

ARI news

Main Story

THE BIG MOVE

Special Feature

REFLECTIONS ON BICYCLES AND CITIES: THE MAKING OF "LIFE CYCLE"

Outreach Event

11TH SINGAPORE GRADUATE FORUM ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

Photo credit:
NUS Office of Estate Development



WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

PROF JONATHAN RIGG

I have now been ARI's Director for a little more than six months. It seems longer than that, but in a good way: there is just so much going on.

This means that all I can do here is run through the highlights – but the full list of activities is archived on the ARI website under “past events”. Our 11th annual, flagship Asian Graduate Student Fellowship Programme was given an injection of funding through the generosity of the Henry Luce Foundation in New York. This enabled us to extend the programme by two weeks and to fund three senior scholars – Professors Michele Thompson, Gerald Sim and Don Nonini – from the US to help us mentor and enthuse 36 students from 13 countries, working on topics as diverse as political cartoons, the spirituality of rain water flowing from Mount Merapi, and labour migrants in Singapore and Dubai. We now need to reflect on the experience and work out how best to mount next year's programme.

Of course such a programme does not run on overseas talent alone, and Dr Michiel Baas, Dr Kay Mohlman, Ms Tay Minghua and Ms Selvi Krishnan were key to making the initiative such a success, along with many “mentors” drawn from ARI and the wider NUS community. I regard it as enormously important for NUS, with all the resources and benefits that we enjoy, to support younger scholars in the wider Asian region. Dr Amelia Fauzia (Senior Research Fellow at ARI) and Mr Amir Maruf wrote a piece entitled “Religion, Citizenship and Democracy in Indonesia: Any correlation?” for the *Jakarta Post*, drawing on some of the debates during the end of programme conference (<http://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2016/08/16/religion-citizenship-and-democracy-in-indonesia-any-correlation.html>).

While size isn't everything, the largest event with which ARI has been involved over the last six months was the SHOT – or Society for the History of Technology – conference at

the end of June, an event jointly organised with Tembusu College and various other local partners including NTU, Yale-NUS College and SUTD. The conference involved 450 participants from 45 countries engaging in 89 different sessions. The keynote was presented with *élan* by Professor Bruno Latour, apparently his first visit to Singapore, and Assoc Prof Greg Clancey, research leader of the STS Cluster, skillfully kept the train on track and on time, while remaining remarkably poised throughout.

It is unusual to mark departures in this column, but in this instance it is justified: Professor Chua Beng Huat stepped down as convenor, architect and leader of the Cultural Studies Cluster in June. He was there, as they say, at the very beginning and NUS's international reputation in the field of cultural studies is very much a product of his vision, enterprise and leadership over some 13 years.

Finally, we have moved back to the main Kent Ridge campus in July, leaving our bucolic (for Singapore) home for ten years at Bukit Timah. In his Word from the Director in 2007, Professor Tony Reid hinted at the challenges that moving to Bukit Timah would create, and in particular the spatial separation of ARI from its natural hinterland, namely the disciplinary and area studies departments in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Now that we are back in the fold the anticipation is that interactions, liaisons and collaborations will be that much easier to engineer. There is already something in the wind... two new ARI reading groups have been recently launched, ground-up initiatives by our postdoctoral fellows, and grant collaborations are also blossoming.

Having more places to eat is no bad thing either.

Cateljne Coopmans and Graham Button received, in June 2016, the Distinguished Paper Award 2016 from the American Sociological Association (ASA), Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis section, for their 2014 paper: "Eyeballing Expertise", *Social Studies of Science*, 44(5): 758-785. Read the full citation here: <http://asa-emca.blogspot.sg/2016/06/asa-distinguished-paper-award-16.html>.

Prof Mike Douglass gave 5 keynote speeches and a public lecture: "The Resilience of Progressive Cities: Governing Asia's Urban Transition in the Anthropocene", *International Workshop and Symposium on Progressive Cities as Resilient Cities*, Hanoi, 18-19 July 2016; "Planning as a Process of Becoming – The Contemporary City and the City Possible in Theory and Practice", *Workshop on Becomings in Planning/Planning in Becoming*, Sweden, 20-21 June 2016; "The Rise of Progressive Cities in Asia – Research on Planetary Urbanisation and Human Flourishing in the 21st Century", *Globalisation Graduate Forum*, 17 June 2016; Planetary Urbanisation and Human Flourishing – Alternative Concepts of Resilient Cities in Asia, Leiden University, 8 June 2016; "Resilient Urbanism in the Anthropocene – The Rise of Progressive City Regions in Asia's Urban Transition", *International Workshop on Resilience and Asian Urbanism*, University of Washington, 28-30 March 2016; Keynote presentation for *International Workshop on Gaps in Disaster Governance Research*, Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance Programme, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 10-12 March 2016.

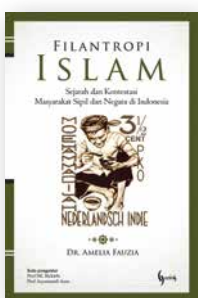
Dr Amelia Fauzia gave a keynote speech on "Spiritual Economy and Faith-Based Philanthropy: A Bridge in Studies of Economy and Religion", *International Conference on Accounting, Management, Economics and Social Sciences (ICAMESS)*, Jakarta, 30 April 2016. She was also appointed

International Board Member representing ARI/NUS in the International Centre for Aceh and Indian Ocean Studies (ICAIOS) in July 2016.

