and teaching. Working towards these goals, in 2006, the CSDS supported the launch of the MA in International Development Studies (MAIDS) program.

CGN

www.facebook.com/pg/chulaglobalnetwork

Chula Global Network steps up to be the force of the combined strength. It is the platform and forum for the exchange and integration of the various expertise from within you.

IRASEC

www.irasec.com

Irasec is a French regional research centre based in Bangkok, dedicated to Contemporary Southeast Asia, through its 11 countries. It considers the region of 644 million inhabitants (3rd population in the world, and 3rd economy in Asia) as a major regional political, trade and cultural crossroad. Engaging the humanities and social sciences in an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective, it analyses the major political, social, economic and environmental trends at local, national and regional scale, within the wider geopolitical and geostrategic Asian context and beyond.

Deeply anchored in the Thai academic landscape, the centre also develops partnerships in the region, organises international events, associating senior and young researchers and PhD students from Asia and Europe. Irasec intends to stimulate debates within scholarly circles and enhance public awareness of the region. The institute co-publishes books with international academic editors in French/English and provides free access to its publications.

IRD

www.thailand.ird.fr

The IRD (Institut de recherche pour le développement) is a French research organisation, original and unique on the European development research scene. Emphasizing interdisciplinarity, the IRD has focused its research for over 65 years on the relationship between man and its environment, in Africa, Mediterranean, Latin America, Asia and the French tropical overseas territories. Its research, training and innovation activities are intended to contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of southern countries.

IFP

www.ifpindia.org

Present in Thailand since 1985, IRD develops research projects in the fields of environmental sciences and natural resources, health, and human and social sciences. The programmes are developed and conducted in partnership with Thai researchers, with the objective of producing original and innovative scientific knowledge contributing to the sustainable development of the country and the South-east Asian region.

IRD in Thailand also contributes to the training of Master, PhD and postdoctoral students, and supports capacity building of local research teams through the Junior Teams associated with the IRD (JEA), established with the partners.

The French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP) is the largest of the 27 UMIFREs for two reasons: Indian, not only Western researchers work there; IFP deals with biophysical sciences, not only with social sciences and humanities. It is composed of 4 departments (Indology, Social Sciences, Ecology and Geospatial Monitoring). Two keywords summarize the main part of their research objects: "heritage" and "environment".

"Heritage", because of the many quite unique collections it keeps (8,400 UNESCO-registered manuscripts, 15,500 species of pollen, 24,000 pages of herbarium, 130,000 photographs catalogued in the photo library ...), but also because of the publications of the IFP (critical editions of Sanskrit texts), and especially its research, which deals with religious rites as well as sacred groves or urban heritage policies. "Environment", because this term encompasses issues addressed by the IFP, in terms of health and nutrition, Ayurvedic and siddha medicine, forest ecology, biodiversity conservation, climate change, or management of irrigation water.

IRN-SUSTAINASIA

www.political ecology network.org

The International Research Network (IRN) - SustainAsia programme (2018-2023) brings together 5 Asian Umifres to conduct multidisciplinary and comparative researches on "Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development in Asia: Governance and Societies Confronted with Environmental Challenges", notably through the following axes:

- The challenge of inclusive growth
- Territorial organisation of human activities
- Degradation of the environment, public policies and political ecology

The programme involves Asian scientific partners from, amongst others: India, China, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

A warm welcome to the international conference “Political Ecology in Asia 2019: Plural Knowledge and Contested Development in a More-Than-Human World,” hosted in the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

This conference convenes together scholars, researchers, civil society representatives, journalists and students who hold a shared interest in the field of political ecology. We are honored to welcome the conference’s two keynote speakers: (retired) Professor Thanet Wongyannava (Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University) and Professor Lyla Mehta (Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex). We are also very glad that 45 papers will be presented on 12 panels over the two days of the conference. They cover a broad range of themes relevant to political ecology in Asia, and reflect the diversity of the field of political ecology conceptually and methodologically.

The origin of this conference is a discussion hosted by the French Institute of Pondicherry in October 2018, following the creation by the French CNRS of the IRN-SustainAsia network a few months earlier in Paris bringing together French and Asian research centers. For the present conference organization, four research institutions have collaborated closely, namely: the Center for Social Development Studies, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University; the French Research Institute for Sustainable Development – IRD; the French Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia – IRASEC; and the French Institute of Pondicherry - IFP. In organizing this international conference, we also are grateful for the financial support of the following organizations: the France Embassy in Thailand, IRN-Sustain Asia (CNRS), and the Faculty of Political Science and the Chula Global Network of Chulalongkorn University.

In organizing this international conference, we hope that we can contribute towards the following:

- To further the definition of the field of political ecology in Asia through the presentation of research papers with a focus on South and Southeast Asia;
- To build awareness about political ecology as an academic field amongst researchers and students in the region who may be less familiar with it;
- To facilitate networking amongst researchers with an interest in political ecology across South and Southeast Asia and globally; and
- To relate academic work on political ecology to ongoing challenges of sustainability, conflict transformation, and inclusive governance in Asia

We believe that it is both a timely and necessary moment to discuss the political ecology of Asia, and we wish you an engaging and insightful conference.

The Organizing Committee of Political Ecology in Asia 2019

- Carl Middleton (Center for Social Development Studies, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University)
- Olivier Evrard (French Research Institute for Sustainable Development - IRD)
- Sarah Benabou and Frédéric Landy (French Institute of Pondicherry - IFP)
- Christine Cabasset (French Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia - IRASEC)
- Stephane Rennesson (CNRS-LESC)



**THANES
WONGYANNAVA**

Retired Professor, Faculty of Political
Science, Thammasat University

CHAIR
**JAKKRIT
SANGKHAMANEE**

Faculty of Political Science,
Chulalongkorn University

DISCUSSANT
STÉPHANE RENNESSON

LESC-CNRS, Nanterre, France

REFLECTION ON VIJÑANA OF RELIGION: NEW ANIMISM IN THE AGE OF THE ANTHROPOCENE

In this keynote paper, I ask whether the diverse field of political ecology has the potential to – and could or should - accommodate *vijñana* ecology, which roughly translates to spirit ecology. I first consider the omnipresence of *vijñana* in Thailand, and show how within Thai social relations there is hierarchy in the structure of both the living and the dead. I then reflect upon the implications of a monotheistic mode of thought that has dominated globally since the colonial period. I show how within monotheistic thought and later secularized thought, animism was considered as a savage stage of social development, and how through colonialism missionaries sought to repress it. I then argue that there has been a recent resurrection of animism, in the age of the Anthropocene and post-secularization. Here, I propose that under this new animism magic, magical realism, and spiritualism are powerful and meaningful. Yet, I also argue that whilst the rise of new animism shows a sign of atonement between man and nature, neither the old animism nor the new animism has left the monotheistic sphere, and animism remains ‘in the jungle’ rather than in relation with major religions and institutions. In the final section of the paper, I outline the relationship between Buddhism, animism and Brahmanism in Thailand to show how they are widely connected throughout society. In considering the meaning of Nature (*Dharmajati*) and the role of magic, I draw particular attention to differences between the world of scholars, intellectuals, and modernist on the one hand, and local lay people on the other. Overall, I argue that political ecology needs to move beyond even the new animism and incorporate the epistemologies of *vijñana* ecology to fully encompass the human condition and the politics of nature and society.

CHAIR

KARINE LÉGER

Director of Airparif

Karine Léger is director of Airparif, the air quality monitoring network of Paris' Region. She has both a technical and a management background, linked with environmental issues (master in management at Science Po, Advanced Msc. in environmental management and engineering at Ecole des Mines). She has 18 years of expertise in air pollution, related with forecasting, communication, partnerships, innovation and international projects. She takes part in regional, national and European working groups on air quality, public information and communication strategy. She also develops and contribute to the management and development of different international projects with Airparif's counterparts like the Beijing environmental monitoring center, the AQCC of Teheran and the municipality of Hanoi.

PARTICULATE MATTERS: THE EMERGENCE OF A POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF HAZE IN ASIA

In the course of the last two decades, haze has become a key theme in the political agenda of many Asian countries and in urban conversation in major as well as secondary cities across Asia. Singapore, Hong-Kong, Beijing, Harbin, New Delhi, Bangkok, Chiang Mai etc. have all been impacted by seasonal smog that has raised fears and triggered heated debates echoed by national and foreign media: Beijing inhabitants coined the term 'airpocalypse' in 2013, Indian newspapers compared Delhi to a 'gaz chamber' in 2016, Chiang Mai was branded the 'most polluted city in the world' several days consecutively in 2018 and 2019 etc. In this panel, we want to consider haze as an emerging coalescence of scientific, political and cultural substance, as an intermediate object that retroact on social life. We will especially focus on three themes:

- Measurements and impacts: uncertainties and intimacies

As Dan Brockington notes, how we measure, and to what end and purposes matter a great deal because "measurement does not just record; it shapes, changes, and constitutes things. It is not merely descriptive. It is creative" (Brockington, 2017: 1). Knowledge about and measurement of particulate matters do not only register or record air pollution, they also create new objects in the public discourse and contribute to the transformation of a (worsening) seasonal phenomenon as local crisis. We would welcome contributions on two key aspects: the first one relates to the limited generazibility of scientific knowledge produced over air pollution and to the gaps it leaves in the interpretation by the general public of the nature, causes and consequences of the phenomenon. The second aspect focuses more on the non-material, non-scientific, dimensions of air pollution and the way it relates to intimate perceptions of breathing, affective atmospheres and possibly culturally determined attitudes toward "matters out of place". When air pollution acquires visibility both as a threat for corporeal security and as a scientific object, situation is therefore prone for "emotional fireworks" (Chateau Raynault, 2017: 425) and

science cannot claim to be neutral in this process. These two aspects have been studied in Western countries but much remain to be done to explain how controversies recently emerged around the “air pollution crisis” in various Asian contexts and how the haze is first and foremost a social production.

-Polluters and polluted: narratives of suspicion and blame

While causal uncertainty exists surrounding the precise combination of the drivers of haze, multiple narratives of its causes and effects circulate throughout the region, in which blame is alternatively put on smallholder farmers burning biomass, middle-class car owners, agribusiness companies, street food stalls, ineffective politicians, Indonesian or Burmese neighbours etc. Frequently intertwined with cultural representations of otherness and territorial patterns of inequalities, as well as with discussions about appropriate rural and urban lifestyles, these environmental narratives act as core categories in the contemporary controversies over the social production of haze. Diverse environmental knowledges (e.g. local, localized, global-expert) are differently validated, circulated, and contested within and between social groups, which can both engender and/or negate crisis narratives and be endorsed in local or national political agenda. An hybrid knowledge of air pollution is therefore constructed across various identity markers (such as ethnic diversity, urban-rural interaction, belonging to and agenda of academic, political or civil society networks) and through a range of material and discursive practices using new communication technologies such as the internet and smartphones. We would like therefore to inquire to which extent the haze has (re)activated a specifically Asian politics of environmental knowledge that has the ability to reshape social relations between the so-called polluters and the polluted.

-Atmospheric enclosures and inequalities

While haze could seem to be “democratic” in the way it affects all the population of a given area, various works have already demonstrated how inequality is mapped through spatial distinctions, often through differences in urban and rural development, as well as along the vertical scales of condominiums. In Hong Kong, air pollution is a class issue, where the urban elite set the clean-air agenda, while lower classes disproportionately suffer the effects of air pollution (Choy and Zee, 2015). Alternatively, in Northern Thailand, verticality is nearly absent in the urban setting but it translates into a distinction between lowland and upland areas that tends to overlap, though in partial and incomplete ways, with urban and rural

areas. A wide range of air purifiers companies also develop marketing campaigns in Delhi, Beijing or Bangkok, and promise respiratory refuges to those who can afford them. We would therefore welcome any contribution that focus on how the spatial distribution of air pollution is significant for how it produces and is produced by socio-economic inequality, how it gives birth to forms of atmospheric enclosures and possibly new patterns of social life.

References

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ROHIT NEGI

Associate Professor, Urban Studies,
Ambedkar University Delhi

Rohit Negi is Associate Professor of Urban Studies at Ambedkar University Delhi. Trained as an Urban Planner and Geographer, Rohit been a collaborator on the transnational research project entitled 'The Asthma Files'. Rohit is the co-editor of 'Space, Planning and Everyday Contestations in Delhi' (Springer, 2016), and his writings have appeared in journals like *Geoforum*, *Review of African Political Economy*, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *Urbanisation and the Economic and Political Weekly*.

PRERNA SRIGYAN

PhD student, University of California-Irvine

Perna Srigyan is a PhD student of Anthropology at the University of California-Irvine. Earlier, she was a Researcher at The Asthma Files (TAF) and looked at the production, circulation, and politics of environmental knowledge, focusing on Delhi's air pollution. A postgrad in Environment and Development from Ambedkar University Delhi, Perna's interests are in environmental anthropology and STS.

**MAKING AN 'INDIAN' AIR
POLLUTION TECHNOSCIENCE**

A vibrant debate on air pollution has underpinned questions of science and environment in the Delhi Region in the recent past. At least one strand of this technoscientific attention has grown in relation to the national government's position that not only is there insufficient evidence of mortality associated with air pollution, but also that existing research which extrapolates from empirical work on non-Indian populations living in non-Indian environments does not sufficiently capture the nuances specific to India. In other words, the 'ecological and environmental impacts, social infrastructure, cultural ethos, and characteristics of the Indian economy' (National Clean Air Plan, 2019) are not adequately addressed by the prevailing technoscientific consensus. The government therefore has called for 'indigenous studies' linking pollution and health. Similar nativist trends have been observed in United States, France, and Poland, too, with a recent editorial in *Nature* warning that such obstinacy may seriously undermine efforts to improve air quality.

This paper traces the evolution of an 'Indian' air pollution technoscience in response to the state's position via its two trajectories. The first sees scientists searching gaps in research, listing short-term and long-term research priorities and instantiating cross-disciplinary longitudinal projects. The second response, on the other hand, brings certain scientists and medical practitioners into confrontation with the state. These scientists argue that there is existing credible evidence of serious acute and chronic health effects to not only guide policy, but go into 'mission mode'. The paper shows how the contours of this debate are important to understand urban environmental politics and its links with knowledge and governance going forward.

