

MONARCHY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA and their Impact on Urban Development Now

25-26 August 2022



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This workshop is organized by the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore; with funding support from the Urban Studies Foundation.

This workshop explores the overlooked question of the influence of monarchies in shaping contemporary urban development in Southeast Asia. The royal institutions of Southeast Asia have varying degrees of legitimacy: some are residual powers with little influence, others have emerged as personality-driven agents of urban change. Current, and often Western-centric, understandings of urban change privilege the institutions of the state and the market. But in Southeast Asia, monarchical power may also play a part. This workshop seeks to chart that role, be that in the form of the symbolic geographies of extant royal buildings re-branded as heritage, the power of privilege of property ownership, or through entrepreneurial development initiatives. Guiding questions for the conference include:

- What type of agency do contemporary Asian monarchs have over the development trajectories of the cities they identify with and are located in?
- How is that influence exercised and what are its urban consequences?
- What is the relationship between royal authority, modern state power, and the market in Asian urban contexts?
- To what extent is this urban agency articulated in and through inherited morphologies and forms versus contemporary urban visions?
- How does royal power and planning power intersect?

Monarchies in Asia have received extensive scholarly attention but primarily through the lenses of history and anthropology, perspectives that often overlook the ways in which royal institutions act as contemporary social agents. In the context of Southeast Asia, for example, much has been made of the diminishment of royal power through colonial decisions or postcolonial nationalism ideology (Porananond & King, 2016). Far from residual, many monarchical systems survive in the present, albeit with varying degrees of authority and transparency with respect to contemporary state-based institutions and market forces (Kershaw, 2001). These persistent monarchical systems operate in dynamic and varied political contexts, ranging from autocratic, militarised, faltering democratization, and new trends of political decentralization. In the context of Thailand, for example, scholars speak of 'royal power' as a dispersed elite 'form of network governance' (McCargo, 2005; Winichakul, 2008), one that has served anti-democratic forces (Ivarsson & Isager, 2010). In Indonesia, laws on Yogyakarta Special Province have allowed the sultan to be automatically appointed as the governor, offering a form of local power (Hudalah et al., 2014), while other members of the royal family hold positions in influential organizations and government departments (Eswe, 2008; Marwan, 2016). In Malaysia, scholarly attention is turning to the entrepreneurial 're-emergence' of the Sultan of Johor (Hutchinson & Nair, 2016). In sum, the monarchs of Asia are not merely residual royal institutions, they enjoy political and economic privileges which in turn allows them to shape urban development in various ways.

This workshop gathers scholars with an interest in urban change in Asia and the way it responds to or is shaped by royal institutions. While there is growing attention to monarchical power from a political perspective, only limited attention has been given to its agency with respect to urban development trajectories in Asia.

WORKSHOP CONVENORS

Dr Ofita Purwani | *Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore*

Prof Jane M Jacobs | *Yale-NUS College, Singapore*

Dr Dan Zhang | *Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore*

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PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE

DATE	TIME (Singapore Time)	PANEL SESSION
25 Aug 2022 (Thu)	10:30 – 10:45	WELCOME & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
	10:45 – 12:15	PANEL 1 - RE-INSCRIBING ROYAL URBANISMS
	14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 2 - METROPOLIS AND MONARCHY
	16:00 – 17:30	PANEL 3 - MONARCHICAL INFRASTRUCTURE
26 Aug 2022 (Fri)	10:30 – 12:00	PANEL 4 - ROYAL PARADOXES
	14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 5 - MONARCHY AND LANDED AGENCY
	15:30 – 15:50	CLOSING COMMENTARIES

25 AUGUST 2022 • THURSDAY

10:30 – 10:45	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
	<p>Tim Bunnell <i>Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>Ofita Purwani <i>Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>Jane M Jacobs <i>Yale-NUS College, Singapore</i></p> <p>Dan Zhang <i>Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore</i></p>
10:45 – 12:15	PANEL 1 – RE-INSCRIBING ROYAL URBANISMS
<i>Moderator</i>	Dan Zhang <i>National University of Singapore</i>
10:45	<p>Re-traditionalisation of the Urban Landscape in the Modern Context: The Return of Philosophical Axis of Yogyakarta</p> <p>Bayu Dardias Kurniadi <i>Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia</i></p>
11:05	<p>The <i>Deva-Dhammaraja</i> Urbanism in a Democratising Society: Lessons from Law and Town Development in Thailand</p> <p>Rawin Leelapatana <i>Chulalongkorn University, Thailand</i></p> <p>Chompunoot Tangthavorn <i>King Prajadhipok’s Institute, Thailand</i></p>
11:25	<p>Re-Inscribing “Philosophy” in a Sultanate City</p> <p>Revianto Budi Santosa <i>Islamic University of Indonesia</i></p>
11:45	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:15	END OF SESSION