Dr Rita Padawangi and Prof Mike Douglass won the 14th annual William J. Holland Prize for their paper published in *Pacific Affairs* 88(3), 517-550, "Water, Water Everywhere: Toward Participatory Solutions to Chronic Urban Flooding in Jakarta". Read more here: <http://www.pacificaffairs.ubc.ca/announcements/holland-prize/>.

Prof Jonathan Rigg gave 4 keynote speeches: "Making Space for the Rural in an Urban World: Thailand in Asian Perspective", the *Urban Research Plaza's 14th Urban Culture Forum*, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Chulalongkorn University, 3-4 March, 2016; "From Traction to Friction: The Emerging Southeast Asian Development *Problematic*", TRaNS 'Beyond Aid' Conference, Sogang University, 27-28 May 2016; "From Vulnerability to Precarity? Rural Lives and Livelihoods under Conditions of Neo-liberalism", *Rural Research & Planning Group (RRPG), 7th International Conference*, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), 15-17 August 2016; "Illusions of the Past and Delusions of the Present in Rural Asia", *Conference on Modernity in Cosmopolitan Southeast Asia*, Thammasat University, 22-23 August. He was also appointed member of the Editorial Board of SUVANNABHUMI (Seoul), 2016-2018.

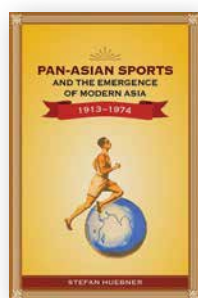
Prof Brenda Yeoh gave a keynote address on "Living across Borders: Time, Temporalities and Transnational Families", *The International Conference on Migration and Orders*, China, 27-28 August 2016. She was also appointed International Board Member of the Asian Pathways Research Lab in 2016; Member, Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP), Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2016-2018; and Academic Panel Member for "City Hall: A Place for the People" Exhibition, 2016-2017.



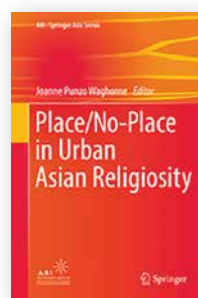
Amelia Fauzia
Filantropi Islam. Sejarah dan Kontestasi Masyarakat Sipil dan Negara di Indonesia
Gading, Yogyakarta, 2016
(Indonesian translation of *Faith and the State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia*, by Amelia Fauzia, Brill, Leiden & Boston, 2013)



Hamzah Muzaini & Brenda S. A. Yeoh
Contested Memoriscapes: The Politics of Second World War Commemoration in Singapore
Ashgate, Abingdon, UK, 2016



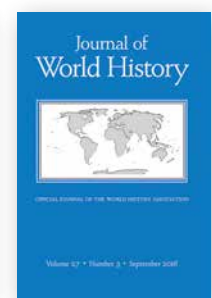
Stefan Huebner
Pan-Asian Sports and the Emergence of Modern Asia, 1913-1974
NUS Press, Singapore, 2016



Joanne Punzo Waghorne (ed)
Place/No-Place in Urban Asian Religiosity
ARI-Springer Asia Series Volume 5
Springer, Singapore, 2017



Teresita Cruz-del Rosario and James M. Dorsey
Comparative Political Transitions between Southeast Asia and the Middle East and North Africa: Lost in Transition
Palgrave Macmillan, USA, 2016



Diego Olstein & Stefan Huebner (eds)
Special Issue: *Preaching the Civilizing Mission and Modern Cultural Encounters*
Journal of World History 27(3), 2016

THE WAIT IS OVER..... AFTER A DECADE, ARI IS BACK ON THE KENT RIDGE CAMPUS

MS SHARLENE ANTHONY
SENIOR MANAGER

Photo credit: ARI administrative team

With a brand new building and issues associated with brand new buildings still lingering, ARI was the first “Asian studies” department to move into AS8 on 30 June 2016.



Close to six months before the move, hopes of moving in within the next few months were still uncertain. Eventually, a site visit by ARI's new Director, Professor Jonathan Rigg and Deputy Director Assoc Prof Huang Jianli provided a sense of urgency and a date for the move was finally set.

The sense of excitement was however soon replaced by the dreadful task of packing. Boxes and bubble wrap arrived amidst ongoing seminars and conferences. Artwork was taken down, cupboards, fridges and storerooms were cleaned out and cleared. The ARI office at the Bukit Timah campus was in a state of disorder... in an orderly way. Staff were informed that ARI would occupy level 7 at AS8, with all staff being housed on a single level. In total, level 7 can accommodate 109 staff. It also includes a meeting room, a resource room, three storerooms, a print room and a pantry. The ARI Seminar Room however, is located on level 4 (just beside the link way to the Central Library and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences departments).

Saying goodbye is never easy... but we did it! Boxes were loaded. The administrative staff was divided into two teams; one to ensure nothing was left behind and another to ensure the items delivered found their rightful homes at AS8. A slight drizzle in the early part of the morning caused a



Working with the movers to get all boxes loaded and cleared out of Levels 8, 9 and 10 of BTC

delay in the loading of boxes and resulted in the move being extended by another half day. Eventually, to everyone's relief, all items were delivered safely albeit some very minor dents and chips.

Hitting the ground running and back into the swing of things, ARI prepared for our first VIP visit, NUS President, Professor Tan Chorh Chuan and a team of Senior Management members toured level 7 on 5 July. During the visit, Professor Tan highlighted that AS8 is the first building on campus to have an escalator!

On 7 July, the ARI Seminar room on level 4, passed the test as it hosted its first event, the *Children, Family and Migration in East Asia* conference jointly organised by ARI and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. With a seating capacity of about 100, and configured more in a lecture room style, the glass walls on either side



Prof Tan Chorh Chuan and members of NUS Senior Management team visit the ARI Resource Room on 5 July 2016

give the room a more welcoming and modern feel.