RINI YUNI ASTUTI

Research Fellow, Asia Research
Institute, National University of Singapore

Dr. Rini Astuti is a Research Fellow at Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. She is also the 2019 APEC Women Fellowship awardee. Her current research focuses on emerging peatland and forest governance apparatuses in Indonesia.

ANDREW Mc GREGOR

Associate Professor, Dept of
Geography and Planning, Macquarie University

Prof. A. McGregor teaches at Dept Geography and Planning Macquarie University. He is particularly interested in exploring alternative human-nature relations in the context of climate change and the Anthropocene.

DAVID TAYLOR

Professor, Dept of Geography,
National University of Singapore

Prof. David Taylor is the Head of Geography Dept at National University of Singapore. He is the Principal Investigator of a SSRC funded research on the governance of the transboundary environmental commons in Southeast Asia.

**POSITIONING INDONESIA'S OIL PALM
SMALLHOLDERS IN THE
ANTHROPOCENE DEBATES**

This paper focuses on the air pollution crisis that affects periodically Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia and which is largely blamed in the public debate on palm oil plantations. We examine the position of oil palm smallholders in debates concerning the Anthropocene, focusing on Indonesia as a case study. Smallholder farmers were responsible for approximately 40% of Indonesia's palm oil cultivation (11.9 million hectares) in 2016, and this is predicted to grow to over 60% by 2030. The area of smallholder oil palm has grown at an average rate of over 11% per annum since 2016 surpassing that of private companies at 5.5% annually. Mono-agricultural practices are eradicating forest and peatland biodiversity and gradually destroying the possibility that future users will be able to benefit from ecosystem services, and even live in those areas. However, in many areas in Indonesia, oil palm is also providing direct livelihoods to more than 4 million farmers; and more than 12 million Indonesians have escape poverty through this crop. In this paper, we employ Bruno Latour's concept of propositions, to identify and assess three emerging approaches in Indonesia to address the transboundary impacts produced through the land use decisions of millions of rural smallholder farmers. The three propositions relate to diverse socio technological advancement and good agricultural practices promoting intensification, certification, and alternative livelihoods. We examine each proposition by drawing on the political ecology perspectives, contextualizing the socio-environmental dilemma facing smallholders oil palm production.

SARATH GUTTIKUNDA

Founder/director of
UrbanEmissions.Info (UEinfo, India) and
affiliate associate professor at
Desert Research Institute (Reno, USA).

Dr. Sarath Guttikunda, is the Founder/Director of UrbanEmissions and an Atmospheric Scientist. His interest on air pollution stems from the guidance received during Bachelors at the Indian Institute of Technology (Kharagpur, India, 1997) and during Doctorate from the University of Iowa (Iowa City, USA, 2002). Since returning to India in 2007, he co-founded UrbanEmissions, an independent institution researching air pollution at urban, regional, and global scales. He was a visiting faculty at the Indian Institute of Technology (Delhi and Bombay) between 2011-2016. In 2009, Sarath became part of the global TED fellows community.

**HOW TO BREAK THE POLITICAL BARRIER
TO ACT ON AIR POLLUTION CONTROL
WITH OPEN INFORMATION?**

Almost all the debates on air quality in India are (often) limited to big cities (like Delhi), even though most of India's population lives in Tier-2, Tier-3, and smaller towns. There is little by way of measurements or an assessment of sources contributing to local air pollution problems or the growing health impacts associated with these pollution levels. And this prerogative often gives the political platform to use sentence like "we do not know enough to act". In this presentation, author will present the Air Pollution knowledge Assessment (APnA) city program, launched in 2017 and now covering information baselines for 50 Indian cities. The program is an attempt to fill the information gap, with an objective to create a baseline databases to support policymakers as they chart out strategies to improve air quality and provide a platform for open public policy dialogue in India.

Resource link - <http://www.urbanemissions.info/india-apna/>

OLIVIER ÉVRARD

Researcher, French Research Institute
for Sustainable Development

Dr Olivier Évrard is a social anthropologist at the French Research Institute for Sustainable Development in France and representative of IRD in Thailand. He has conducted extensive periods of fieldwork since the mid-90s mostly with highland Mon-Khmer and lowland Tai speaking populations in Laos and Thailand. His work focuses on ethnicity, mobility, land use and history of interethnic relationships particularly as they intersect with environmental issues.

**MARY
MOSTAFANEZHAD**

Associate Professor, Department of
Geography, Hawai'i University at Manoa.

Dr. Mary Mostafanezhad is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography and Environment at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Through her work, she brings critical geopolitics and political ecology perspectives to bear on development, tourism and socio-ecological change in the Asia-Pacific region. She is the author of *Volunteer Tourism: Popular Humanitarianism in Neoliberal Times* (Routledge, 2014) and co-editor of eight books, such as *At Home and in the Field: Ethnographic Encounters in Asia and the Pacific Islands* (University of Hawaii Press, 2015), and *Political Ecology of Tourism: Community, Power, and Environment* (Routledge, 2016).

**HAZE CRISIS AND UPLAND/LOWLAND
RELATIONSHIPS IN CHIANG MAI, THAILAND**

Each year between February and April, seasonal air pollution canvasses northern Thailand. This annual occurrence has persisted for at least several decades and it has only recently become a social and political crisis in the region. While causal uncertainty surrounding the socio-ecological drivers of the recently dubbed “haze crisis” persist, multiple narratives of its causes and effects circulate throughout the region, in which blame is frequently placed on smallholder swidden farmers who have recently entered into new market relations. This paper offers a critical analysis of recent events and debates over the measurement of particulate matter over time, as well as the range of blame narratives that inform the judgment of the haze as a crisis. In this context, we argue that the haze crisis is in part the latest narrative on the ecological crisis of the uplands while growing urban pollution is largely ignored.

CHAIRS

KANOKWAN MANOROM

Associate Professor,
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**BERNADETTE P.
RESURRECCIÓN**

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FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The session brings together recent and ongoing research on Southeast Asian rural landscapes that demonstrate power-laden and contested processes of extraction, claim-making and industrial zoning in increasingly risky climate change-stressed contexts. At the same time, planned interventions in these contexts are defined as problems requiring technical and economic solutions and therefore sidestep declining people's resource rights and well-being. The papers in this session show that the tight weaving of material and discursive elements have reality-producing effects: they re/create multiple and interlocking inequalities and disadvantage and also construct unhelpful hierarchies of knowledge.

Two papers demonstrate the role of state brokerage in legitimizing corporate claims to frontier spaces symptomatic of the emerging trend of 'frontier capitalism' in the region. One paper, on the other hand, points to more benign narratives on climate change adaptation and migration, showing how they may inadvertently lead to land capture and distressing security-related pressures on local populations. Departing from studies on rural landscapes, a final paper delves into the professionalization of gender in environment and development scientific and technical settings and unpacks how epistemologies are contested, 'rendering gender as technical' in environmental programmes and as a result, blunting its political edge and transformative potential.

A feminist political ecology (FPE) approach brings together fine-grained studies on the workings of power and resource exploitation that simultaneously re/produce multiple and intersecting forms of inequalities and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, age, and class, defining short- and long-term experiences of disadvantage. Additionally, FPE calls for decolonizing practices as studies under this stream lay bare and question the persistence of colonial claim-making through new forms of statist authority and legitimacy. Finally, FPE also interrogates knowledge

production, neoliberal regimes, 'technologies of rule' and policy making, as they herald new forms of intervention and environmental governance that may be inflected with assumptions that deepen gender-differentiated and unjust life opportunities and exclusions under the guise of professional expertise and intervention.

1B

FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

**BERNADETTE P.
RESURRECCIÓN**

Senior Research Fellow
Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)

Dr Bernadette P. Resurrección is a Senior Research Fellow at the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI). She has more than 20 years of experience doing research and teaching on gender, environment, and international development. She leads the Gender, Environment and Development (GED) Research Cluster of the Stockholm Environment Institute (Asia Centre) and co-leads the SEI (global) Gender & Social Equality Programme. Bernadette has worked on climate adaptation, water stresses in peri-urban Southeast Asia, migration and disasters in Philippine coastal areas, among others. Bernadette is the 2019 winner of the Mary Fran Myers Award for Gender and Disaster awarded by the Center for Natural Hazards and the Gender and Disaster Network (GDN) at the University of Colorado in Boulder. She was formerly an Associate Professor of Gender and Development Studies at the School of Environment, Resources & Development of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT). She received her M.A. and Ph.D. in Development Studies from the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University in the Netherlands.

**GENDER PROFESSIONALS IN ENVIRONMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT. THEORY AND PRAXIS
THROUGH FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY**

The presentation is about a book in progress on the work of gender professionals in environment and development institutions, where they are charged with tackling gender inequality. Major donors and policy directors today require gender analyses in planning technical projects on climate change, disaster risk reduction, and food and water insecurity. Global climate change and disaster agreements and protocols contain clauses for the integration of gender equality in intervention programs building on conventions such as the Sustainable Development Goals, UNCED Agenda 21 and Section K of the Women's Beijing Platform for Action.

As recent global agreements bring renewed urgency to environmental challenges, gender professionals – specialists and experts, researchers, organizational focal points – simultaneously deal with personal, power-laden realities associated with navigating gender in everyday practice, and wider questions of epistemology, where gender analysis is brought into fields defined as largely techno-scientific and managerialist. How then to move forward and work with gender challenges collaboratively in technical, environmental management settings?

This book takes a self-reflexive view of the politics of knowledge in the gender profession in environment and development, framed through feminist political ecology and given voice by gender professionals themselves. It aims to understand gender professionals' strategies and dilemmas as they are tasked to advance gender equality in difficult contexts where the technical sciences traditionally define priorities for research and policy action.

The book takes a relational approach to explore tensions (and their potential for promising and alternative pathways) between the position of the gender planning expert and the tasks that demand simplifications and quick fixes, and between professional practice and the worlds that experts of various stripes wish to transform. By reflecting on and unpacking the experiences of gender professionals and their everyday professional lives, the book also takes the opportunity to re-visit the suite of technical planning tools that have been developed within the 'gender business', and to reflect on whether they have led to meaningful gender equality outcomes or have blunted the possibility of deeper transformation.

KANOKWAN MANOROM

Associate Professor,
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Associate Professor Kanokwan Manorom, a director of Mekong Sub-Region Social Research Center (MSSRC) based at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand. She earned her Ph.D in Rural Sociology from the University of Missouri-Columbia, USA. She was granted the Australian Leadership Award (ALA) as a visiting scholar to base at the University of Sydney in 2011. She has been working in Thailand and Mekong region in fields such as political economy and resource governance, livelihoods analysis, development and impact assessment. She has closely worked with civil society organizations. She had worked on the Mekong Fellowship Project under M-POWER and Water, Land and Ecosystem Program (WLE) Greater Mekong during 2012-2017. She is currently a steering committee of SUMERNET program, SEI. Since 2014, she has been collaborating with researchers from University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Alberta on importance of local/indigenous knowledge on sustainable resource governance. Her main published paper is revolved around resource governance, gender and border study

FEMINISM POLITICAL ECOLOGY AND LAND BROKER STATE IN THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES (SEZs) IN THE MEKONG: A CASE STUDY OF THAILAND

Feminist Political Ecology mainly deals with a political ecological life. Its analysis enormously focuses on access to, control over, and produce knowledge of natural resources. Thus, I will use a case of land's control that impact lives of women, taking a case study of Thailand. The presentation will highlight how land has been controlled by state through special economic zones policy and implementation in the border areas of Thailand. This is because borders are perceived by state as sites of frontier capitalist development resulted in backward development policy and Mekong economic cooperation that exploits locals rather than improving their lives. Hence, I will discuss how the Thai government has acted as "a land broker" for private businesses in its support of neoliberalism through SEZ projects. It furnishes private companies with land plots serving the companies and as a result attracting further investments rather than protecting local stakeholder's rights especially women. By doing this it turns once communal land into a private commodity. This leaves many economic, social, and environmental risks that can potentially affect local communities who would lose their land to the development of SEZs. Regulating the frontier landscape through special laws, the rhetoric of good governance, and state mechanisms have destroyed local, affected women's livelihoods and their dependence on natural resources, land resource, in particular. Hence, I argue that a special economic zone project acting as an agent of "Frontier Capitalism" has come to affect women's everyday lives, created day-to-day suffering, excluded women from the benefits from development and access to land resources that sustain their livelihoods. Despite this, women have tried to protect their livelihoods and negotiated with the state, but their negotiation has been difficult due chiefly to gender norms in favor of powerful men and state.

SITI MAIMUNAH

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow/
WEGO-ITN University of Passau

Siti Maimunah (Mai) is a scholar-activist from Indonesia who is studying Feminist Political Ecology. She is a Ph.D. student at the University of Passau, Germany, and a fellow of Marie Skłodowska-Curie/ WEGO-ITN. She was working on issues around mining, gender, and indigenous people in Indonesia by combining research, popular writing, and environmental justice activism. She is preparing her first writing collaboration on research ethics and decolonial thinking and looking forward to practising in her research about how ethnicity, gender, and intersectionality shape the resource frontier in Indonesia.

**BEYOND RECOGNITION OF ADAT FOREST:
FEMINIST POLITICAL ECOLOGY AND
RESOURCE FRONTIER ON CUSTOMARY
FOREST IN INDONESIA**

The Indonesian government is supporting extractives, such as mining, logging, and large plantations, as part of a national framework and commodity-based approach to national growth. Supported by global and regional forces, Indonesian extractive regimes play a key role in the formation of the country's economic and political order. The government provides the huge land for extractive projects, including customary forests. Reflecting from de-colonial thinking, this paper argues in the persistence of a colonial perspective reflected by the Indonesian state managing the land and forest ecosystem as commodities. Turning to commodities creates resource frontier and frontier space, divided the nature-culture for the future goals of development/modernity. The state assigns land concessions to the corporation, overtakes the customary forest and creates conflicts. The changing to decentralization and opening democratic space is a historical turning point for Indonesian civil society and Indigenous people to reflect on the ignorance of environmental destruction, agrarian conflicts and civil society demands for agrarian reform. Especially when Indonesian constitutional court ordered the state should release customary forest from the state forest (2013) and the government program of agrarian reform (2015) include the recognition of adat forest. Using decolonial critics and intersectionality the presentation brings different perspectives and questions on how customary forest recognition is an opportunity to challenge extractive regimes in Indonesia.