Monarchy in Southeast Asia and their Impact on Urban Development Now

25-26 August 2022 | Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

14:00 – 15:30		PANEL 2 – METROPOLIS AND MONARCHY
Moderator		Tim Bunnell <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:00		The Monarch as a City-Shaping Agent in Contemporary Asian Cities: The Case of Pesangrahan Ambarrukmo, Yogyakarta Ofita Purwani <i>National University of Singapore</i> Jane M. Jacobs <i>Yale-NUS College, Singapore</i> Stephen Cairns <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:20		The Last Absolute Monarchy in Southeast Asia: The Impact of British Colonialism on Urban Development in Contemporary Brunei Mu'izz Abdul Khalid <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:40		Metropolis, Monarchy, and the Mass: Antiroyalism in Thailand's Urban Spaces (2020-2021) Khorapin Phuaphansawat <i>Chulalongkorn University, Thailand</i>
15:00		QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
15:30		END OF SESSION

16:00 – 17:30		PANEL 3 – MONARCHICAL INFRASTRUCTURE: PRACTICAL AND SYMBOLIC
Moderator		Ofita Purwani <i>National University of Singapore</i>
16:00		Royal Road: Urban Transportation, Capitalist Development, and Monarchy in Thailand Puangchon Unchanam <i>Naresuan University, Thailand</i>
16:20		Competing Axes – Rival Dynasties: The New Kingdom of Cambodia Stephanie Benzaquen-Gautier <i>University of Nottingham, UK</i>
16:40		The Monarchy and the Railways in Java: The Impact of the Establishment of the Colonial Railway Network on Contemporary Urban Morphology Harmilyanti Sulistyani <i>Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta, Indonesia</i>
17:00		QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
17:30		END OF DAY 1

26 AUGUST 2022 • FRIDAY

10:30 – 12:00	PANEL 4 – ROYAL PARADOXES
<i>Moderator</i>	Jane M. Jacobs <i>Yale-NUS College, Singapore</i>
10:30	Visible Presence, Unseen Hand: The Royal, the Real, and the Spectral in Bangkok Michael Herzfeld <i>Harvard University, USA</i>
10:50	A Malay Sultan, a Chinese Property Developer, and a Private Gated City in the Ocean: A Tale of Informality from Above Sarah Moser <i>McGill University, Canada</i>
11:10	A State of Paradox: The Residual Informal Powers of Constitutional Monarchs in Southeast Asia Noémi Chaw <i>Singapore Management University</i>
11:30	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:00	END OF SESSION
14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 5 – MONARCHY AND LANDED AGENCY
<i>Moderator</i>	Francis Hutchinson <i>ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore</i>
14:00	Kings, Prisons, and Ritual Work: Infrastructures of Incarceration and Freedom in a Political Economy of Development/Devaluation Hui Ying Ng <i>Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich, Germany</i>
14:20	The Crown Property Bureau (CPB) and Urban Expansion in Thai Provincial Areas: Case Studies of the CPB's Markets in Nakhon Pathom and Songkla Pattarat Phantprasit <i>Independent Researcher, Thailand</i> Trin Aiyyara <i>Independent Researcher, Thailand</i>
14:40	Constitutional Monarchy and Johore Development: Theory and Reality Mohd Nazim Bin Ganti Shaari <i>Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia</i> Nurul Azreen Azlan <i>Universiti Teknologi Malaysia</i>
15:00	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
15:30	END OF SESSION
15:30 – 15:50	CLOSING COMMENTARIES
	Jane M Jacobs <i>Yale-NUS College, Singapore</i> Francis Hutchinson <i>ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore</i>
15:50	END OF DAY 2

Re-traditionalisation of the Urban Landscape in the Modern Context: The Return of Philosophical Axis of Yogyakarta

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This article discusses the changing relationship between the urban landscape and the Sultanate in Yogyakarta. Since 2012, the Sultan has transcended existing regulations through charismatic power, legal and budgetary reforms to 're-traditionalize' Yogyakarta based on its original *sumbu filosofis* (philosophical axis). This imaginary axis is the line stretching from south to north and is the basis for Yogyakarta's urban landscape.