Although the physical move back to the main campus was relatively smooth, many challenges have to be overcome as we settle into AS8. Unwanted visitors such as ants, toilets that do not work, printers that could not connect and rain water beating in resulting in water ponding are some such examples. Slowly but surely these items are being resolved one by one, creating a conducive new home for ARI to foster close working relationships and build networks with colleagues interested in the field of research on Asia.

A "homecoming" event to celebrate ARI's 15th Anniversary and return to the Kent Ridge campus was held on 6 September. The turnout was excellent, with attendees from within NUS and from external organisations, and even from the general public.



Business as usual - Participants in the first conference held at the ARI Seminar Room on level 4



PULITZER PRIZE WINNER VIET THANH NGUYEN: LITERARY IMAGINATION AND ACADEMIA

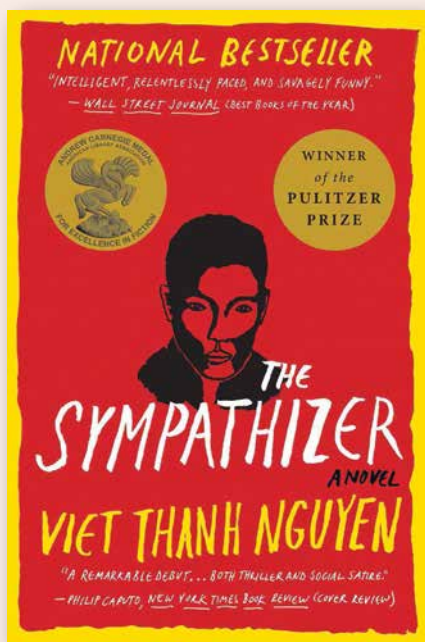
DR FIONA LEE
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
(FORMER POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW,
CULTURAL STUDIES IN ASIA CLUSTER)

One seldom thinks of academic and fiction writing as going hand in hand. Yet, for Viet Thanh Nguyen, a professor in English at the University of Southern California and Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Cultural Studies in Asia Cluster from June to August 2014, these two modes of knowledge production mutually complement his work. In addition to writing for academic audiences in areas including Asian American studies, literary and cultural studies, and Transpacific studies, Nguyen also pursues his research interests through writing fiction. His debut novel, *The Sympathizer* (Grove Press, 2015), explores the Vietnam War's lasting impact on diasporic identity and subject formation through the story of an undercover communist agent caught between the conflicting sides of North and South Vietnam, and the United States. These issues are further examined in his recent scholarly monograph, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Harvard UP, 2016). I spoke to Nguyen in June, shortly after his novel won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, about how writing fiction allows him to think through the relationship between power and knowledge production in his academic research.

US President Barack Obama's recent visit to Vietnam (in May 2016) has been portrayed as an effort of reconciliation in light of the war fought between the two countries. You've just published two books on the history and remembrance of this war. What did you make of his visit?

There has been enough passage of time that a second generation is having an opportunity to think through this war and what it means, and I'm a part of that. I did not live through the war, but I have certainly been affected by what happened to my family. President Obama is also a part of that second generation too, who did not have to go to war or be opposed to it. We bring complementary but also very divergent viewpoints to what it means to have reconciliation. His visit to Vietnam is, in many ways, obviously a positive

thing — it is better to have a US president visit your country rather than ignore it or bomb it. He's also selling bombs, in a symbolic sense, to the country by lifting the arms embargo, or allowing the US to sell weapons to Vietnam. For me, this kind of reconciliation between the US and Vietnam is a very pragmatic, state-oriented reconciliation that is more about the absence of conflict and about strategic alliances for further geopolitical negotiations or manoeuvring against China rather than true peace. The novel is more pessimistic about what peace and reconciliation means. What happens by the end of the novel is that when states come to power—even when new revolutionary states come into being—often times, there is a repetition of the use and abuse of power. That, I think, is what is signified by President Obama returning to Vietnam—not a genuine peace but more of a negotiation between states that allows power to continue.



The novel strikes me as an effort at examining how these geopolitical and military conflicts manifest at a personal level.

The novel is about one man's internal conflict, his psychology, and relationship to power and ideology. I tried to construct a character who was believable as an individual, but who would also embody different binaries because of the accident of his birth—being someone who is of French and Vietnamese descent, who is also caught up in this cold war conflict, and who had an infatuation with the United States. His construction allows me to talk about what it means to be caught between ideological sides and be hailed in different ways by power. Although he does commit to one, he's also still hearing the call of other ideologies. So he is always aware of how power is working. And he is forced to become aware of how it is that war becomes rooted in one's own being. This is another way by which war becomes perpetual. War is perpetual partly because of the machinery of war—states, militaries, economies and so on. But, war is also perpetual because it is internalised. What he realises is that regardless of how those who are within an ideology prefer to see themselves as always being human, they are also structured by inhumanity as well. At the end of the novel, he is forced to confront that in a very visceral and graphic way. In *Nothing Ever Dies*, I try to make that more explicit at the level of criticism by talking about what I see as the mutual existence of humanity and inhumanity.

What is the significance of the literary imagination in your work as an academic?