SARA VIGIL

Stockholm Environment Institute

Sara Vigil is a Research Fellow at the Stockholm Environment Institute (Asia Center), within the Gender, Environment, and Development cluster. Sara conducted her PhD with the Political Ecology research group at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS, Erasmus University Rotterdam) and at the Hugo Observatory (University of Liege, Belgium). She has lectured at Sciences Po Paris, Paris 13 Sorbonne, at the Brussels School of Journalism and Communication and has worked as a research fellow and associate for several universities, think tanks, and international organizations.

TOWARDS A FEMINIST GEOPOLITICAL ECOLOGY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE, LAND GRABS, AND MIGRATION

Adaptation and security framings have gained traction not only to explain the causal chains and impacts of environmental change and/or migration, but also to justify land intensive interventions to address them. Despite progress in the understanding of the complex links between environmental change and migration, academic and policy analyses have paid scarce attention to the ways in which environmental and migration narratives are (re)shaping access to fundamental natural resources and changing migration dynamics in the process. Moreover, in the burgeoning literature on land and green grabs, the impacts of migration narratives on land grabs as well as the impacts of land grabs on migration remain underexplored. In order to fill these gaps and bridge the diverse disciplines that deal with these phenomena, my PhD research used a 'variegated geopolitical ecology' framework to examine the material and discursive interactions between environmental change, land grabbing, and migration. Using a global ethnographic approach, the methodology involved a historical and multi-scalar analysis together with extensive comparative fieldwork conducted in two different socio-political settings: Senegal and Cambodia. Notwithstanding important context specificities, findings across cases show how environmental and migration narratives, linked to adaptation and security discourses, have been deployed – advertently or inadvertently – to justify land capture, leading to interventions that often increase, rather than alleviate, the very pressures that they intend to address. The research shows that despite the opposed assumptions that underpin the 'migration as adaptation' or 'migration as security threat' narratives, both frames can interact with environmental and climate change justifications in ways that create 'self-fulfilling risks,' which make insecurity and maladaptation a reality that extends well beyond the landscapes where land grabs unfold. After presenting the variegated geopolitical

ecology framework and the main findings of this work, this presentation will discuss how and why the inclusion of a feminist vantage point that bridges feminist geopolitics with feminist political ecology can significantly advance our understanding of both the macro and micro level factors that together shape the complex interrelations between environmental change, land grabs, and migration.

RESOURCE POLITICS AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

In Asia, access to resources, ranging from land and water, to clean air and energy, are central to livelihoods and wellbeing. The distribution of access to resources reflect state policies and societal values, as well as the inclusiveness and accountability of decision-making processes that link them together and result in their translation into practice. The public sphere is the arena where state policies and societal values interact and are debated, including on often contested issues such as access to resources. It includes public venues, and via the mass media and social media. Opportunities to utilize the public sphere as an arena for resource politics for accountability and exploring alternatives vary across Asia, reflecting diverse political and legal systems.

In this panel, we explore various dimensions of the public sphere in relation to resource politics in Asia. One paper critically assesses the very meaning of public and private in the Mekong region, and discusses the implications for land and environmental governance. A second paper focuses on the transformation of the public sphere in Myanmar from during the military junta period to under the current semi-civilian government. It argues that a hybrid public sphere presently exists in Myanmar that maintains some continuity of the previous authoritarian period with a degree of civil, political and media freedoms that were more recently gained. The final paper examines the environmental consequences of India's recent shift in politics and political economy, and the implications for environmental journalism and civil society.

PHILIP HIRSCH

School of Geosciences,
University of Sydney

Philip Hirsch is Emeritus Professor of Human Geography at the University of Sydney and is a research affiliate at Chiang Mai University. He has published extensively on environment, development and agrarian change in Southeast Asia and has carried out rural fieldwork in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia over a period of more than three decades. His recent books include (with Derek Hall and Tania Li) *Powers of Exclusion: Land dilemmas in Southeast Asia* (Singapore University Press 2011); (with Ben Boer, Fleur Johns, Ben Saul and Natalia Scurrah) *The Mekong: A socio-legal approach to river basin development* (Earthscan/Routledge 2016); and the *Routledge Handbook of the Environment in Southeast Asia* (Routledge 2017).

DEMARCATING THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IN LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN THE MEKONG REGION

This presentation sets out a framework for taking a critical look at the context-determined demarcation between the public and private spheres in the realm of land, natural resources and environmental governance in the Mekong Region. It explores the generation of plural meanings of “public” and “private” in terms of what constitutes the public sphere, the public interest, public goods and public space – and how these are set conceptually and materially against the private. It does so through an exploration of ways in which public and private are demarcated in development projects and policies, and the implications that the explicit or implicit meanings in such demarcation hold for: the actor configurations and power relations that shape how collective and individual interests are defined; ways in which claims to ownership of resources are formulated and legitimized; the spaces within which projects can be debated, contested and governed; and ultimately how benefits, costs and risks are distributed across society. The presentation draws examples from hydropower dams and land appropriation in the Mekong Region to illustrate how these issues may be explored and to make the case for context-specific examination of ways in which the public-private demarcation is understood and deployed.

TAY ZAR MYO WIN

Center for Social Development Studies,
Faculty of Political Science,
Chulalongkorn University

Tay Zar Myo Win is an independent researcher working with many research organizations including the Center of Social Development Studies, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University. Tay Zar's main research interests include decentralization, democratization, local governance, and public participation in politics, particularly in both Myanmar and regional Southeast Asian contexts. Tay Zar holds a Master's degree of Arts in International Development Studies from Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Political Science, Thailand. Apart from his researcher's life for a demi-decade, Tay Zar earns ten years of experiences in the NGO sectors to manage multiple grants with Civil Society Organizations for implementing projects, providing civic education, voter education and deeper understandings of democracy, human rights, and promoting civic engagements towards the better inclusive governance transition for Myanmar.

THE HYBRID PUBLIC SPHERE IN MYANMAR AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Myanmar was under a military junta government for almost six decades, during when the state heavily controlled the population's access to information through maintaining an 'authoritarian public sphere,' including via severe control over civil society and independent mass media. In 2010, Myanmar held elections that resulted in a semi-civilian government despite the heavy flaws. Whilst the military maintained considerable influence, a degree of electoral competition and civil, political and media freedoms were introduced within the constraints of the 2008 constitution. This melding of both liberal and illiberal elements within an electoral system is best understood as a hybrid regime (Diamond, 2002). In this paper, the authors analyze the emergence of a 'hybrid public sphere' in Myanmar since 2010 that maintained some elements of the previous authoritarian control of production and circulation of critical discourse which combined with more liberal elements that reflect recently gained civil, political and media freedoms and a greater role for civil society, journalists, and interaction through social media. This paper develops its analysis through an assessment of the political transition at the national level, and then through a case study of subnational politics in *Dawei* City which specifically focuses on the local planning of electricity supply. The authors argue that for Myanmar to shift from the procedural to the substantive form of democracy, independent civil society requires a series of strategies that deepen and link the recently gained formal freedoms to ensuring the accountability of state and powerful non-state actors via the creation and maintenance of a substantive public sphere.

M. RAJSHEKHAR

Independent journalist, Delhi.

M. RAJSHEKHAR worked as a business reporter before heading to the University of Sussex for an MA in Environment, Development and Policy. In 2010, he joined The Economic Times, India's largest selling business paper, to report on rural India and environment. In 2015, he moved to Scroll.in, an online journalism startup, where, trying to refamiliarise himself with the country after the rise of Narendra Modi, he spent his first three years living in and reporting from six provinces of the country. Over these nine years, he has developed a focus on natural resources, political corruption, oligarchy, crony capitalism and democratic malfunction.

A RISING INDIFFERENCE TO LAW: ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING IN THE AGE OF NARENDRA MODI

Five years ago, India kicked off the sad transition from an imperfect democracy into a more authoritarian, right-leaning one. This mutation, one that is still underway, comes with large environmental consequences.

I start by briefly describing the evolution of India's environmental jurisprudence. And then, I take a deeper look at the political economy of the environment between 2004-2014, when a coalition government, fronted by the Congress party, was in power. This was an interesting period where – between the imperatives to attract investment, win votes and raise enough money to fight elections – the political parties in power simultaneously took progressive and regressive decisions. We saw natural resources scams that handed mineral reserves (iron and coal) mostly in dense forests, to a handful of politically connected actors, and we saw the passage of progressive legislation that sought to vest use/management rights over forests with local communities, for instance.

Things are very different now. The new government at the centre, led by the rightwing Bharatiya Janata Party, is far more willing to assert its authority – to even skirt or go beyond the law – than the previous one. An instance here is the Ganges. Three large projects coming up in this basin – a highway up in the hills, an inland waterway running the river's length, and inter-basin transfers – have been exempted from environmental scrutiny.

This hardening desire to chase industrial growth irrespective of environmental costs is different from what we have seen in countries like China. There is a curious reliance on a handful of large business houses that bag most of these contracts, for one. In my talk, I focus on the nature of such alliances, their opacity, the costs of the government focusing on a few firms, and the challenges civil society faces while trying to uncover these processes.

OLIVIER CHRÉTIEN

Head of Department Environmental
Impacts Prevention, Paris Municipality

Olivier Chrétien has been working for more than 20 years on urban and environmental issues for the City of Paris, in which on public spaces, mobility & environment (e.g. Bike Action Plan, Tramways), etc. For the last 8 years, he has been the head of the “Environmental Impacts Division” at the Urban Ecology Agency. He leads studies and expertise in the fields of noise, air quality, soil pollution and electromagnetic waves. He participates to the city's environmental strategies, through the drafting of environmental planning documents (climate, air, energy, noise, etc. action plans) and provides technical support to the municipality's projects on urban pollutions. He also works on the development of innovative tools to combat pollution and on raising public awareness on environmental issues.

ASIA'S URBAN POLITICAL ECOLOGIES

Asia's fast urbanization pace, in a context marked by the depletion and degradation of natural resources, has already been well documented. Indeed, cities are facing a big number of challenges, such as population growth, housing, inequalities, transportation-mobilities, waste, energy, pollution, etc. These vulnerabilities are enhanced by climate change / extreme climate events and other natural hazards. In order to address the main issues, programs and concepts such as « Environmentally sustainable cities » and « Resilient cities » have targeted the cities where a concentration of both environmental issues and potential solutions can be found. But altering the trends and improving the situation have revealed to be particularly challenging in Asia's complex politico-economic urban governance context, with opposing, and sometimes conflicting agendas, powers, interests, competences and skills at all level (international – national – local). However, one may also observe a kind of new consensus regarding environmental matters, reinforced by the growing feeling of “Climate emergency”. Increasing media coverage and global movements (e.g. Climate marches, etc.) also served the shift. The objective of this panel is to highlight some components at play in the fabric of the « Environmentally Sustainable City », with a particular focus on one or more of three inter-related processes: new forms of democracy, governance and cooperation (international, regional, transnational).

NIRAMON SERISAKUL

Urban Design and Development Centre
(UddC) / Department of Urban and Regional
Planning, Chulalongkorn University

Niramon Serisakul is an assistant professor at Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Chulalongkorn University and a director of Urban Design and Development Center. She was invited as a Fellow of Collegium de Lyon, and an associate researcher in Institute for East Asian Studies in 2016 and an invited professor at Science Po Lyon in 2017.

**WATER MANAGEMENT IN BANGKOK
AND UNEVEN VULNERABILITIES**

Bangkok has a long relationship with water; water is not only fundamental to the people as an essential resource, but also central to the country's culture. Because of its location and geography, Bangkok is naturally prone to flooding. In earlier times, Thais were able to adapt their lifestyles to accommodate the annual arrival of water. Initially, Bangkok was a functional water-based city. However, starting in the 1890s, Bangkok started to become a land-based city. Due to the city's unsustainable development in the 20th century, it has experienced severe floods in recent decades. Bangkok's urbanization has contributed to the floods through decreased water retention spaces (i.e., canals). Urbanization has caused land subsidence due to ground water pumping. Global climate change means rising sea levels, threatening low-lying cities such as Bangkok. Water management of the Thai government and Bangkok has been inefficient. The institutional traps that have hampered the state's governance are its fragmentation, inflexibility, incomplete decentralization, elite capture, and flawed crisis management plans. Since flooding is an annual natural occurrence, it is imperative that the state prepares policies that are both reactive and preventive. The state must first acknowledge that it is also responsible in the distribution of risk. The most fundamental solution is a bottom-up approach and expansion of public participation. However, this will require time and patience, and it must be carefully implemented as it may become another channel through which the state claims legitimacy without actually incorporating the people's voice.

IRVAN PULUNGAN

Coastal Committee Member,
Governor's Delivery Unit,
Jakarta Capital City Government

Irvan Pulungan is a trained urban planner and policy analyst who's holding a Master degree on Eco-Cities from Cardiff University. Currently, He is working as Senior Policy Advisor for Jakarta Governor's Office 2017 – 2022 with as one of main responsibilities, the coordination the city climate change working group in developing substantive policy direction to achieve the city climate commitment in reducing 30% of its greenhouse gas emission by 2030. Irvan started his career as policy analyst in 2006 as a researcher at the Indonesian Centre for Environmental Law. In 2008, Irvan was appointed by the Minister of Environment to become member of the ministerial research group to draft Indonesian Environmental Protection and Management Act.

MANAGING THE (SINKING) CITY OF JAKARTA

Land subsidence, flooding and sea level rise have been Jakarta's major urban development challenges for centuries. For decades now, Jakarta has become the victim of economic power induced urban spatial planning process. As a result, the city of Jakarta, especially its coastal areas, have become an externality in the urbanisation process based on economic growth from the sale of land and property. This impressive economic growth made Jakarta gain considerable competitiveness at regional level and thus turned it into one of the most populous cities in the world. Meanwhile, however, Jakarta has experienced a massive decline of its environmental quality and environmental services, making it one of the megacities facing – at a fast pace - the threat of sinking and of the loss of its most important urban assets, water resources, in the context of climate change.

This paper examines how, facing this highly challenging situation, the Governor of Jakarta 2017 – 2022 is strengthening all aspects of the city planning and policy making process to manage land groundwater extraction and climate change that have made the city sink in the past few decades. One of the tools mobilized lies in the development of a new urban governance in order to encourage the implementation of innovative and comprehensive sustainable policies.