Different from many cases where the role of the monarchy at the sub-national level appears diminishing, I argue that the Sultanate in conjunction with the Yogyakarta Government is compounding its importance with new legitimacy by "re-traditionalizing" the urban landscape with two case studies about the relocation of the iconic Malioboro Street traders, and the process of private housing development within the palace walls.

Using in-depth interviews and policy analysis, this research reveals the following findings. First, the policy to clean up Malioboro Street, albeit ill-prepared, poorly implemented, and mainly to gain UNESCO recognition, has received little resistance from the traders due to proceeding policies and the Sultan's dominant legitimacy. Even though traders were moved to two shelters where space is limited and their income reduced significantly, no protest has been made. Second, the requirement for a Javanese architectural style building, which is legally only limited to the Sultanate's land, is applied to all resident buildings along the axis line. Private property owners should receive recommendations from the Province's Office of Culture to obtain building permits. This unclear ruling has created uncertainty that led to bribery. However, if done consistently, in the long run, these policies would create Yogyakarta as a heritage province.

Bayu Dardias Kurniadi is an assistant professor and the head of the Master Program at the Department of Politics and Government, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta Indonesia. Bayu's interest is on the Indonesian monarchy where he visited and interviewed 23 raja and sultan across archipelago during his doctoral study at the Australian National University with the thesis entitled 'Defending the Sultan's Land: Yogyakarta, Control over Land and Aristocratic Power in Post-Autocratic Indonesia' (2019). In his thesis, he challenges the cultural anthropological theories in explaining Yogyakarta politics and argues that the political contestation is mostly determined by the political economy of land control. He is a member of Modern Monarchy in Global Perspective Network and recently contributed a book chapter in '*Monarchy and Decolonisation in Asia*' published by Manchester University Press (2020). His publication includes 'The Moluccas's surviving aristocracy in Indonesian politics: Fragmentation and land-based political support', *PCD Journal* Vol. 9, No. 2 (2020).

**The *Deva-Dhammaraja* Urbanism in a Democratising Society:
Lessons from Law and Town Development in Thailand**

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The contemporary theory of urban planning generally regards law as an instrumental tool for integrating public participation into the overall urban development process. Given its main focus on democratising urban planning, this outlook consequently fails to capture an attempt made to refashion, rationalize, and modernise traditionalism, as in Thailand, to reinvigorate the influence of the monarchy over this process. This paper proposes an alternative legal concept of urban development – the *Deva-Dhammaraja* concept. Thailand's urban planning laws, we argue, reflect the syncretism of two traditional concepts of kingship – *Devaraja* (God-like king) and *Dhammaraja* (righteous king). At one end, they serve to re-emphasise the king's status as the incarnation of a Hindu deity who stands at the zenith of Mount Meru – the centre of the cosmological order. By exempting the monarchy from being regulated normal planning rules, such laws ultimately create 'a sacred space' for the king. Meanwhile, Thai urban planning laws also serve to promote his status as *Dhammaraja*. The Crown Property Act 2018 re-empowers him to manage all royal property at his own pleasure and according to the value of Thai ancient royal tradition, righteous and merciful King, some royal real estate was donated for specific purposes indicated by the King's sacred command – building schools, hospital or government complex. All royal land development projects, without the public participation nor the laws passed by the parliament, encourage the efficient and strong improvement of both urban and remote area. Simultaneously, this legal merciful development, with no hidden political interest, legitimates the King's role on urban planning. However, this royal grace, without urban growth prediction nor public consultation, has created the silent and unsayable academic questions if or how it might affect the city development scheme. We confirm that our proposal has not been submitted elsewhere. We are also willing to have our paper, if selected, included in a special issue.

Rawin Leelapatana received a competitive scholarship from the Office of Higher Education Commission to pursue his PhD in law at the University of Bristol, the United Kingdom in 2014. The title of his PhD thesis is *The Kelsen-Schmitt Debate and the Use of Emergency Powers in Political Crises in Thailand*, supervised by Professor Steven Greer. In November 2018, he received the Anglo-Thai Educational Awards for Academic Excellence, and completed a PhD degree on 23 January 2019. Since his return to Thailand in February 2019, he has worked as a lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University.