As someone who is a writer, I feel that one primary task is to pay attention to language, the texture of language, the choice of words and rhythms, and to strive constantly against cliché. It is not to say that all writers are good at that, but that is supposed to be what we do. And if you pursue that, part of what you are committed to is the power of the form that the imagination makes possible. If you do that, you can't give in to certain kinds of conformities that are present in scholarly thinking. The production of scholarly knowledge takes place in institutions, in intellectual formations that are professional, that are careerist, that have worldly implications and ramifications. What that means is that scholarly formations can produce clichés of knowledge and method as well. One thing that the literary imagination can do is to throw those clichés into relief. When we say that literature is supposed to speak truth to power, that is one of the reasons why literature can serve as a theoretical purpose, why it can be critical, why it can be used against imperialism, and why it can be used against academic pieties and pettiness.

What I hear you saying is that as scholars, we have to pay attention to how we're writing and how the language we use is a reproduction of the institutions, the disciplines we inhabit.

The lineage which I think of is through Michel Foucault and Edward Said in *Orientalism*, the critique of power/knowledge which Said turns against orientalists. But his critique is of knowledge as a formation of power, which does not happen only in orientalism or in dominant modes, but also in every kind of disciplinary mode of thinking including Asian American studies, cultural studies, or inter-Asia cultural studies, for example. We have to be able to work against the grain of our own tradition. It is easy to adopt Said and point the finger at someone else's tradition. It is much more challenging to also think against the tradition that produces us. We can't think of academic knowledge or artistic knowledge as some kind of pure production, but something that is embedded in social relationships. As academics, none of us are free from that, but not all of us are cognisant of that either.

This interview was edited for length and clarity.

REFLECTIONS ON BICYCLES AND CITIES: THE MAKING OF "LIFE CYCLE"

(AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL DOCUMENTARY)

DR MALINI SUR

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY (FORMER RESEARCH FELLOW, ASIAN MIGRATION CLUSTER)

On 15 April 2016, ARI organised a panel discussion surrounding *Life Cycle*, a 42-minute documentary, at The Substation, Singapore. In this film, I explore the bicycle's changing relationship to Indian cities.

Professor Joseph Alter (Yale-NUS), Tara Dankel (SUTD) and Lin Weiqiang (NUS) presented commentaries and engaged in a conversation with me (direction). Fiona Lee moderated this roundtable on bicycles, cities and bodies. The panellists interrogated the relationships between technologies of motion and human bodies, and debated how attention to bicycles and cycling may help urban planning and transport to rethink Asia's rapidly transforming cities.

These debates were central to the making of *Life Cycle*. Between January 2015 and April 2016, I conducted visual and ethnographic fieldwork in the city of Kolkata in eastern India. Winding through Kolkata's roads, I travelled with Debalina and Sabyasachi (camera), following the city's migrant labourers, local daily wage workforce, academics, and environmentalists. We documented how Kolkata's cyclists negotiated city roads congested by buses, cars and auto-rickshaws. We filmed environmental activists who participated in Kolkata's annual cycle rally capturing significant moments of collective protests against the city traffic regulations that prohibited cycling on more than 174 city roads in 2015. Shortly after this rally in late January 2015 which called attention to police harassment, new traffic regulations opened several roads to cyclists. We also spent several hours with police constables as they regulated traffic in busy intersections and at the Kolkata police headquarters in order to gain



insights into the city's traffic system and the regulation of road space.

Over 2015 and 2016, we had shot across a variety of locations – busy markets, police stations, tea stalls, traffic booths, slums, middle class residences and residential homes – to survey the city's main thoroughfares and by lanes. By this time, we had not only witnessed several road fights and accidents, but Sabya Pal (sound: outdoor), had carefully recorded these for us. Shooting in Kolkata's



busy streets and markets had many interesting moments. For instance, one afternoon a group of cyclist vendors rumoured that our film was intended to promote a new vehicle that would replace the bicycle in Kolkata's markets! In another instance, a passerby confidently attempted to guide the camera! But mostly, strangers volunteered a wealth of information and welcomed us to their houses and work stations.

Over a period of three months in 2016, Sumit Ghosh meticulously edited the large volume of visual material that the fieldwork had generated. Editing *Life Cycle* was a product of long discussions on the borders of anthropology and film-making. If anthropology's ethical attention to temporal and locational precisions sought to sequence montages in specific ways, editorial artistic sensibilities were more inclined to disrupt these. My location as an anthropologist based in a foreign city and Sumit's seniority as an editor in Kolkata, the city where he lived, guided these discussions. We resolved important dilemmas surrounding visual representations by agreeing to combine ethnographic ethics with artistic attention to the bicycle, and to represent Kolkata without either exaggerating or concealing critical issues. Abdul Rajjak designed and finalised sound in record time when my failed discussions with several sound studios in the city had stalled the project. As soon as Sayan Bhattacharya completed the translations and the subtitling, I returned to Singapore with the completed project that took a total of eighteen months.

Life Cycle is a product of tensed debates. These relate to the differing visions of environmental activists who demand greater road equity, the city police for whom the



bicycle is a slow moving vehicle, and daily wage-workers who informally negotiate with the police. Another set of debates revolve around the distinct experiences of cyclists who negotiate with increasing numbers of speeding cars and buses, and car users who see cyclists as disrespecting traffic rules and congesting an already clogged city. The final debates were among those who came together to make *Life Cycle* who held different political and artistic positions on state control over public space, the role of traffic police, and motorised versus non-motorised transport.

Life Cycle testifies to how bicycles occupy the spaces in-between distinct imaginaries of India's burgeoning cities.

