

Report on Roundtable: 'Postcolonial migration and urban encounters'

As new migrants congregate in postcolonial cities and intersect with cultures constituted through past migration patterns, what are the impacts on urban encounters between different groups of migrants and with residents? This was the topic of discussion at a roundtable jointly organised by the ARI Asian Migration Cluster and the FASS Migration Cluster on 25 February 2015. The discussants included visiting researcher Dr Peter Dirksmeir (Geographisches Institut, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), A/P Daniel Goh (NUS Sociology) and A/P Elaine Ho (NUS Geography). Professor Brenda Yeoh (NUS Geography) chaired the event. The discussants highlighted the value of postcolonial perspectives for informing migration analyses and the tensions arising in urban spaces now. Postcolonialism reminds us that contemporary struggles over belonging and rights in cities as different as Berlin, Myanmar and Singapore are not only reminiscent of power relationships during the colonial past, but are also shaped by how 'race' and cultural difference were managed then. The roundtable discussion provoked meaningful debate over the repetition of colonial-like power relationships and whether 'race' (or ethnicity) is still a useful category for understanding cultural difference. Notwithstanding the variety of views expressed, the roundtable participants concurred that present struggles over migration and urban space are characterised by greater social stratification found in society today.



Speakers: A/P Daniel Goh & A/P Elaine Ho



Question & Answer



Speaker: Dr Peter Dirksmeir