RÉMI DE BERCEGOL

Center for Social Sciences and
Humanities / French National Center for
Scientific Research – CNRS

Rémi de Bercegol, Ph.D., is a Research Fellow at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) deputed to the Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities (CSH) in New Delhi. His research focuses now on world urbanisation and the transformation of cities in the global South, analyzed principally in terms of their essential services (water, sanitation, waste management and energy). Beyond his academic publications, Rémi de Bercegol has been organizing numerous public events and public exhibitions in India and France.

SHANKARE GOWDA

Associate to Centre for Policy
Research (CPR) New Delhi

Shankare Gowda, PhD, is an Urban Governance specialist, associated with Centre for Policy Research (CPR) New Delhi. He is also a collaborator of Centre de Sciences Humaines (CSH) and he has co-authored several publications on Indian urbanisation.

MARGINALIZING POLICIES: RETHINKING THE MODERNIZATION OF THE WASTE SECTOR IN DELHI

One important aspect of sustainability involves the flows of materials and energy, extracted, consumed, transformed and disposed of in the functioning of urban societies. In particular, the question of urban waste, a sector previously neglected in the field of urban policy, has slowly become a major issue in world urbanization. Through an analysis of the case of Delhi, this chapter aims to undertake an exploration of the valorization of waste. It studies in particular the marginalization effects of waste management policies in Delhi (that essentially promote large centralised technical systems such as waste-to-energy plants), on waste recycling markets and the people working with waste (whose work is -partly- informal and poorly recognized). Hence, the main objectives of this presentation are (1) to question the marginalization effects of the current reforms on the waste informal sector by looking at the life at the margins of the waste workers and (2) to analyze the potentialities of re-integrating marginalized industries to complement the overall system in an adapted way.

CHRISTINE CABASSET

French Institute on Contemporary
Southeast Asia – IRASEC

Christine Cabasset, Ph.D in geography and territory planning, is a research fellow at the French Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia – IRASEC (CNRS-MEAE) based in Bangkok, and an associate researcher to the Center on Southeast Asia – CASE (EHESS-CNRS-INALCO) in Paris. She has been studying Southeast Asia since the beginning of the 1990s, particularly Indonesia and Timor-Leste. Linking the fields of urban/tourism planning and management, environment and governance, her current research focuses on adaptation of major seaside tourist resorts areas to environmental conditions. She published numerous academic works and organized/and contributed to a number of scientific events.

GOVERNANCE OF SEASIDE TOURIST RESORTS AREAS CONFRONTED WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

A big number of works and programmes are specifically targeting cities and towns in order to tackle urban and environmental issues. Such things still remain uncommon for the major seaside tourist resorts areas although they definitely are urban areas, having even become in some places extended and densely populated conurbations. While the density of population, tourists and commercial activities require efficient urban and environmental services, one may observe a general deficit of such infrastructures and services, notably in the fields of energy, transportation, water supply and waste – liquid and solid – management systems. Concurrently, like all coastal towns or cities, seaside tourist resorts areas are increasingly affected by climate change effects and extreme weather events. The challenges may also turn to be social when local residents oppose some large-scale projects. However, because of specific local conditions – e.g. historical, social, or political, not all tourist resorts areas are environmentally managed in the same way. The objectives of this presentation is to remind the main environmental challenges faced by seaside tourist resorts areas, as well as to analyze the main factors at game in better governed and managed places, and the main trends on climate policies.

CHAIR

MILES KENNEY-LAZARDepartment of Geography,
National University of Singapore

Miles Kenney-Lazar is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore. He has been conducting research on the political, economic, and environmental geographies of large-scale Vietnamese and Chinese agro-industrial plantations in Laos over the past decade, particularly their threats to peasant claims on land and forested landscapes. He is currently expanding his research to analyze the politics of land dispossession in peri-urban Laos and land rights restitution in Myanmar (Burma).

POLITICAL ECOLOGIES OF LAND IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: BEYOND THE TECHNICAL-REGULATORY GAZE

Land issues in the Mekong countries of Southeast Asia have drawn increasing research attention since the 2000s, especially due to transboundary land investments and the commercialisation of agriculture. A common concern of applied policy and academic research is the ways in which farmers are excluded or dispossessed of lands in the process of commodifying rural livelihoods, solutions to which are often framed in technical terms, such as land use planning, regulation, zoning, and formalisation. While formal policy instruments are one response to potential loss of access to farmland and forests that are vital to the livelihoods of rural communities, the technical-regulatory domain is often isolated from unseen links between land and society, local politics and wider economies, contributing to the frequently observed disconnect between policy and practice with regards to land issues. This panel seeks to move beyond the technical-regulatory gaze applied to land to examine these broader socio-political links from several key perspectives in the context of agrarian change in the Mekong region. The panel incorporates field-based research on the interactions between monoculture commodity crops/plantations, land degradation and migration/rural labour dynamics; rights-based approaches to community land titling; and the inherently multi-layered nature of governance and actor relations regarding land issues; with the aim of extending the boundaries of comparative political ecologies of land. Panellists explore these themes via cases focused on Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar.

ROBERT COLE

Global Production Networks Centre
and Department of Geography,
National University of Singapore, and
Centre for Social Development Studies,
Chulalongkorn University

Robert Cole is a doctoral candidate with the Global Production Networks Centre and Department of Geography, National University of Singapore, and Research Associate with the Centre for Social Development Studies, Chulalongkorn University. His interests surround economic integration, rural development and environmental issues in the Mekong countries of Southeast Asia. His doctoral research explores interconnections between globalising agri-food production and agrarian change in Laos' northeast borderlands.

THE MAIZE BOOM IN NORTHERN LAOS: IMPACTS ON LAND USE AND ACCESS

Upland farmers in Laos' northern Houaphan province have experienced a rapid transition over the past decade from subsistence to commercial livelihoods combining rice with the commodity crop of maize, for industrial animal feed in Vietnam. Cultivated on steep sloping land, the relatively small plots involved add up to large-scale conversion of former swidden landscapes into areas of near monoculture maize. This presentation considers the effects on customary access and land use practices when a commodity crop is introduced to an existing swidden system. Based on a mixed-method study in two villages of Houaphan province, the research shows how maize progressively expanded over the existing system, which was primarily based on clearance rights agreed between the households in each cropping season. After several years of continuous production of maize, the land base rapidly degraded, which farmers compensated through input intensification and extension of cultivated area within the limits of household labour. At the same time, many hoped for ways out of maize through diversification to fruits. This scenario raises questions about the potential transformation of an existing, mutually agreed rotational land-use system into longer-term, fixed uses in the form of plantations. The research also highlights the offloading of ecological and social risks from large agri-food corporations to contract farmers in marginal uplands of Southeast Asia.

MILES KENNEY-LAZAR

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Miles Kenney-Lazar is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore. He has been conducting research on the political, economic, and environmental geographies of large-scale Vietnamese and Chinese agro-industrial plantations in Laos over the past decade, particularly their threats to peasant claims on land and forested landscapes. He is currently expanding his research to analyze the politics of land dispossession in peri-urban Laos and land rights restitution in Myanmar (Burma).

**THE RELATIONAL GOVERNANCE OF LAND:
CONTESTED PLANTATION CONCESSIONS
IN LAOS**

The government of Laos has conceded over one million hectares of land – five percent of the national territory – to resource investors, threatening rural community access to customary lands and forests. However, investors have not been able to use all the land granted to them and their projects have generated geographically uneven dispossession in part due to local resistance. This presentation compares how dispossession materialized in eight villages targeted by a Vietnamese rubber plantation and a Chinese pulpwood plantation in southern Laos. I contribute to a nascent literature on the political contingencies of dispossession by showing how extra-economic forces of expropriation are governed relationally. Contributing to a relational environmental governance framework, I demonstrate how such contingencies are shaped by social and political relations among and internal to state, capital, and community actors, leading to either the extension and solidification or contraction and fragmentation of dispossession as a hegemonic mode of development. In the case at hand I focus on four sets of decisive relations: 1) corporate-state relations that mediate the capacity of investors to mobilize state powers of land expropriation, 2) the state's discursive framing of socio-environmental relations between communities and their rural environments, which affects how amenable village territories are to acquisition, 3) community-government relations built on kinship, ethnic, or historical links which villagers can use to lodge effective grievances with the state, and 4) coherent and democratic internal village relations that build community solidarity against plantation development

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Dr Soimart Rungmanee is a lecturer at the School of Development Studies, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand. Prior to that, she was a research assistant at UNESCO and UNDP Bangkok involved in projects “Indigenous People in the Protected Areas in the Andaman Sea” and “Mobility and HIV/AIDS Vulnerability in the Mekong Sub-region.” Her expertise lies in the intersections of rural sociology and sociology of development. Her research interest covers the themes of migration and rural change and politics of natural resource management. She is currently conducting research projects on crop booms and migration in Lao PDR, and gender and land governance in the Mekong Sub-region.

PATCHARIN LAPANUN
SOUKNIDA SAUTOUKY
MAW THOE MYAR

**MIGRATION AND WOMEN’S LAND TENURE
RIGHTS AND SECURITY IN THE GREATER
MEKONG SUB-REGION***

Gender inequalities in land tenure are pervasive in many regions. Not only do women have less access to land than men, but their rights to own land are also restricted and they frequently hold rights through male family members. In addition, gender relations determine who can participate in migration and who needs to be a stayer. This paper is based on research that investigated the extent to which secure access to land shapes and is shaped by different women and men’s migration, including from a generational perspective. We have looked critically at the complexities and diversity within and between the case studies in Laos, Myanmar and Thailand and examined the linkages between gendered patterns of migration and land tenure, which are highly contextual and vary between and within countries. We argue that a gendered pattern of migration is having a profound effect on access to and management of land. However, the impact on women’s empowerment is variable. The three case studies demonstrate the complexity and the importance of considering the contexts of culture and development trajectories to unravel the complex relationships of gender, migration and land tenure.

*This research is funded by FAO through in co-operation with the Regional Centre for Social Sciences and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Chiang Mai University, with contributions from Daniel Hayward and Philip Hirsch.

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Supatsak POBSUK is the Thailand Programme Officer at Focus on the Global South. His research interests include land, forest, natural resources, community rights, social movement, displacement, trade and investment, democracy and political economy in Southeast Asia.

ALTERNATIVE LAND MANAGEMENT IN THAILAND: A CASE STUDY OF THE SOUTHERN PEASANTS' FEDERATION OF THAILAND (SPFT)

This study presents the struggle for land of the Southern Peasants' Federation of Thailand (SPFT) in Surat Thani province. It is a counterpoint to the country's centralized land management system that has resulted in inequitable land distribution, concentrated in the hands of a few powerful owners, and inevitably in land conflicts. It presents the concept of community rights as an alternative to reinforce the land rights movement in Thailand.

By employing the community land title (CLT) as an alternative land management, the local communities participate in establishing regulations of land utilisation within their community. It presents a complexity of land rights between individual and community as people are able to utilize their land while people, as part of a community, manage land collectively in accordance with a mutual community regulation.

SPFT's alternative practices – a strategy to counter the centralized system and resist the sway of the capitalist system – are also illustrated through its land governance and management methods in the form of community economic practices, grassroots democracy, networking strategies, community constitutions, building community cultures and women empowerment. By securing land as a fundamental right of peasants, SPFT is able to use it as fully as a means of production for subsistence livelihood, and to serve as a safety net and social capital of local communities.

SARAH BENABOU

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Sarah Benabou is a Fellow at the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD), currently posted at the French Institute of Pondicherry, India. Her broad scholarly interest is in the relationships between societies and their environments, and how these are shaped by culture and political economy. Her work engages with the 'environmental turn' taken by neoliberalism and the idea of the irreducibility of environmental problems to technical solutions. She has written on livelihood transitions in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve in India, on the current momentum around "biodiversity offsets", as well as on the involvement of the private sector in various COPs (Rio 2012, Paris 2015). She currently investigates a Redd+ project in Meghalaya (North-East India) and develops a new research on ecological change across the Eastern Himalayas.

PEOPLE AND THE BIODIVERSITY CRISIS: RESHAPING GOVERNANCE AND JUSTICE IN CONSERVATION

This panel examines the issue of biodiversity conservation governance in Asia and sheds light on recent developments. Approaches to conservation across the world have archetypally taken two forms. One is the historically state-driven conservation in the form of protected areas (PA), often planned and managed against local people, set aside from mainstream concerns and managed as "islands". The other, which developed in the 1990s as a response to "fortress conservation" (Brockington 2002) and the need to improve the position of impoverished rural communities who gain their livelihoods from state-claimed lands, promoted the idea of community-based conservation (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). Both these approaches have had their share of successes and failures, generating long-standing research and intense debates on their effectiveness. Across Asia, they have spread and adjusted to contexts which may often combine centralization of power, active advocacy groups supporting long-established customary laws and resource rights for local populations, and conservation-business partnerships of all forms.

A major theme for political ecologists has been to study the process of "territorialisation" involved in the creation of these PA (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995). Namely, how state's historical spatial practices and zoning policies have enacted unjust forest regimes that marginalized residents and their subsistence needs. The turn to more participatory, community-based management solutions, has been received with caution, as studies showed that they may also result in the strengthening of state control over communities (Li 2002). Though offering contrasting ideas and mobilizing different organizations, these two approaches are thus viewed in terms of a continuum rather than in absolute opposition by political ecologists. Gathered under the label "mainstream conservation" (Brockington et al. 2008), both tend to embrace nature-people dichotomies (with protected areas as a

paradigmatic tool) and a functioning within capitalism - market and private enterprises being part and parcel of the conservation venture from the very beginning.

During the last decade, debates around the notion of “Anthropocene” and the largely shared frustration of failing to halt the biodiversity crisis have been qualified as a new moment for conservation and inspired the rise of new radical proposals (Büscher and Fletcher 2019). On the ground, what is particularly visible is on the one hand a form of intensification of existing practices, combining hard and soft power to achieve conservation goals. Studies on the militarisation of conservation to tackle poaching and trafficking of wildlife are a case in point (Duffy et al. 2019), such as the ever-growing body of work on the neoliberalisation of conservation (Igoe and Brockington 2007). On the other hand, emerging alternatives to existing models have also received particular attention (Kothari and Joy 2017), such as the recent theoretical proposal for a “convivial conservation” (Büscher and Fletcher *ibid.*).