LOST IN TRANSITION: COMPARATIVE POLITICAL TRANSITIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

ASSOC PROF TERESITA CRUZ-DEL ROSARIO
SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW

For the past three decades, political transitions in Asia have been the subject of much interest in academic and policy-making communities. Despite indications of their fragility, there are encouraging signs of democratic transitions as in Myanmar. In the Philippines and Indonesia, countries with relatively open political systems, transitions to democracy have been complete, albeit messy, flawed, and highly contested.

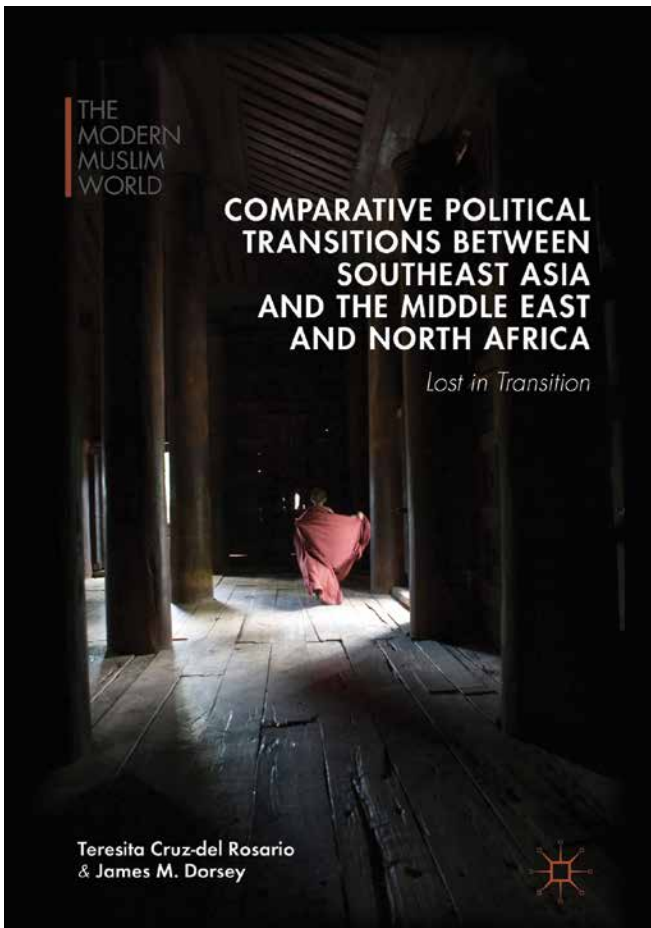
These transitions have been made possible across Asia via a thick, though often underground, layer of social movements and civil society organisations (CSOs). Further, reformist factions within the military in some of these countries, in coalition with civil society organisations, have played crucial roles in the transition process.

In contrast, Middle Eastern and North African countries that have been gripped by revolts in recent years find themselves in the midst of chaotic and uncontrollable transitions. The ouster of Mohammed Morsi in July 2013 returned the country to military rule. The proliferation of private militias in Libya indicates the absence of institutions upon which effective governance rests. Civil strife in Syria and Iraq shows no signs of abatement. The absence of both a civil society infrastructure and reformist factions within the military at the advent of the Arab revolts differentiates Middle Eastern and North African nations from their Asian counterparts.

What accounts for these differences? Why did elements of the military not embrace change as the guarantor of the preservation of their vested interests? Why were CSOs and social movements implanted successfully in Asian countries

despite authoritarian experiments in Myanmar, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Cambodia? What factors account for the continuing expansion of CSOs even in tightly controlled spaces, and how do CSOs and social movement actors continue to manoeuvre for the expansion of civic space? Why was Southeast Asia, unlike the Middle East and North Africa, able to build strong national identities in their equally multi-cultural and multi-ethnic societies? How do differences in the policy of regional superpowers explain the differences in Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern transition?

A few hypotheses might help explain these differences: 1) an early tradition of civil society organisations in a number of Asian countries notably Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia; 2) historical experiences in parliamentary politics (e.g., Myanmar, Indonesia and the Philippines); 3) differences in the way Western aid operated in collusion with underground civil society movements in Asia and in the Middle East and North Africa; and 4) a modernising outlook (“ethos”) within the reformist factions in the Asian militaries that subscribe to professional criteria rather than to personal affiliations and loyalty.



These are the questions that underlie this book project. It takes a comparative perspective between two significant regions where political transitions have been occurring in the past three decades. Cross-regional comparisons are conspicuously absent in the literature on political transitions. State-society relations in Asia and the Middle East have not been comparatively studied, yet these constitute an area of scholarly interest given the recent experience of political change in both regions. Mindful of the diversity and differences among countries in both regions, this book highlights regional comparisons that could potentially pave the way for future detailed investigations and chart new territories for research along specific dimensions.

A concluding chapter discusses comparative lessons for post-revolt Arab nations and Southeast Asian nations like Indonesia and the Philippines who are far further advanced on the road towards liberalisation. Southeast Asia's success in putting an active electoral culture in place in which citizens insist on the legitimacy of their leaders through fair and honest elections is a first step in the right direction.