Chompunoot Tangthavorn has worked as a senior researcher at King Prajadhipok's Institute. She received a competitive scholarship from Thai Government to obtain her master degree in law from the University of Toulouse 1 (Capitole), France in 2012. In 2019, she was appointed as the consultant of the House of Representative Extraordinary Sub-Committee studying the constitutional amendment. She is an author and co-author of the number of researches on constitutional assembly and constitutional amendment in Thailand, constitutional referendum and Thai legislative process.

Re-Inscribing Cosmology in a Sultanate City

Revianto Budi Santosa

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Situated in the southern side of central Java, the Sultanate city of Yogyakarta was established in the mid-18th century as the result of the bifurcation of Mataram. It is ruled by Hamangku Buwana dynasty till nowadays. Due to the prominent roles of Sultan Hamengku Buwana IX during the National Revolution and his decision to accept the designation of this city as the National capital, the Sultan was appointed as a lifetime governor and his domain was made a Special Territory.

The Law of the the Special Status of Yogyakarta recently issued in 2012 included five special provincial authority, namely, the hereditary position of the governor and vice governor, the structural organization of the local government, cultural affairs, as well as land and spatial planning (*tata ruang*).

The special authority over spatial planning is really a challenge to the provincial government to implement as this aspect has the most palpable appearance of the province with a special status and its capital. While the existing spatial planning has very limited concerns with the special status of the province, the government launched a campaign to propose to UNESCO the center of Yogyakarta dubbed as the “Philosophical Axis” (*Sumbu Filosofis*) inscribing the narrative of a perfect man into the urban arrangement of the city.

Many heritage conservation and urban designs projects are delivered under the title of the “Revitalization of the Philosophical Axis” supported by the generous Specialty Funds granted by the national government. The locations of this projects are heavily concentrated on the northern portion of the axis being the primary tourist attraction districts.

The Special Act of Spatial Planning being the derivative of the National Law issued in 2017 is oriented backward. The choice of methods in this Act include to recover, to repair, to enhance and to develop the previous functions of a spatial unit, with no explicit vision for the future.

In the absence of vision for the spatial planning the “Revitalization of the Philosophical Axis” gives the sense of progress while maintaining the relations with the past, though in obscure ways.

Revianto Budi Santosa is a senior lecturer in the Department of Architecture Islamic University of Indonesia, and head of the cultural advisory council to the Governor of Yogyakarta. His main interests are primarily in architectural history and theory, as well as Javanese and Islamic culture. His master thesis is published as a book *Omah: Deciphering Meanings in Javanese House*. His last publication is book titled *Kudus: A Piece of Jerusalem in Java* (2019) and currently edits a book on *Kasultanan Yogyakarta and its Contributions to the Nation to be* published by the Kraton of Yogyakarta. He also translated many books especially in Javanese history written by prominent scholars such as Benedict R. O. G Anderson and Nancy K. Florida.

**The Monarch as a City-Shaping Agent in Contemporary Asian Cities:
The Case of Pesanggrahan Ambarrukmo, Yogyakarta**

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This paper seeks to advance scholarship on monarchical institutions as active agents in Southeast Asian urban development in contemporary times. It does so in the context of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and using a post-independence development case study of the royal Ambarrukmo caravanserai in the eastern part of Yogyakarta. The monarchy of Yogyakarta, as in a number of Asia urban and regional contexts in Asia, is far from archaic or residual in their power. Rather, they enjoy an urban agency that is threaded through the fabric of local and national politics in both explicit and opaque ways. We focus on series of developments on the land of the *pesanggrahan* (royal inn or caravanserai) Ambarrukmo. We chart this agency across two periods of development: the construction of the Ambarrukmo Palace Hotel (1964), during Indonesia's immediate post-independence period, and the more recent development of the Ambarrukmo Plaza (2006), during a period of neoliberal economic development. The construction of new buildings on the site of *pesanggrahan* Ambarrukmo by two different sultans shows how they reinforced their authority in and through grand visions and pragmatic measures that often aligned with, and even served, state-led development agendas. Our particular approach is to read this adjusting authority from the built forms and functions it manifests in the cityscape.

Ofita Purwani is an Urban Studies Foundation International Fellow at Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. She is also an Associate Professor at the School of Architecture Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia. She was a Visiting Scholar at Yale-NUS College, Singapore in January-July 2020. She obtained her PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2014. Her interests range from Javanese built environment, Southeast Asian urbanism, traditionalism, heritage issues, tourism, urban studies, spatial politics, invented traditions and sociology. She is currently working with Prof Jane M. Jacobs on a project entitled, Southeast Asian Royal Cities Today; How Monarchy Influences Urban Development.