Covering various geographies across Asia, with a particular interest for “Zomia” hill societies at the ecological and cultural margins of Asian states, this panel proposes to explore this new moment for conservation. Through presentation of several empirically grounded case studies, it examines how far lessons of the history of conservation governance resonate in today’s legal frameworks and program initiatives as far as equity and the deepening of the environmental crisis are concerned, and what new challenges lay ahead.

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Robert Farnan is lecturer in Social Science at Chiang Mai University. His research explores the intersection of security, conflict and development, with particular focus on environmental governance, relationality and the politics of infrastructure in Southeast Asia. Recent publications include: "Indigenous Resistance as Irregular Warfare: the Role of Kachin Forces in SOE and OSS Covert Operations during the Burma Campaign" (Routledge, 2019); "Infrastructural Violence, Logistical Governance, and Practices of Transparency along the East-West Economic Corridor, Thailand and Myanmar" (Thailand Research Fund, 2018); & "Urban Resilience and the Neoliberal Subject of Climate Change in Thailand" (Asian Review, 2017).

INDIGENOUS RESURGENCE, RELATIONAL ONTOLOGIES, AND THE SALWEEN PEACE PARK

This project explores the intersection of indigenous resurgence, relational ontologies, ecological knowledge and conservation in the context of the Salween Peace Park (SPP), Myanmar. Significant attention in geography and political ecology has been paid to the transboundary impacts and social and environmental assessments of the commons, which arise in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) in response to large-scale hydropower projects. Less attention has been given to the role played by global discourses, such as indigeneity, and the associated ecological knowledge practices (Jasanoff 2004), which inform environmental governance. It is therefore the aim of this paper to explore how ecological knowledge and practices of indigenous resurgence are increasingly implicated in environmental struggle and governance over large-scale hydropower development (Gururani and Vandergeest 2014). Drawing from critical indigenous scholarship and the burgeoning academic literature in critical security studies (CSS) and science and technology studies (STS) respectively, this paper goes beyond modern technocratic articulations that underlie the formation of 'sustainable' hydropower development. It does this by looking specifically at Karen ecological knowledge practices, animist cosmologies and the formalization of knowledge that is involved in the SPP. In order to shed light on these dynamics, this paper focuses its empirical lens on the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN), a community-based non-governmental organization operating in Myanmar and Thailand, whose work is instrumental in the formation of the SPP.

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Sarah Benabou is a Fellow at the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD), currently posted at the French Institute of Pondicherry, India. Her broad scholarly interest is in the relationships between societies and their environments, and how these are shaped by culture and political economy. Her work engages with the 'environmental turn' taken by neoliberalism and the idea of the irreducibility of environmental problems to technical solutions. She has written on livelihood transitions in the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve in India, on the current momentum around "biodiversity offsets", as well as on the involvement of the private sector in various COPs (Rio 2012, Paris 2015). She currently investigates a Redd+ project in Meghalaya (North-East India) and develops a new research on ecological change across the Eastern Himalayas.

PUTTING CONSERVATION IN LOCAL HANDS? THE KHASI HILLS REDD+ PROJECT

This contribution is based on ongoing research on the Khasi Hills Redd+ project, located in Meghalaya, North-East India. Presented as "one of the first Redd+ initiatives in Asia to be developed and managed by indigenous governments on communal lands", I use this case as a way to think more broadly about the cultural politics of resource control and its intersections with neoliberal environmentalism. Unlike other forestry projects in India that have long been criticized for being too concentrated in the hands of the Forest Department, this project taps into the particularity of Meghalaya as a 6th Schedule State. Here, ownership and control of the land lie formally with the people rather than with the State, as the presentation of the Khasi Redd+ project suggests. Can we assume that this difference in property arrangements benefits the management of the forest and the community to whom it belongs? How does society where lands and resources are in the hands of communities respond to a project based on the neoliberal premise that selling carbon on the international market will incentivize locally ecological behaviours? I argue here that to understand the consensus it gathered in the villages where it is deployed and its limits, one has to examine who is controlling the forest – and the Redd project – in the name of the "community".

NITIN RAI

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Nitin D. Rai is a Fellow at the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment. He uses a political ecology approach to understand the implications of state conservation policy and practice for people and landscapes. His recent interests include analysing market-based interventions and corporate investments in biodiversity conservation and local resistance to such initiatives. Nitin is an editor of the journal *Conservation and Society*.

AJIT MENON

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SHRUTHI JAGADEESH

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HOW MANY TIGERS ARE ENOUGH? THE BIOPOLITICS OF TIGER CONSERVATION IN INDIA

The tiger has been central to the Indian state's conservation practice for over five decades. The state has used the vulnerable status of tiger populations to justify the coercive control of large landscapes. We argue that the increased territorialisation of protected areas has been enabled and maintained by a focus on tigers by international and national agencies; the development of the science of tiger population estimation; and most recently the economic valuation of ecosystem services from tiger reserves. Using the concepts of spectacularisation, biopolitics and green grabs we argue that the remaking of the tiger as global conservation icon has implications for local people, accumulation of revenue by private actors, and ecological processes in forests. Tiger population estimation technologies such as camera traps serve as forms of surveillance that help the state maintain control. We highlight the features of a mammoth infrastructure that the state is building, which combines the coercive power of older conservation practice with newer forms of rule. The state has recently banned the granting of land and forest use rights to local people in tiger reserves even as it seeks increased investments in tourism and conservation infrastructure. The commodification of the tiger, the biopolitics of tiger population estimation and the economic valuation of forests have enormous implications for the rights of people living inside tiger reserves.



PROF LYLA MEHTA

Institute of Development Studies, UK

Lyla Mehta is a Professor at the Institute of Development Studies, UK, and a Visiting Professor at Noragric, Norwegian University of Life Sciences. She trained as a sociologist (University of Vienna) and has a Ph.d. in Development Studies (University of Sussex). She uses the case of water and sanitation to focus on the politics of scarcity, gender, human rights and access to resources, resource grabbing, power and policy processes in rural, peri urban and urban contexts. Her work also focusses on climate change and uncertainty and forced displacement. Lyla has engaged in advisory work with various UN agencies and has also been active in advocacy and activist work on environment and development issues with NGOs and social movements in Europe and India. She has extensive research and field experience in India and southern Africa and is currently leading a Belmont/ Norface/ EU/ ISC/ ESRC/ RCN/ JST project on 'Transformations as praxis' in South Asia. Lyla is a co-editor of Environment and Planning E Nature and Space. Her most recent book is Water, Food Security, Nutrition and Social Justice (Routledge, 2020).

CHAIR

BHARAT DAHIYA

Research Center for Integrated Sustainable Development, College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Thammasat University and Urban Youth Academy, Seoul

Prof. Bharat Dahiya is Director, Research Center for Integrated Sustainable Development,

THE POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF CLIMATE CHANGE, UNCERTAINTY AND TRANSFORMATION IN MARGINAL ENVIRONMENTS

The scale and impacts of climate change remain deeply uncertain. This is particularly true at the local level, where climate related uncertainties combined with unequal capitalist growth trajectories often exacerbate social and political inequities and the vulnerabilities of marginalised communities. Policy makers and scientists tend to draw on quantitative assessments, models and scenario building to understand and capture uncertainty. But these are often disconnected from how local people – particularly those living at the margins – make sense of and cope with uncertainty. This paper focuses on diverse and contested framings of climate change and uncertainty in three sites in South Asia (dryland Kutch, the Sundarbans delta and coastal Mumbai). It looks at how uncertainty is understood and experienced from 'below' by the lived experiences of local people, how it is conceptualised and represented from 'above' by climate scientists and experts and how the 'middle' - civil society, NGOs, academics - can potentially function as brokers between the 'below' and 'above'.

Uncertainty can be epistemic, ontological and linked to broader political economy conditions. Often official efforts to deal with uncertainty are highly politicised and can increase the vulnerabilities of marginalised groups. While uncertainty can lead to anxieties about the future, I conclude by exploring whether it can also provide an opportunity to create transformation and structural change in marginal environments characterised by climate related uncertainties.

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DISCUSSANT

**PROF. SURICHAJ
WUNGAEAO**

Center for Peace and Conflict Studies,
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Surichai Wungaeo is an Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Director of the Centre for Peace and Conflict of Chulalongkorn University. His most recent co-edited book, published in 2016, is “Globalization and Democracy in Southeast Asia: Challenges, Responses and Alternative Futures.”



CHAIR

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Shaun Lin is a Max Weber Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore (NUS). He obtained his PhD from the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), University of Wollongong in 2016, and earned his honours degree in Geography from NUS in 2011. He was also a policy officer in the International Division at the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore. Shaun has published a number of journal articles relating to environmental geography, geopolitics, border studies and maritime political geography on Southeast Asia, China, the Indian Ocean, and the Arctic in *Geopolitics*, *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, *Political Geography*, *The Geographical Journal*, and *The Professional Geographer*. His current research is on impacts and responses of China's Belt and Road Initiative in Southeast Asia, and transboundary environmental governance issues in Southeast Asia.

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE

Industrialization has occurred unevenly across in Asia. Whilst much emphasis has been placed by governments and corporations on the economic benefits of this industrialization, there have also been significant impacts to local environments including enclosure of commons, and changes to communities' economic, social and ecological vulnerabilities in both positive and negative ways. The outcomes of these changes hold implications for ecological justice, including in terms of the distribution of harms, benefits and risks, how decisions are taken and by who, and who is or is not valued within these decisions.

In this panel, we consider the relationship between industrialization and ecological justice in Asia. The first paper addresses the deepening interconnections through aid, trade and investment between Japan and Thailand under East Asian regionalism that been a key catalyst of Thailand's industrialization. It argues that this regional integration has not only offshored resource extraction and production from Japan to Thailand, but also of management of the environment that, read relationally, addresses crisis of the environment and capitalism in both countries. The second paper attends to the growing crisis of plastic pollution in Southeast Asia, and particularly in Thailand. Through an analysis of the political economy and governance of plastic, it analyzes how the problem relates to production and design, consumption, and waste management, and evaluates prospective solutions. The third paper examines the Coramandel Coast of South India since the Tsunami, and the outcomes of industrialization-led growth. It shows how coastal communities' relationship with the sea and coastal resources were disrupted, and the costs to these communities as industrial projects failed to deliver on their promises of new jobs and infrastructure. The final paper examines special economic zones and industrialization in Myanmar. With a focus on the China-Myanmar economic corridor under China's Belt and Road Initiative, it examines the implications for inequality and conflict through the lens of social justice.

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Takeshi Ito is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Graduate School of Global Studies, Sophia University. His research lies at the intersection of ecology, capitalism, and state. It explores how interactions on multiple scales between human and non-human actors embedded in particular institutional and ecological settings produce social and ecological inequality with a focus on sustainability. His research interests include Agrarian and Environmental Change, Political Economy of Development, and theories of Hegemony and Resistance. He has lived and conducted fieldwork in Indonesia, Thailand, and Hokkaido.

HOW JAPAN'S AID AND INVESTMENT 'OFFSHORE' FLOOD MANAGEMENT TO REDUCE FLOOD RISKS IN THAILAND

Regional integration promotes the offshoring not only of resource extraction and production but also of management of the environment that is central to the maintenance of productive relations on which economies are dependent. Conventionally, relations of exchange involving resource extraction are understood merely as exploitative and causal ones between two countries of different levels of capital, human, and natural resources—a resource-poor country causes environmental degradation in a resource-rich country, invoking the image of predatory nature of capitalism or “accumulation by dispossession.” By contrast, this paper argues that relations of resource exchange are reciprocal ones which may take the forms of economic and ecological offshoring to sustain and rework existing socio-ecological relations towards “sustainable” and “resilient” ones. By taking flood management in Ayutthaya, one of Thailand's main industrial areas, this paper shows how the offshoring of economic production and environmental management from Japan to Thailand has become part and parcel of addressing the crises of capitalism and the environment in both Japan and Thailand. As the two economies have rapidly been integrated after the Plaza Accord of 1985, flood management in Thailand has become not only the responsibility of the Thai government but also the global risk management agenda for the Japanese government to protect normal business operations of Japanese firms in Thailand. Interventions in socio-ecological relations to maintain production relations are, then, “fixes” of disruptions that support business continuity and sustainable and resilient environment by means of foreign aid, science and technology exchange, and mutual help.

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Dr. Danny Marks is an Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at the Department of Asian and International Studies of City University of Hong Kong. Prior to this position, he was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow with the Urban Climate Resilience in Southeast Asia project at the Munk School of Global Affairs of the University of Toronto. Dr. Marks has spent a number of years conducting research and working on environmental governance in Southeast Asia. Dr. Marks completed his PhD at the University of Sydney and his MA at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

**POLITICAL ECOLOGY OF THAILAND'S
MARINE PLASTIC POLLUTION CRISIS**

About 8 million tons of plastic are dumped in the world's oceans annually. This is a major transboundary problem because it causes social and environmental damage on a global scale and seriously threatens marine wildlife. Many marine animals have been found to become entangled in plastic debris or have ingested it in their stomachs. Some humans also have consumed plastic after eating these animals which contributes to cancer and infertility. Five countries are responsible for 60% of this waste: China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. This paper focuses on one of them: Thailand. Studies have found that the plastic usage in the country has increased by 12% annually in the past few years and that Thailand has a high level of plastic debris in beach locations around the country. However, none have examined the political-economic drivers and governance of plastic pollution in the country. In this paper, therefore, I seek to address this gap. I identify the governance structure of plastic pollution in the country and analyse the drivers behind's Thailand failure thus far to address this problem. I study three different stages of the problem: production and design, consumption, and waste management. My findings are derived from government documents, such as the Plastic Waste Management Plan of 2017-2021, but primarily from interviews of key actors, including government officials, NGOs, and private sector leaders, who are involved in this sector. I conclude by discussing the usefulness of a political ecology lens to examining this issue as well as, given the country's governance structures, suggesting avenues forward to reduce the country's plastic pollution.

SENTHIL BABU

French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP)

Senthil Babu is currently a researcher in the Department of Social Sciences, at the French Institute of Pondicherry. Trained as a historian of science, he is currently engaged in shaping a research programme on Nature, Knowledge and Labour in the institute. He is part of several research projects focusing on the axis of Knowledge, Practices and Work, which is devoted to the historical and contemporary study of knowledge practices in culture, with a commitment to develop a critical and democratic ethos in the interface of the people, the State and the institutional world of knowledge production. He can be reached at senthil.babu@ifpindia.org.