19 – 20 OCTOBER 2016

**MUSLIM ENDOWMENTS
IN ASIA: WAQF, CHARITY
AND CIRCULATIONS**

7 – 8 NOVEMBER 2016

**YOUTH MOBILITIES AND
IMMOBILITIES IN THE
ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

17 – 18 NOVEMBER 2016

**DISASTER JUSTICE IN
ANTHROPOCENE ASIA
AND THE PACIFIC**

21 – 22 NOVEMBER 2016

**DISASTROUS PASTS:
NEW DIRECTIONS IN
ASIAN DISASTER HISTORY**

15 – 16 DECEMBER 2016

**CHINA-ARABIA,
ENCOUNTERS AND
ENGAGEMENTS**

9 – 10 FEBRUARY 2017

**GENDER PERSPECTIVES
ON COLONIAL INTER-ASIAN
LABOUR MIGRATION**

21 FEBRUARY 2017

**POLITICAL THEOLOGIES
AND DEVELOPMENT
IN ASIA**

27 – 28 FEBRUARY 2017

**LIVING IN AN AGE
OF PRECARIETY:
LIVING AND LIVES
IN 21ST CENTURY ASIA**

2 – 3 MARCH 2017

**RESILIENT CITIES FOR
HUMAN FLOURISHING:
GOVERNING THE
ASIA-PACIFIC URBAN
TRANSITION IN THE
ANTHROPOCENE**

6 – 7 MARCH 2017

**SECULAR AGE IN
SOUTH, EAST, AND
SOUTH-EAST ASIA**

13 – 14 MARCH 2017

**CONTEXTUALISING
PRODUCTIVE AGEING
IN ASIA**

Details of events are available at: <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/Event>



Ms Kristel Anne Acedera has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Research Assistant in the Asian Migration Cluster with effect from 10 May 2016. She is currently pursuing her M. Soc. Sci. degree at the Department of Geography, NUS. She researches on the role of communication technologies on transnational familyhood and mediated intimacies. At ARI, she will be providing administrative and academic research support for the Child Health and Migrant Parents in South-East Asia II Project (CHAMPSEA II).



Dr Tina Shrestha has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Asian Migration Cluster with effect from 4 July 2016. She received her PhD in Cultural Anthropology from Cornell University and her research interests are transnational migration, bureaucracy and brokerage, legal humanitarianism, and critical refugee studies. At ARI, she will be undertaking a research project that examines the role of state employment recruitment agencies and private manpower companies in Nepal in the context of protracted socio-political transition and post-disaster recovery process, and their corporate partners in Malaysia.



Dr Creighton Connolly has commenced a 1-year appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow in the Asian Urbanisms Cluster in ARI with effect from 27 June 2016. He received his PhD in Geography from the University of Manchester and his research focuses on cultural politics, urban political ecology, and contestations over urban development in Malaysian cities. At ARI, he will focus on the cultural politics of urban development vis-a-vis vernacular heritage conservation in the UNESCO World Heritage City of George Town, Penang.



Dr Carter Higgins has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster with effect from 4 July 2016. He received his PhD in Asian Literature, Religion, and Culture from Cornell University and his ethnographic research in India and Nepal centres on the meeting points of everyday devotional practice, governance, knowledge, and affect. At ARI, he will begin a project on the Department of Devasthan ("religious sites"), state government of Rajasthan, India—which was created in 1949 to manage the Hindu (and the occasional Jain) temples of the area's erstwhile princely states upon the latter's integration into independent India.



Dr Yang Yi has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Changing Family in Asia Cluster with effect from 4 July 2016. She obtained her PhD in Sociology from NUS and her research interests lie in social inequality and social stratification, ageing and health, and gender studies. At ARI, she will work on social exclusion and cognitive impairment of the elderly in China by drawing data from the Chinese Longitudinal Healthy Longevity Survey (CLHLS).



Dr Desmond Hok-Man Sham has commenced a 1-year appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow in the Asian Urbanisms Cluster in ARI with effect from 13 June 2016. He obtained his PhD from Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London. His research interests are postcolonial studies, heritage preservation, the city and arts, and cultural policy. At ARI, he will analyse how the dynamics between the state, capital and civil society shapes the process of heritage-making in East and Southeast Asian cities, with specific reference to Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.



Dr Stefan Huebner has commenced a 2-year appointment as a Research Fellow in the Inter-Asia Engagements Cluster with effect from 14 July 2016. He received his PhD from Jacobs University Bremen, Germany, and he is working on his second book project which is a global history of oceanic colonisation projects, which connects offshore oil drilling and mariculture (cultivation of marine organisms) to ideas of architects to build floating city extensions and futuristic floating cities.



Dr Fiona Williamson has commenced a 2-year appointment as a Research Fellow in the Asian Urbanisms Cluster with effect from 4 July 2016. She received her PhD in History from the University of East Anglia. Her current research focuses on the interconnections between flooding and urban development in Singapore and colonial Malaya. At ARI, she will join the Disaster Governance project team, continuing her work on flooding and meteorological history in British Southeast Asia.



Dr Lai Lei Kuan Rongdao has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster with effect from 25 July 2016. She received her PhD in East Asian Buddhism from McGill University, Canada, and specialises in modern Chinese Religions, focusing especially on identity production and the changing landscape in modern Chinese Buddhism. At ARI, she will complete a book manuscript, based on her doctoral dissertation, on educational reform and citizenship discourse in modern Chinese Buddhism. She will also be working on her new project on transnational lineage networks in twentieth-century Chinese Buddhism.



Dr Lee Yeonjin has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Changing Family in Asia Cluster with effect from 4 July 2016. She received her PhD in Sociology from the University of Pennsylvania and her research interests are quantitative methods, social demography, social stratification, and health policy. At ARI, she will conduct research on the health inequalities in East Asian and Southeast Asian countries using demographic methods, specifically focusing on gender differences in health care and the ageing process related with family support.



Dr My (May) Ngo has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster with effect from 26 July 2016. She received her PhD in Anthropology from Swinburne University of Technology, Australia. Her research interests include how constructions of both the “sacred” and the “secular” are negotiated within the humanitarian and development field, and how an examination of these processes render into question values that are assumed as universal and neutral. At ARI, she will complete a book manuscript based on her doctoral dissertation and work on a new project examining the politics of religion and development in Cambodia, with a focus on Catholic organisations.