Jane M. Jacobs is a Professor of Urban Studies at Yale-NUS College. Her specialist area is social and cultural geography and she has published on postcolonial geographies, architecture and society, high-rise urbanism, and the politics of heritage. She is the author of *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (1996), *Cities of Difference* (1998), *Uncanny Australia* (1998), and *Buildings Must Die: A Perverse View of Architecture* (2014). Prof Jacobs manages the pleasant confusion of sharing her name with the influential, but now deceased, urbanist Jane Jacobs. Because of this, she has become an expert in professional disambiguation.

Stephen R Cairns is Director of Future Cities Laboratory (FCL) in Singapore, and Urban-Rural Systems design-research practice, and is a Professor in Architecture at ETH Zurich. He co-authored *Buildings Must Die: A Perverse View of Architecture* (with Jane M. Jacobs) (MIT Press 2014), and co-edits the *Future Cities Laboratory: Indicia* series (with Devisari Tunas) (Lars Müller Press with NUS Press 2017, 2019 and 2021).

**The Last Absolute Monarchy in Southeast Asia:
The Impact of British Colonialism on Urban Development in Contemporary Brunei**

Mu'izz Abdul Khalid

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For over five decades, Samuel Huntington's theory on monarchies, or what he refers to as 'The King's Dilemma,' has been an influential work in the field of political science. He argues that monarchies are political anachronisms doomed to extinction in the contemporary world due to the predicament of monarchs to either undergo political liberalization or power decentralization. To preserve control, monarchs could either modernize the country while ramping up repression, or they may democratize into a constitutional monarchy in which they only reign and do not rule. The theory first appeared credible because numerous monarchs, such as those in Libya, Egypt, and Iran, were deposed due to strong popular opposition. Yet, a handful of monarchies, like Brunei, have escaped the dilemma by retaining power while also modernizing their states. In fact, Brunei, the last absolute monarchy in Southeast Asia, has been governed under a perpetual emergency rule since the uprising in December 1962. This has made the kingdom devoid of representative government, notably after the British Gurkhas eliminated Brunei's only popular political party, *Partai Rakyat Brunei* (PRB). From this point forward, the Bruneian monarchy served as the main determinant of the country's urban development. The Bruneian monarchy's contribution to developing the country began under the rule of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin III (SOAS III) with his introduction of National Development Plans (*Rancangan Kemajuan Negara*) about a decade before. After achieving independence, the present ruler, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, worked alongside his royal family members to carry on his father's legacy. This involved putting rules into place that would facilitate better housing development, land adjustments, and ecological management. In this paper, I argue that the current absolute power and authority that contemporary Bruneian monarchy has over urban development has deep colonial origins. Only under British indirect rule and protection did the Bruneian monarchy emerged as an absolute monarchy, which included the fusion of royal power and planning power.

Mu'izz Abdul Khalid is a PhD Candidate from the Department of Southeast Asian Studies at the National University Singapore. He was a visiting fellow at the MacMillan Center of Yale University and the Department of Anthropology. He graduated from University College London in MSc Security Studies and The University of Sheffield in BA International Relations and Politics. He is currently one of the Journal of Islamic Governance editors under Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD). Mu'izz's research interest areas include authoritarianism, monarchism, the intersection between religion with politics, and mostly to do with Borneo. Based on archival and ethnographic research, his doctoral dissertation focuses on the impact of British indirect rule and the emergence of absolutism in Brunei. This included looking at the role of oil wealth and Islam to facilitate the Bruneian's monarchy absolute rule.