THE FAILED PROMISE OF INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND OF JUSTICE: THE CORAMANDEL COAST OF SOUTH INDIA

It is not an irony anymore, for the coastal working communities in the Tamil coast of the Coramandel, that the Tsunami that ravaged their lives, had also unleashed devastating changes well after the worst disasters to affect this coast line. The post disaster attention to the coast, opened it up for infrastructure development, with the promise of industrialization led growth, through ports, power projects, petrochemical refineries and fracking. In over fifteen years that this promise unfolded, the people along the coast have witnessed ruptures in their working relationship with the sea and the resources of the coastal landscape, which sustained their lives and labour. In this presentation, we will focus on the coastline of the Cuddalore district in Tamil Nadu, in southeastern India to narrate these developments and how such a promise has failed its people. Loss of land for the farming communities along the coast and for the landless agricultural workers has been accompanied by loss of working spaces for the fishers and other shoreline resources. The logic of finance which propelled this promise through the industrialization projects has left ruins of a ghost infrastructure, coastal erosion and the eternal wait for justice through legal arbitration over settlement of claims. Investors have fled, leaving the people behind with land and resources which they cannot use anymore, which now can only be identified as appendage to the nonperforming assets of these companies. Yet, the same logic of finance continues to propose new projects based on previous failed ones, creating a social class that will feed off the transactions in land and labour. The promise of employment and development has thoroughly failed the fishers and the farming communities together. We will narrate the techniques deployed for the alienation of the ecological resources through formal and informal means adopted by the private investors and agencies of the state which rendered their acts legitimate, when even

legal violations would be justified as exemptions for the sake of development. The possibility of seeking justice has eluded the coastal communities in the wake of this collusion. What then would characterize the relationship between ecological resources, working lives and justice under the regime of finance led creation of ghostly infrastructure?

DR. MYINT ZAW

Paung Ku

Myint Zaw, has been actively engaged in civil society movement for peace and sustainability in Myanmar for more than a decade. He won the Goldman Environmental Award for Asia in 2015 for his activism against mega dam in critical watershed area of Irrawaddy River in Myanmar. He is also a former executive editor of a local weekly newspaper and worked in the area of media development from 2005 to 2009. He studied in Chulalongkorn University of Thailand, University of California, Berkeley and Australian National University. He published more than ten books in Burmese language.

FLASH POINTS- EXPLORING CONFLICT AND JUSTICE ISSUES IN ECONOMIC ZONE OF MYANMAR UNDER BRI INVESTMENT

In protracted conflict of Myanmar, resource extraction and inequality can be considered as the major contributing factors. So far plans for special economic zones and foreign investment rarely take into account aspect of contested authority in multi ethnic society of Myanmar. As a result many investment schemes perpetuate conflict and inequality. China-Myanmar economic corridor under Belt and Road initiative proposes to bring several economic zones and transportation hub to Myanmar. This paper will explore conflict sensitivity and social justice issues of current and proposed plan of economic zones in Myanmar

CHAIR
**JAKKRIT
SANGKHAMANEE**

Faculty of Political Science,
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ONTOLOGIES OF INFRASTRUCTURE

The panel explores the multiplicities and complexities of infrastructure in different political ecology terrains. It looks into processes of (re) imagining, defining, designing, scale- and agency-making, aggregating and particularising the ecologies in order to allow a particular set and network of infrastructures to function. Exploring distinctive ontological dimensions of infrastructure in different forms and scales such as hydrological dam, city concrete surface, rapidly transform cities, and climate actors and knowledge, the panel suggests the dynamism and influence of infrastructure in shaping and politicising ecologies.

JAKKRIT SANGKHAMANEE

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Jakkrit Sangkhamanee is an Associate Professor in anthropology and a Director of Politics and Global Studies Program at the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. His recent researches deal with the issues in science, technology and society (STS) especially the studies of water engineering in promoting state building and constructing hydro-bureaucracy in Thailand.

INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE MAKING: THE CHAO PHRAYA DAM AND THE DANCE OF AGENCY

The article explores the process behind the construction of the Chao Phraya Dam, the first World Bank-funded water infrastructure project in Thailand, developed during the 1950s. Employing Andrew Pickering's 'dance of agency' concept in examining the process of turning financial and technical assistance into a workable project, I argue that development infrastructure, like the Chao Phraya Dam, provides a space to explore the dialectic operations – accommodation and resistance – of agency and the unstable associations among diverse actors, expertise, institutions, and materials, as well as practices. Recounting the history of the dam in the making, I explore a series of entanglements through different dances of agency, namely initiation, assessment, mobilisation, negotiation, adjustment, confrontation, and settlement. Such a multiplicity of dances inside and in the making of infrastructure reflects the techno-political entanglement encompassing the manifold negotiation and adjustment of conflicting goals, interests, recognition, and cooperation among different agencies. The dam, often portrayed as an engineering achievement of the state, is in fact the result of unanticipated relations and the responses to the temporal emerging.

4B

ONTOLOGIES OF INFRASTRUCTURE

ELI ELINOFF

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Eli Elinoff is a Senior Lecturer in the Cultural Anthropology Programme in the School of Social and Cultural Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. Dr. Elinoff received his PhD in Anthropology in 2013 from the University of California, San Diego. His research there examined struggles over land, citizenship, and politics in Khon Kaen City. This research is the basis for his forthcoming book *Citizen Designs: Politics and City-making in Northeastern Thailand* (University of Hawaii Press). Subsequently, he took up a postdoctoral fellowship in Asian Urbanisms, jointly appointed at the Asia Research Institute and the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore. His research has been published in a variety of academic and public venues including *South East Asia Research*, *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *City*, *Cultural Anthropology Online*, and *The New Mandala*. He is currently affiliated with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Chulalongkorn University working on a project funded by the Royal Society of New Zealand's Marsden Grant that explores political ecologies of concrete across Thailand and Southeast Asia.

AGGREGATE ECOLOGIES: ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF CITY SURFACES

Concrete is the most ubiquitous human-made material in the world. Few materials carry as much symbolic weight in ongoing discussions of our environmental crisis. Yet, efforts to think about the environmental implications of concrete often seem to come up short: They either resort to reducing concrete to carbon; mobilize specific images of quarries to get at some of the material intensity of mass urbanization but also highlight highly local effects of mining; or emphasize the ways the material is tied up in displacement of localized populations through construction projects large and small. Indeed its ubiquity, its presence across scales, and its centrality to modern life bedevil our attempts to understand it as an environmental force. In this brief and very preliminary talk on my ongoing research, I sketch out some steps towards a concept of ecological aggregation to highlight the ways concrete intensifies material transformation by her varied and dispersed environmental changes extending those changes into new the making of new anthropogenic ecologies. By focusing on the way this material intensifies, collects, accumulates, and extends ecological change, I explore how concrete's compound composition often adds up to much more than a simple carbon accounting would reveal. I will consider these processes by discussing some of my research on the cement and concrete industries in Thailand. By considering concrete's power to aggregate ecologies by intensifying, drawing together and extending a wide ranging set of complex natureculture transformations, I argue that the material has been fundamental to allowing humans to generate geological speed and widen the reach of our environmental impacts to a planetary scale.

CASPER BRUNN JENSEN

Leicester University

Casper Bruun Jensen is an anthropologist of science and technology currently residing in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He is the author of *Ontologies for Developing Things* (Sense, 2010) and *Monitoring Movements in Development Aid* (with Brit Ross Winthereik) (2013, MIT) and the editor of *Deleuzian Intersections: Science, Technology, Anthropology* with Kjetil Rødje (Berghahn, 2009) and *Infrastructures and Social Complexity* with Penny Harvey and Atsuro Morita (Routledge, 2016). His work focuses on climates, environments, infrastructures and practical ontologies.

URBAN KALEIDOSCOPES: CHINESE CONSTRUCTION, SCALE-MAKING, AND THE RE-DESIGN OF CAMBODIAN CITIES

Cambodia's urban environments have changed rapidly over the last decades, and especially over the last few years. After the 2018 election tightened the grip of Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) on national politics, democracy has been widely perceived as eroding. This change, however, re-contextualized the investment environment, which appeared more stable than ever. Chinese investments exploded and a very visible, material outcome was further intensification of the already fast-paced construction business. Combining an STS interest in sociotechnical networks and the design of cities as an ongoing event with an anthropological interest in the variability and transformability of horizons of understanding, the paper analyzes these urban transformations as an effect of interwoven materialities and perspectives.

Building concretely reshapes the activity trails of the city, its spatial contours, the ambience of neighborhoods. Eyes firmly focused on upscale gated communities and serviced apartments, the construction business is gradually modularizing and segmenting Phnom Penh, moving poorer people to the outskirts and richer people into the centers. The construction boom is interpreted in terms of pre-existing urban, material, and sociopolitical networks and relations. Reversely, however, the unprecedented speed, intensity and unpredictability of urban change also leads many Cambodians to re-evaluate existing perspectives, not least about 'the Chinese.'

Interspersing first-hand experiences and ethnographic observations with media reports and political commentary, I show tuk tuk drivers, journalists, businessmen and politicians engaged in designing the city by weaving together perspectives and materialities. Moving between street observations in Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville and grand political diagnoses of China's world-historical role, I

analyze each not as situated at a pre-given scale (ranging from micro to macro), but rather as involved in making scales. The image of urban transformation is a kaleidoscope of partially incongruent, connected, scale-making projects.

CHAYA VADDHANAPHUTI

Department of Geography,
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Chaya is a geographer with interest in the human dimension of climate change, especially the geographies of climate knowledge. His research explores how the so-called travelling idea of “climate change” is produced and interpreted by various kinds of organisations and actors. At the same time, how such term might compare with the local “weather” which is historically, culturally and materially bounded in Thai people’s lives. He develops research ideas around nature-culture nexus through relational geography and science & technology studies (STS). Chaya is a lecturer in geography at the Department of Geography, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

RE-DEFINING, RE-IMAGINING AND RE-PARTICULARISING THAILAND'S CLIMATE KNOWLEDGE(s):

THE CASE OF CLIMATE ACTORS AND THEIR KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURES

In 2012, Thailand published the first National Climate Change Master Plan (2015-2050) to comply with the UNFCCC's goal of greenhouse gas emission reduction and low carbon society. This coincided with the rising number of climate-related development projects conducted by local, national and international governmental and non-governmental organisations. Improving climate literacy for lay Thai people, is one of the key criteria for evaluating the success of a climate project. Three styles of climate education, and indeed their knowledge infrastructure were found. For science-driven organisations, global climate change needs to be monitored, predicted and controlled, hence the public needs to understand graphs and technical terms despite much confusion. For policy-driven organisations, climate change is effectively an international development project repackaged in a new climate brand. Indeed, local Thai authorities and their staff were enrolled into, and continued to be policed by, Western mindset through rounds of workshops and training for climate knowledge to be revealed and transferred to different communities. For community-based organisations, climate change is at once a real, local experience, and at the same time an environmental problem and discourse used by or against ethnic minority groups. The question is, to what extent do these framing of climate change matter or make sense to local northern Thai people whose weather knowledge show humble respect toward nonhuman nature and supernatural beings that effectively put them as part of earthly-spiritual beings. Their weather-world is place-bound and has nothing to do with carbon emission. The idea of Anthropocene, the co-constitution of humans and nature,

reminds us that for climate communication and education to work effectively requires cultivating human values, their morality and humility towards the nonhuman forces. Climate knowledge needs to be composed of plural forms of knowledges and beliefs system.

CHAIR

KENJI OTSUKAInterdisciplinary Studies Center,
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Kenji Otsuka is Senior Research Fellow in the Environment and Natural Resource Studies Group at the Interdisciplinary Studies Center, Institute of Developing Economies (IDE), JETRO in Chiba Japan. He achieves his Ph.D. in environmental studies and M.A. in environmental sciences at Tsukuba University. His research interests are in the fields of interactive governance on water, environment, and health, disaster risk reduction and sustainability transition in China and East Asia. He has been organizing joint research projects with Chinese counterparts, including research institutes and NGOs, since 1993. He recently edited a book, *Interactive Approaches to Water Governance in Asia*, published by Springer, 2019.

HYDROSOCIAL RIVERS AND THEIR POLITICS

Rivers throughout Asia – historically until the present day – are intimately tied to the region's ecosystems, societies, economies, and cultures. These relationships, however, are transforming due to rapid economic and societal change driven by, among many things,

demographic changes; human development; food and energy demands; trends in economic growth, trade and investment; and climate change. In this panel, we attend to the politics of rivers in Asia and how the meaning, value and use of rivers are socially embedded and therefore also contested between various groups, including state agencies, private-sector investors, construction and energy companies, farming and fishing communities, and civil society groups. Amongst these actors, the region's rivers are viewed in multiple ways, including: as engines of economic growth, in particular for large-scale hydropower dams and irrigated agriculture; as natural resource foundations of rural livelihoods; as important domains for environmental conservation; and as cultural cornerstones of cuisine, festivals and the sacred.

One paper reveals this contestation through the lens of ontological politics taking the case of the Salween River in Myanmar. The authors argue that ontological politics are an underappreciated terrain of contestation through which political authority and the power relations that underpin it are (re)produced. The second paper examines an urban setting, namely the Chao Phraya River Promenade in Bangkok. In this study, the multiple rationalities of this contested development project are analyzed through socio-anthropological lens examine the actors involved, their interests and strategies, and claims to land tenure. The third paper will addresses the political ecologies and geographies of biophysical processes in an increasingly anthropogenic Mekong Basin. Viewing the river as a transborder commons, it demonstrates how more-than-humans matter to riparian and wetland communities. The final paper details the community-led restoration of the Penna River basin in Andhra Pradesh, India as an example of rewilding the commons.

CARL MIDDLETON

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Dr. Carl Middleton is an Assistant Professor and Deputy Director for Research on the Master of Arts in International Development Studies (MAIDS)/ Graduate Research in International Development (GRID) Programme, and Director of the Center for Social Development Studies (CSDS) in the Faculty of Political Science of Chulalongkorn University. His research interests orientate around the politics and policy of the environment in Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on nature-society relations, the political ecology of water and energy, and environmental justice.