Dr Ariane Utomo has commenced a 3-month appointment as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Changing Family in Asia Cluster with effect from 18 July 2016. She received her PhD in Demography from the Australian National University. Her current research focuses on how changing patterns in marriage pairing relate to the broader contexts of development and social change in Indonesia. At ARI, she will be working on a research paper on attitudes and practices of ethnic intermarriage in Greater Jakarta.



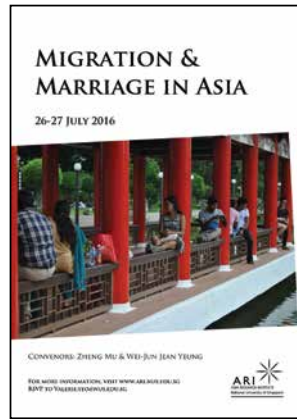
Dr Mok Mei Feng has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster with effect from 1 August 2016. She received her PhD in History from the University of Washington and her research interests include Vietnam, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, East Asia, everyday life, transnationalism, and cultural networks. At ARI, she will further develop her doctoral research, examining everyday transnationalism, and how people, ideas and cultural products circulated within transnational Chinese networks, and manifested themselves in everyday life of diasporic Chinese communities.



Dr Gustav Brown has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster with effect from 2 August 2016. Dr Brown holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles. At ARI, he will examine the partnerships, policies and practices that enable non-proselytising Christian iNGOs like World Vision to build trust and manage conflicts while operating within majority Muslim communities in Indonesia.

CHANGING FAMILY IN ASIA

PROFESSOR JEAN YEUNG



The Changing Family in Asia Cluster organised a conference on *Caring for Elderly in ASEAN Plus Three: Long-term Care in the Familial Context* on 1-2 March 2016, convened by Assoc Prof Thang Leng Leng and Professor Jean Yeung, in collaboration with the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As countries face population ageing, long-term care has become a pivotal concern; with expectations that the demand for the provision of health and supportive services increases with a growing elderly population. The panels discussed supporting seniors through community efforts in Indonesia, South Korea and China, long-term care needs and support in Thailand, Myanmar and the Philippines, and care patterns and typologies in East Asia and Singapore. On behalf of the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Tham Borg Tsieng, Deputy Director, ASEAN Directorate, thanked ARI and the Centre for Family and Population Research for agreeing to work with the government on this endeavour. He explained that the conference was based on

Singapore's agreement to implement the recommendation of the East Asia Vision Group II to the APT Commemorative Summit in 2012, which is the "strengthening of demographic policy cooperation including information sharing and joint research in response to demographic problems". The cluster is now working on two special journal issues based on presentations in this conference. The cluster also organised a conference on *Migration and Marriage in Asia* on 26-27 July 2016. Presenters from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, Indonesia, India, Vietnam, Singapore, the US, Canada and the UK discussed various pertinent issues such as overall trends in migrants' marriage rates, migrants' attitudes toward marriage, family, and gender relations, how these relationships vary by migrants' socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender, and policy considerations. Convenors of this conference were Dr Zheng Mu and Prof Jean Yeung.

Recently, we produced a double issue titled *Growing Up in One-parent Families in Asia* (guest editors: W. Jean Yeung and Hyunjoon Park) to demonstrate the heterogeneity and complexity of one-parent families with respect to the causes and consequences. This is a collection of ten papers presented in the conference on *Growing Up in a One-parent Family in Asia* held in ARI on 1-2 July 2014. We also have new cluster members who joined us in July 2016. Dr Ariane Utomo, a Research Fellow of the Crawford School of Public Policy ANU under an ARC Linkage project led by Professor Peter McDonald (Indonesian data for population, social, and economic analysis), joined as Visiting Senior Research Fellow, and Dr Lee Yeonjin, with a PhD in Sociology (Demography) from the University of Pennsylvania, joined as Postdoctoral Fellow.

ASIAN MIGRATION SMALL TOWN, BIG DREAMS!

MS KHOO CHOON YEN
RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Migrant workers are either victims or spendthrifts: two viewpoints on labour migration prevalent in the migrant-sending villages of Ponorogo, Indonesia. The first narrative, popular amongst economically better-off, non-migrant families, positions migrants as victims who suffer abuse at the hands of exploitative employers. The second dominant perception is that migrants and their families tend to squander their remittances away, in a manner seen as unwise.



Villagers enjoying the film screening

ASIAN URBANISMS

MR MARCEL BANDUR
RESEARCH ASSISTANT

The Asian Urbanisms Cluster successfully organised the conference on *Lanes and Neighbourhoods in Cities in Asia*, led by Dr Marie Gibert and Prof Mike Douglass at the end of June 2016. The conference was also generously supported by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), the Luce Foundation, and the Future Cities Laboratory at Singapore-ETH Centre. Towards the end of July, Dr Rita Padawangi and Prof Mike Douglass were invited to join in the Prepcom 3 HABITAT III meetings in Surabaya. Also at the end of July, Dr Rita Padawangi represented the Asian Urbanisms Cluster at ARI to collaborate with Karl Kim of the University of Hawai'i, the Tunas Nusa Foundation and Anton Novenanto of Brawijaya University to conduct joint research on the resilience of communities affected by the mud volcano disaster in Porong, Sidoarjo. In September, Dr Rita Padawangi delivers a public lecture for the Southeast Asia Signature Series seminar at the University of Copenhagen.