JOHANNA GÖTZ

Development Studies,
University of Helsinki

ONTOLOGICAL POLITICS OF HYDROSOCIAL TERRITORIES IN THE SALWEEN RIVER BASIN, MYANMAR/BURMA

In this paper, we question an often-unchallenged assumption that we all talk about the same ‘thing’ when talking about water. Taking the Salween River in Myanmar as a case study, we draw on a growing body of hydrosocial literature to analyze the multiple ontologies of water. Conceptually, we take each ontology to be constituted of – and enacted within – a human-more-than-human assemblage, the spatial dimensions of which demarcate a ‘hydrosocial territory.’ We present three illustrations, namely: the role of the Union Government’s National Water Resources Committee and how it produces and is situated within an ontology of ‘modern Water’; a Karen indigenous initiative to establish a Salween Peace Park and an associated revealing of an ‘indigenous’ ontology; and plans for the construction of mainstream hydropower dams and electricity export to neighboring Thailand, where the two former water ontologies and their hydrosocial territories collide. We examine how multiple ontologies of water are contested through ‘ontological politics’, whereby human actors compete to further their own interests by naturalizing their ontology whilst marginalizing others. Whilst not downplaying the role violent conflict plays, we argue that in the Salween basin ontological politics are an underappreciated terrain of contestation through which political authority and the power relations that underpin it are (re)produced, with implications for processes of state formation, territorialization and the ongoing peace negotiations.

THANAWAT BREMARD

G-EAU (Water Management, Actors, Territories), Montpellier/ IRD (French Research Institute for Development), France

Thanawat Bremard is a Ph.D. student at the ABIES doctoral school, AgroParisTech, France conducting a thesis on the institutional interplay in the governance of groundwater, land subsidence, floods, water infrastructures and urbanization in Bangkok. He has worked with the CSDS, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, during 2017 on the relationship between drought and water management in Northeastern Thailand. After obtaining a Master's degree in Sociology and Anthropology Applied to Local Development in 2018, Thanawat Bremard has pursued the institutional analysis of the Thai water sector as a political ecology scholar who also works with GIS mapping.

POLITICS OF URBAN RIVERBANK DEVELOPMENT: THE CONTESTED CHAO PHRAYA RIVER PROMENADE PROJECT IN BANGKOK

Through the study of the disputed Chao Phraya River Promenade, an urban project in Bangkok, this paper sheds light on the politics of decision-making regarding the development of the urban riverbanks. The 14 km promenade, proposed in 2014, raises cultural concerns regarding the relation of the riparian communities to the river, economic ones for the construction costs alone are estimated at 8.363 billion Thai bahts, environmental ones regarding its impacts as well as political ones on the matter of riparian relocation and the participatory process. The project doesn't simply oppose the government with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration against NGOs and contesting urban riparian residents. The multiple rationalities of this contested development project are analyzed, through socio-anthropological lens, in order to bring out a more nuanced stakeholder map detailing the actors' strategies and leeway in pushing their vested interests. Tracing the project back to its first proposal in 1993 under the form of a riverside road, the author reveals through the trajectory of the project how the varying factions of stakeholders and their interests coalesced around the issue. The paper also illustrates through the case of the three distinct communities of Mittakham, Baan Pune and Wat Devaraj, the heterogeneity of the urban riverbanks as a hydrosocial territory with overlapping jurisdictions, varying stances towards the project, plurilegality of land tenure regimes and ambiguity in using dykes as the demarcating boundary between encroachers and rightful riparians. The controversy that grew alongside the project paved the way for the constitution of a Bangkok-based civil society which seeks to publicize issues of public space in the city and the lack of development vision for the Chao Phraya within the city planning.

This paper is supported by the DoUbT project (Deltas' dealings with uncertainty: Multiple practices and knowledges of delta governance) under the supervision of François Molle (WP3 whose Principal Investigator is Jean-Philippe Venot).

CARL GRUNDY-WARR

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Carl Grundy-Warr is a senior lecturer at the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore (NUS). He teaches global political ecologies; natural resource politics; geopolitics; and he also specialises in field-based modules in Southeast Asia. His current educational and research interests concern the political ecologies and geographies relating to floating, wetlands and riparian communities of the Mekong Basin.

**FLOWS, FRAGMENTS AND FUTURES:
RETHINKING BIOPHYSICAL GEOPOLITICS
IN THE LOWER MEKONG WETLANDS
AND TONLE SAP**

Temporal and spatial dynamics of nature(s) have become radically rearranged and fragmented in many transborder commons, not least the once 'under-developed' but now thoroughly anthropogenic Mekong Basin. Socio-ecological uncertainties threaten food, livelihood and environmental security for millions of people. This paper investigates the political ecologies and geographies of biophysical processes and properties, particularly in relation to the hydrological flood-pulse, rocks, channels, deep pools and flowing material.

More-than-human matters immensely to numerous riparian and wetland communities in the Basin, and ecological fragmentation is geopolitical in the manner in which it involves temporal and spatial (re) b/orderings of vital commons within and across jurisdictional human boundaries. Through particular investigations of biophysical geopolitics in the Mekong Basin, the vitality of temporal spatial flows and connections shall be used constructively to consider how these may feed creatively into research, advocacy and education for enhancing socio-ecological security in the future.

SIDDHARTH RAO

Adavi Trust, and Timbaktu Collective,
Andhra Pradesh, India

Siddharth Rao is a conservation biologist and development practitioner who co-leads the Adavi Trust. Siddharth holds a master's degree in Ecology and has over seventeen years of experience working in conservation practice, wildlife research and development. His work focuses on restoration ecology, community led conservation, environmental justice, carnivore ecology, markets for conservation and conservation outreach and education. Siddharth is a 2015 Kinship Conservation Fellow and also serves as a consulting ecologist at the Timbaktu Collective.

**REWILDING THE COMMONS:
COMMUNITY LED RESTORATION
IN THE PENNA RIVER BASIN**

The savannahs of India are a forgotten landscape, designated as 'wastelands' and overexploited for decades. These fragile lands are home to numerous social groups and support an abundance of wildlife. This 28 year old project has kept two things at its core, communities and watersheds. Situated in the Penna River Basin this community led restoration effort has been possible due to extensive work on the social aspects of water. This project navigates the process of reshaping hydrosocial territories, caused by external influences as well as the restoration efforts itself. This paper shares a practitioner's views, perspectives and learnings from working alongside rural communities in Andhra Pradesh, India.

CHAIR

FRÉDÉRIC LANDYFrench Institute of Pondicherry,
University of Paris-Nanterre/LAVUE

Frédéric LANDY is a professor of geography at the university of Paris-Nanterre, France, and heads the French Institute of Pondicherry, India. He is presently working on the environmental image of indigeneity ("eco-ethnicity"), on landscapes and ecotourism, on agroecology, mostly in India. He is the author of *Feeding India. The spatial parameters of food grain policy*, Manohar-CSH, 2009. He has edited *From urban national parks to natured cities in the global South: The quest for naturbanity*, Springer, 2018, and co-edited *Megacity slums. Social Exclusion, Space and Urban Policies in Brazil and India*, Imperial College Press, 2013.

REPRESENTATIONS OF NATURE AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENTS

Nature must be protected and controlled. At least this is a dominant Western conception, placed under the sign of modernity. Yet there exist many others, among indigenous populations of course, for whom the human/non-human distinction may make no sense, but also more generally among local populations in the South: with often limited but sophisticated technical means, they know how to live with natural constraints and make good use of them without wanting to control them at all costs. However, authorities in Southern countries, whether governments or international NGOs, often wish to design and implement policies and actions inspired by Western representations. The latent or open conflicts that can result are political, economic, agrarian - but also cultural and representational. Which stakeholders turn to be a winner in the end? those who oppose Western visions by claiming grassroots approaches and visions, or those who manage to master certain dominant discourses and exploit them for their own benefit?

FRÉDÉRIC BOURDIER

CNRS, UMR DEVSOC,IRD/University
of Paris I Pantheon-Sorbonne

Frédéric Bourdier is an anthropologist at the University of Paris Sorbonne (France) and at the Research Institute for Development. From 1989 to 2017, he has been living in South India (medical anthropology, social epidemiology of HIV/AIDS), in North Brazil (health and migration, Amazon) and in Cambodia (anthropology of development, society-nature interactions, ethno-genetic surveys, borderlands studies, malaria interventions, scaling up of antiretroviral treatment, ethno-history, social movements and land insecurity). Through the lenses of political ecology, he now associates anthropological academic research with long term engagement and collaborative studies with local populations in South India, Southeast Asia and in Cuba.

NATURE RESHAPED: DIFFRACTED POLITICAL ENGAGEMENTS FOR RECOVERING GRABBED LAND IN CAMBODIA

In 2008, a Vietnamese enterprise was granted a vast Economic Land Concession for growing rubber trees in a Cambodian forest territory inhabited by Indigenous groups. After years of mutual confrontation initiated by a grassroots social movement (GSM), a coalition of international/national NGOs came in 2013 with the intention to support the “defenseless villagers”. Rather than reactivating the GSM, or accompanying alternative forms of active resistance, it was decided by the leading aid agencies to opt for a mediation orchestrated by the World Bank Group with the expectation that such conciliation process would facilitate both parties to reach a so-called “win-win” solution.

The presentation insists on the sociopolitical consequences (unwillingly) exhilarated by the aid agency apparatus which provoked a series of ruptures between society and nature, in comparison to the categories of thought envisioned by local peoples. Because of their intricacies, any alteration in the vernacular representation of nature is not without generating change and disorder within the social milieu. The presentation considers major local sociopolitical impacts emerging from a recently acquired territorial configuration (driven by external interventions) and ultimately addresses the ongoing ruptures to be found in the nature/society’s relation that came out following the progressive disintegration of a former united, but non-homogenous, indigenous territory.

MARIE-AMÉLIE CANDAU

Post-doc, University of Paris
Nanterre/LAVUE

Marie-Amélie CANDAU earned a PhD in Geography at the University of Paris-Nanterre and currently associated researcher in the CNRS Centre of Himalayan Studies. Her research has focused on water, politics, usages, perception, etc. For her first master, she studied the traditional water tank system in Andhra Pradesh, South India. For her second master, she analyzed the geopolitics concerning the sharing and management of Himalayan water resources. Her PhD analyzes power balances in the flood management on the Koshi plain, in the Tarai region shared by Nepal and North India (Bihar). She spent thirty months investigating their socio-economic impacts in her fieldwork.

POLITICS OF WATER MANAGEMENT IN THE KOSHI PLAIN (NEPAL AND NORTH INDIA) : MODERN ECONOMICS VERSUS EXTREME ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The Koshi is Nepal's largest river system and one of the biggest tributaries of the Ganges River. It is renowned for its erratic behavior and destructive floods in the Indo-Nepalese plain. This behavior can be partly explained by its extreme altitude change that varies in just 160 km as the crow flies, from more than 8800 m to 90 m. It opens abruptly onto a densely populated plain, discharging its exceptional sedimentary load. The increasing density of human occupation, with agriculture and livestock intensifying rapidly, led to attempts to enclose the watercourse between two lateral dikes, and attempting to break its dynamic by means of a capping dam on the Indo-Nepalese border.

This technological concept, based on the idea of "modern water" transferred from the United States, has transformed the relationship between the floods and people's local usages. The river has been disconnected from the land, and its floods that had always been part of the agricultural calendar, became perceived as undesirable. Moreover, this new centralized management system has been systematically associated with the politics of aid that converted autonomous peasants into individuals depending on the state.

Despite the numerous pitfalls that appeared only a few years after its implementation, floods reappeared more intensely and in new forms. This modern hegemonic conception of water management continues to be applied in the plain, and does not consider the impacts on the powerlessness of the flood-affected, nor their lack of voice.

CHRISTIAN CULAS

CNRS, ART-DEV Institute

Christian Culas is senior anthropologist at CNRS (France), living and conducting researches on anthropology of development in Vietnam since 2000. His current research focuses on the conceptions and practices of nature in Vietnam among different social and professional groups (marine fishermen, farmers around natural protected areas, agroforestry farmers, National park rangers, policy makers, environmental NGOs...). The ultimate goal of the project is to provide practical advices based on deep fieldwork data in order to co-design and co-manage protected areas in Vietnam.

NATURE AND HUMAN IN SINO-VIETNAMESE CONCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES.**ARTICULATIONS BETWEEN ASIAN VERNACULAR
'ANALOGISM' AND WESTERN MODERN
'NATURALISM' MODES OF IDENTIFICATION**

There are few studies about the conceptions of nature and the relations between humans and non-humans (Latour 2004) in Vietnam. My main objective is to describe and understand what are today the conceptions and practices of nature. First, I will give an overview of historical landmarks of the conceptions of relations human/nature and human/human (politics), because Vietnam is one important place where the traditional Chinese mode of identification and worldview ("analogism" - Descola 2005) and the Western mode ("naturalism") meet and build a new synthetic and hybrid way of thought and action. Second, some examples of what nature means in Sino-Vietnamese conceptions and practices will show the diverse ways of thinking and acting nature.

Three examples will help us to understand what are the diversity of Vietnamese conceptions of nature: a) Taoist conceptions of Nature where man can learn and experience to reach nature through practice. b) Man can integrate some powers of nature by eating them. c) In Vietnamese conceptions nature can be built by and around the human in "nature gardens", similar in many points to the Japanese notion and landscape called "Satoyama".

These examples of contextualized conceptions and actions with nature can show how the analogical tradition can get articulated, integrated with, or opposed to different forms of naturalism in Vietnam.

CHAIR

OLIVIER ÉVRARDFrench Research Institute for
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Dr Olivier Evrard is a social anthropologist at the French Research Institute for Sustainable Development (IRD) in France and representative of IRD in Thailand. He has conducted extensive periods of fieldwork since the mid-90s mostly with highland Mon-Khmer and lowland Tai speaking populations in Laos and Thailand. His work focuses on ethnicity, mobility, land use and history of interethnic relationships particularly as they intersect with environmental issues. His writings have been published in journals like *Critique of Anthropology*, *Development and Change* or *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. He is also the author of many book chapters including "The political ecology of upland/lowland relationships in Laos since 1975" (in *Contemporary Laos*, Singapore: NUS Press, pp.165-191).