Dr Simone Chung presented a paper on the contemporary social functions and renewed aesthetic experience of inner city Shinto shrines at the *Place of Silence: Environment, Experience and Affectarchitectural* symposium at University of Edinburgh in late June.

Drs Fiona Williamson and Chris Courtney launched a new regional history focused reading group. The aim of this monthly meeting is to bring together history scholars (or simply interested individuals!) across different institutes and departments to encourage a wide-ranging discussion. The next group will be held on 19th September; all are welcome. Dr Williamson represented ARI as a Distinguished Lecturer at the Asia



Prof Karl Kim and team observe the continuous levee construction.
Photo credit: Rita Padawangi

Oceania Geosciences Society (AOGS) annual general meeting held in Beijing on 1-5 August. She also attended the *Atmospheric Circulation Reconstructions over the Earth China (ACRE-China)* workshop on 23-25 August, also in Beijing. The subject of discussion was regional sources of historical observational records for reconstructing the weather of the past two hundred years.

In May Chris represented AUC at the first meeting of the Building Consilience of the Natural and Social Sciences project at the Earth Observatory of the Nanyang Technological University.

Initiated by an NUS-Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris research grant in 2014, the cluster's research project on *Progressive Cities* is reaching into public and policy forums. In Hanoi on 19 July, the Asia Foundation and the Embassy of Belgium in Vietnam funded and hosted the Vietnam Urban Forum on *Progressive Cities as Resilient Cities*. Prof Mike Douglass was the keynote speaker to an audience of approximately 100 people from the general public, NGOs, foreign embassies, and government officials. The Seoul Metropolitan Government is funding and hosting a similar event on 22 September at City Hall, which will be followed by another in Suwon in November that is aimed at developing a progressive cities network among city governments in Asia. An edited book on the *Rise of Progressive Cities East and West* is underway.

In response, the Migrating out of Poverty team in the ARI Migration Cluster sought to challenge these representations of the migration experience by commissioning a short film titled "Small Town, Big Dreams", which looks at the impacts of parental migration on young people's aspirations. Our research has shown that migrants often cite saving for their children's education as a key motivating factor to migrate for work. However, in discussions on the impacts of parental migration, children's voices have been conspicuously absent. In "Small Town, Big Dreams", we feature Miko, a young man brimming with entrepreneurial aspirations, and Nisa, who is in pursuit of her goal of becoming a nurse.

Against the backdrop of a heavily-criticised Domestic Worker Roadmap, poor people in Ponorogo generally hope for the Indonesian government to seriously consider the positive impacts of labour outmigration, and develop

policies sensitive to the aspirations of poorer households who rely on labour migration as a pathway towards attaining the good life for themselves and their families. The film was screened several times during dialogues with community leaders and government officials in Ponorogo in May 2016, reaching a cumulative audience of over 280 people. With every screening, we hope to stimulate people to think beyond these dominant narratives and to inspire them to think about how poorer households can be supported to work towards their aspirations across generations.

The Singapore premiere of "Small Town, Big Dreams" will be held on 18 September 2016, 1:30 pm, at United World College (1207 Dover Road), in collaboration with Aidha. For more information, please email kellynn.wee@nus.edu.sg. We hope to see you there!

11TH SINGAPORE GRADUATE FORUM ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES 12-14 JULY 2016

DR MICHIEL BAAS
RESEARCH FELLOW

Photo credit: Kay Mohlman

For the eleventh time, this year ARI hosted the Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies.

Over a period of three days, sixty-nine graduate students from around the world presented their work on Southeast Asia. Thirty-four of these students – all hailing from the Southeast Asian region – had also participated in the eight-week long graduate student fellowship programme at ARI. As part of this programme the Fellows work on their own research projects, often making use of local facilities such as the NUS and ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute libraries and archives, as well as interacting regularly with their local mentors. The Forum concludes this programme for which the Fellows were joined by an additional thirty-four graduate students from countries as diverse as Australia, Canada, India and Japan.

This year was also the first time that the overall programme was supported by a generous grant from the Luce Foundation. This grant now makes it possible to also include three US-based graduate students into the fellowship programme as well as three Senior Visiting Research Fellows. These Senior Fellows were: Prof Donald Nonini (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Assoc Prof Gerald Sim (Florida Atlantic University), and Prof Michele Thompson (Southern Connecticut State University). Together these Senior Fellows brought important research and publication expertise to the programme which they shared with the students during regularly held meet-up sessions. Besides delivering well-attended individual seminars, they also participated in a roundtable during the Forum on “How to be an Excellent Researcher” which was hosted by Prof Eng seng Ho.

The Forum was furthermore complemented by three excellent keynotes. On the first day Prof Henk Schulte Nordholt (KITLV/Leiden University) opened the Forum



with a thought-provoking discussion on “Citizenship and Democracy in Southeast Asia”. The following day was opened by Prof J. Neil Garcia (University of the Philippines – Diliman) who delivered an intriguing keynote on “Translating Desires: The City in Philippine Gay Literature”. The final keynote speaker was Prof Mary Beth Mills (Colby College) whose talk was titled “Wicked Women or Greedy Girls?” and which she used to engage with “narratives of gender, labour, and value in globalising Asia”.

Again we look back on a successful fellowship programme and concluding Forum. Considering the infrastructural constraints due to ARI’s move to the Kent Ridge Campus, special thanks go out to our support staff for making the programme run as smooth as it did. Besides that great appreciation goes out to all the mentors, selection committee members, chairpersons and discussants who volunteered to be involved in the programme. We hope to see you all again next year!