INTERSPECIES COHABITATIONS IN ASIA: NON-HUMAN ANIMALS AND POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Do non-human animals have a voice in political ecology? Even in modern Cartesian societies it is getting now well accepted that some animals, especially among primates but not only, can have a culture, a sense of rituality and playfulness, and more than anything else engage in political arenas of their own. Animals are also convened into the global and lethal effort toward economic and growth on the one side, into human political narratives, notably as source of energy and symbols on the other. They not only help us to web our grip on the rest of the world but they also figure successfully moral and physical prowess when it comes to highlight local identities. Alternatively, some species are consubstantial to human beings in totemic societies. In animist cultures they can be attributed a personality and intentionality such as human beings when analogist societies offer them some fragments of human and godlike agencies. The question of what we can share and accomplish with non-human animals is at the core of the way we act cosmologies, the way we attribute a political, juridical, moral weight to non-humans.

Asia, defined by a great cultural diversity and a pervasive tension between huge civilizations and a myriad of local cultures, definitely provide in that regard a very rich field of investigation. Beyond ontological simplifications we want to raise here the practical question of the different ways animals, as exceptional individuals and/or as species, do become prominent intermediaries, mediators, and negotiators challenging the great partitioning between natural resources and human agency and self-interest. From utilitarian animals to wild specimens, sympatric and synanthropic species we shall assess up to what point interspecific cohabitation with chosen/elected animals can speak in favor of a well distributed wellbeing, ie. ecosystemic equilibrium, importance of biodiversity, up to the sound environmental challenges Asian societies are to deal with.

ANNETTE HORNbacher

Institute for Ethnology,
Heidelberg University

Annette Hornbacher is professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Heidelberg. She received her PhD in philosophy (University of Tübingen) with a thesis on Friedrich Hölderlin's concept of poetic language as 'higher enlightenment', and her Habilitation in Cultural Anthropology (University of München) with a book on Balinese ritual dance as an alternative to modern western paradigms of representation. She has conducted extensive fieldwork in Indonesia and particularly in Bali where she worked on ritual dance drama as a kinaesthetic embodiment of cosmological knowledge. She has led several research projects: on Religious Dynamics in Post-Suharto Indonesia (funded by German Ministry for Education and Research), on Local Traditions and World Religions (funded by the German Research Council), and on Waterscapes as interrelated nature-culture landscapes in Bali and Komodo (Heidelberg, Cluster of Excellence). In this context, she began working on competing concepts of ecology and human-animal relationships in the Marine reserve of Komodo. Currently, she leads a research project on esoteric Balinese manuscripts in an interdisciplinary research area "Material Textcultures" (SFB933), and is conducting a comparative research project together with Prof. William Sax on tantric text practices in Bali and India.

LIZARDS AND OTHER ANCESTORS: WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND THE MORAL ECOLOGY OF KOMODO

The Indonesian island of Komodo has become world famous because it hosts the world's largest monitor lizards – the "Komodo dragons." This rare species is extinct elsewhere in the archipelago, and thus the thinly populated island of Komodo has become a focus of western wildlife conservation politics since the discovery of the lizards by the Dutch in 1910, a matter of national concern since Komodo became a national park, and a matter of international interest when it was listed as a world heritage site by the UNESCO in 1991. Since then, the lizards and other species have been put under international protection, and the Indonesian government enforced this politics by changing the lifestyle and livelihood of the small human society on Komodo island. And yet, despite all conservation measures, the number of lizards has fallen so dramatically that the Indonesian government has banned all tourism on the island for the coming year. This paper seeks to provide an answer to this paradox of destruction via protection by contrasting the ecological conservation program of the UNESCO with the totemistic local model of human-animal relationships, which is based on a moral ecology in which nature and culture are interwoven rather than separated spheres of social life, and where kinship relations between humans and non-human animals involves a strong mutual moral commitment.

WASAN PANYAGAEW

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Wasan Panyagaew made his Ph.D. thesis at the Australian National University. Author of many articles among which “The Two Khruba Lue: Buddhist Place Makers of the Upper Mekong” in the Journal of the Siam Society in 2018. Wasan Panyagaew has also edited and co-edited books on various sociological topics in Thailand such as football, casinos, music and ethnicity, politics. He is currently director of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of Chiang Mai University.

MODERN NOMADISM AMONG THAI MAHOUTS: A SOCIAL CONSEQUENCE OF HUMAN - ELEPHANT RELATIONS EVOLUTION IN THAILAND’S TOURISM INDUSTRY

This paper presents insights in a research survey conducted recently in tourism-based elephant camps located in 6 strategic touristic provinces of Chonburi, Phuket, Ayutthaya, Kanchanaburi, Surin and Chiang Mai. These camps constitute important job prospects and source of income for mahouts who have a cultural background rooted in the village mahout tradition. They have engaged in elephant raising and training for labor use since their childhood as a genuine way of living. Without any possibility to go on with a traditional way of dwelling with pachyderms they don’t own the elephants they are working with anymore. Yet, their work at the camps requires special skills, a practical knowledge accumulated from experience and emotional engagement with the elephants that makes of the latter a source of income for mahouts and profits for tourism promoters. Recently, the expansion of tourism-based elephant camp business not only manipulates the ways to use pachyderms for touristic purposes, but also creates new touristic institutions and drive mahouts to engage in a sort of nomadic life. These groups of mahouts seasonally and annually leave their home villages to work in camps, linking interestingly very developed tourist cities of Thailand with forest areas where claimed “conservation-based tourism” is flourishing for a few years. What the evolution of elephants-mahouts relation in Thailand have to say about the choices human societies makes in terms of environmental management? How the needs of the pachyderms are interrelated with those of the mahouts, conservation politics and the socioeconomic value of elephants in Thailand.

FRÉDÉRIC LANDY

Director of the
French Institute of Pondicherry, India

Frédéric LANDY is a professor of geography at the university of Paris-Nanterre, France, and heads the French Institute of Pondicherry, India. He is presently working on the environmental image of indigeneity ("eco-ethnicity"), on landscapes and ecotourism, on agroecology, mostly in India. He is the author of *Feeding India. The spatial parameters of food grain policy*, Manohar-CSH, 2009. He has edited *From urban national parks to natured cities in the global South: The quest for naturbanity*, Springer, 2018, and co-edited *Megacity slums. Social Exclusion, Space and Urban Policies in Brazil and India*, Imperial College Press, 2013.

ARE SOME MANAGERS OF INDIAN NATIONAL PARKS CORRUPTED OR ANALOGIST? RELATIONSHIPS TO NATURE AND WILDLIFE IN HINDU INDIA

Mumbai has a national park enclaved in an urban area of 20 million people. It is famous for its leopards, whose territories overflow into the suburbs, as well as for the dozens of thousands of people who live in slums within it. How can we explain that the managers of this park are unable to limit (animal) exits and (human) entries? For some researchers of the UNPEC project, it is due to the material and political difficulties associated with the existence of a national park within a megalopolis, as well as the corruption of many actors, both on the park and city sides. For other researchers, the very model of a national park does not correspond to the reality of the Indian rangers' relationship to nature: far from wanting a conservation fortress, they more or less unconsciously want to maintain bridges between "nature" and the "city", two worlds that they philosophically refused to truly separate.

The aim of this paper is to shed light on the complexity of the relationship between "nature" and "culture" in India, through social classes, caste and religious communities, but also through the different spaces. Can a dichotomy between nature and culture exist in the land of Hanuman and Ganesh, the Monkey and Elephant Gods? There, according to Descola (2005), the dominant ontology is "analogy", very far from the "naturalism" currently dominant in the West. The paper will more than qualify this state of affairs, by showing how ambiguous religious values are in terms of "environmental protection".

STÉPHANE RENNESSON

LESC-CNRS, Nanterre, France

Stéphane Rennesson joined the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) after a PhD in cultural and social anthropology at the University of Paris Nanterre and a postdoctoral position at the Musée du quai Branly. He is currently working at Laboratory of Ethnology and Comparative Sociology after three years at the Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia in Bangkok (IRASEC). He taught anthropology at the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS) and at the Paris Institute of Political Studies. Specialist of Thai culture, he published a book on Muay Thai and, several articles and three ethnographic films about the relations Thai people nurture with animals, notably when they play with them (Beetle and fish fighting, bird signing contests).

THE COPRODUCTION OF ECOLOGIES WITH MORE THAN HUMAN ANIMALS. PLAYING WITH BEETLES, BIRDS AND FISH IN THAILAND

In Thailand some people decided to experiment playing with certain kinds of non-human animals. They push the estrangement quite far since they don't only engage playfully with mammals with which we still share a maximum of common features. They notably enroll insects, fish and birds to explore new bridges that can be built between species.

I shall briefly give a few comparative insights of beetle wrestling, fish fighting and bird signing contests. I'll try to show that It's not only a question of how do non-human animals can have a say in terms of political ecology, that still subsume the study of the enmeshing of economics, politics, ..., biology, thus putting human groups interest as the center of the questioning. It will appear that they are not only and primarily natural resources nor symbolic pools into which human societies can draw energy or properties to secure survival and elaborate concepts. We will ask how they trigger such a curiosity from people who seem to be keen on amending their anthropocentered point of view. At another level of analysis, we shall question the benefits we can get from what may be considered as genuine experimental devices. What do we gain as a species by considering that they generate their own political ecologies and that learning from them is to learn how to dwell with others, to co evaluate with them?

CHAIR

CARL MIDDLETON

Center for Social Development Studies,
Faculty of Political Science,
Chulalongkorn University

Dr. Carl Middleton is an Assistant Professor and Deputy Director for Research on the Master of Arts in International Development Studies (MAIDS)/ Graduate Research in International Development (GRID) Programme, and Director of the Center for Social Development Studies (CSDS) in the Faculty of Political Science of Chulalongkorn University. His research interests orientate around the politics and policy of the environment in Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on nature-society relations, the political ecology of water and energy, and environmental justice.

SPEAKERS

KYAW THU

Paung Ku

Dr Kyaw Thu, the Executive Director of Paung Ku, has a proven record from years of experience working with diverse international non-government and civil society organizations on a broad range of issues at the local, national and regional levels. He has facilitated civil society initiatives and social movement-building to strengthen collective action for the promotion of human rights, ethnic minority rights, land rights, natural resource rights, freedom of expression and the right to information. He is also involved in analysis and strategy to foster the role and capabilities of civil society to better engage and dialogue with political parties and ethnic armed groups for democratic reform and to end armed conflict and communal violence.

POST-DEVELOPMENT AND SYSTEMIC ALTERNATIVES FROM ASIA

The ecological, social and cultural costs and benefits of development in Asia, and their unequal distribution between different groups, are well-documented. Despite the many challenges that exist, transformation to alternative models of development often appears elusive. 'Critical modernists' argue that that better practices within the current paradigm of development is the best route forward, emphasizing for example, new benchmarks such as Gross National Happiness that focus on social, cultural and spiritual measures in evaluating positive changes in any given society. 'Post-development' thinkers, meanwhile, reject the idea of development altogether, offering an entirely different vision of what society should strive for, what should be valued, and the means to achieve it. These visions have range from shifting societal goals from growth to degrowth, to asking what can be learned from the cultural diversity of indigenous groups across the region and very different social relations within society and between nature and society.

On this roundtable, we ask "Are there better ways?" Drawing on their experience and ongoing work, questions that the panelists will address include:

- What are the key 'development' challenges at present? Why are they occurring? How does this relate to your ongoing work?
- What are the immediate solutions to meet these challenges? Who needs to act and how? What are the barriers to be overcome?
- What are the long-term priority solutions for societal transformation? What is the vision, the underlying principles and ideas, and how do they differ from the present? Who needs to act and how? What does this mean for nature-society relations?

The panel aims to evoke an engaged discussion both amongst the panelists and with participants joining the session.

K. J. JOY

Founding Member and Senior Fellow
Society for Promoting Participative
Ecosystem Management (SOPPECOM)

Joy has been an activist-researcher for more than 30 years. His areas of interest include drought, participatory irrigation management, river-basin management, institutions, multi-stakeholder processes, water conflicts, water ethics and people's movements. He coordinates the activities of Forum for Policy Dialogue on Water Conflicts in India and is part of the national level network, Vikalp Sangam (Alternative Confluences). He has published extensively on water-environment-development issues and some of his co-authored/co-edited books include: *India's Water Futures: Emergent Ideas and Pathways*; *Alternative Futures: India Unshackled*; *Water Conflicts in India: A Million Revolts in the Making*; *Community-based Natural Resource Management: Issues and Cases from South Asia*.

**SUPHAKIT
NUNTAVORAKARN**

Mr. Suphakit Nuntavorakarn is a Public Policy Manager and senior researcher at Healthy Public Policy Foundation (HPPF) since 2011. He has been working on sustainable energy and other issues around sustainable development for 20 years, including energy policy and planning, national energy system reform, Sustainable Consumption and Production, Electricity Governance, Community Energy and social enterprises, as well as Health Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment, mining and industrial policy. He was commissioner, advisor, and member in many national organizations, committees and working groups. Mr. Nuntavorakarn graduated master's degree in Environmental Management from Aalborg University, Denmark and Bachelor of Science (Economics) from Kasetsart University, Thailand.

WORA SUKRAROEEK

EarthRights International and
Member of Thailand Extraterritorial
Obligations Watch Coalition

Wora is Mekong Campaign Manager at EarthRights International Asia. She leads campaign and legal advocacy on business and human rights in ASEAN countries and monitoring human rights compliance of foreign investors in the Mekong countries. Her experiences in the past 10 years heavily focus on monitoring due diligence of foreign investors in extractive industry and hydropower such as Chinese and Thai investments. Before joining EarthRights, she worked for Oxfam International in Cambodia and Laos. Wora applied political ecology lens in her work regarding research and documentation of environmental changes and human rights impacts. She has PhD in Development Geography from University of Sydney, Australia.

Hotel

VENUE A

Chumpot-Pantip Conference Room.
4th floor, Prajadhipok-Ramphai Barni Building,
Chulalongkorn University, Henri-Dunant Rd.,
Pathumwan, Bangkok
Thailand 10330
Direction on Google Maps:
<https://goo.gl/maps/t5oufsA6N5t3tHd5A>

VENUE B

Alumni Meeting Room
12h floor, Kasem Authayanin Building,
Chulalongkorn University, Henri-Dunant Rd.,
Pathumwan, Bangkok
Thailand 10330
Direction on Google Maps:
<https://goo.gl/maps/5gUh8wkiuF52>

CU Shuttle Bus

Chulalongkorn University provides **free shuttle bus** service for students, faculty and staff. The shuttle bus service operates all routes Mondays to Saturdays, 7AM - 7PM, and only Bus No. 1 and 2 on Saturdays.