**Metropolis, Monarchy, and the Mass:
Antiroyalism in Thailand's Urban Spaces (2020-2021)**

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Since 2020, urban spaces have opened up a new possibility for anti-royalism in Thailand. This paper argues that the Thai youth movement can be seen as a dynamic struggle against royal gentrification – the expansion of royal power politically and economically in the metropolises. It seeks to apply David Harvey's concept of right to the city to ongoing Thailand's political unrest. First, deprived of public spaces, the mass rallies initially took place in high school and university campus areas both in Bangkok and regional cities. There, subversive language and symbols critical to the Thai monarchy were experimentally expressed and shared before they later became the protest common repertoire. Second, at its peak in late 2020 and early 2021, the movement massively occupied Sanam Luang or "Royal Field" located in the capital's Dusit district of which a large amount of land estates has been enclosed under the new reign. Bangkok's sky train "BTS" stations also conveniently served as rally sites where mobilization occurred abruptly before the police forces took control. In addition, royally-invested shopping malls such as Siam Paragon or ICONSIAM became protest sites where young activists performed creative anti-royalism. Finally, from late 2021 onward, despite being heavily crack downed, urban resistance took in forms of riot, anonymous graffiti, and vandalism against royal objects. The main protest site shifted to Din Daeng where poor lower-class neighborhood located nearby the military and royal estate zone -- the 1st Infantry Regiment. This unorganized headless "thalu gaz" movement represented discontents of the dispossessed class -- slum dwellers and marginalized urbanite youth. To conclude, the paper will explore Thailand's recent popular uprising not only as a democratic struggle against authoritarian regime but also an urban revolution against the enclosure and dispossession of urban spaces orchestrated by the monarchy.

Khorapin Phuaphansawat is an assistant professor at the Department of International Relations, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. Her research interests include contemporary Thai politics, social movements, resistance, and crisis of capitalism. She wrote articles titled "Anti-Royalism in Thailand Since 2006: Ideological Shifts and Resistance" (2018) and "Engendering Public Mourning of King Rama IX through Drama Series" (2019). She is also working on a book chapter called "Monarchy and Metapolicies in Thailand: The Early Years of King Rama X's Reign" scheduled to publish this October.

**Royal Road:
Urban Transportation, Capitalist Development, and Monarchy in Thailand**

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In theory, cities are supposed to be the urban space dominated by town dwellers or the bourgeoisie. In Thailand, however, it is the monarchy that plays a crucial role in shaping urban development. This article examines how the crown influences transportation planning in Bangkok, the kingdom's capital city and one of the world's most congested cities. With a critical inquiry into the history of Bangkok under the previous reign of King Rama IX, the narratives of city governors who received the monarch's guidance, and the king's speeches and initiatives that are related to city planning, this article brings to light the problematic role of the monarchy in urban transportation. While the palace, the government, the mass media, and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration has long saluted Rama IX's initiatives of building more ring roads, overpasses, and bridges in order to solve traffic congestion, this article shows that the royal initiatives did not touch upon the roots of the problem. Those include an excessive reliance on motor vehicles, insufficient public transportation, the dominant role of the automotive and petroleum industries in the national economy, the city planning that serves bourgeois drivers at the expense of mass commuters, the close association between the crown and car conglomerates, and the unconstitutional role of the monarchy. Swept under the rug during the popular reign of Rama IX, those problems have recently been brought to the public attention in the current reign of King Rama X by the protest movement that demands for reform of the monarchy. By protesting the monarch's motorcade and pointing out how it worsens traffic jams, the demonstrators turn the royalist narrative about the royal role in urban transportation upside down. Instead of a solution, the crown is the embodiment of fundamental problems that hinder the ways commoners commute in the metropolis.

Puangchon Unchanam teaches political theory, political economy, and modern Thai politics at Naresuan University. He earned a PhD in political science from the City University of New York. His research interests include Marxist theory and social inequality in Thailand. He is the author of *Royal Capitalism: Wealth, Class, and Monarchy in Thailand* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2020).

Competing Axes – Rival Dynasties: The New Kingdom of Cambodia

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A hallmark of the Sangkum era (as the post-independence period in Cambodia was called) was the country's extensive modernization and urban development. Under the guidance of prince Norodom Sihanouk, who had abdicated in 1955 but as a head of state retained absolute power, Phnom Penh doubled in size. With the help of architect Vann Molyvann, Sihanouk erected the axis that was to embody the new, sovereign Cambodia, with on one side the Independence Monument, and on the other, the Olympic Stadium built to host the 1963 Asian Games. The healthy body natural of emancipated citizens was thus meant to respond to the postcolonial body politic of the nation state. Sixty years later, it is another axis that has emerged. This time, it has not been erected by the king (Sihanouk's son Sihamoni) but by the de facto ruler, prime minister Hun Sen. Interestingly, this axis has been constructed in the Chroy Changvar district in the outskirts of Phnom Penh, a neighborhood that has gone through dramatic changes in part thanks to Chinese investments. It includes the Win-Win Monument, inaugurated in 2018 for the twenty-year anniversary of the end of the civil war and celebrating Hun Sen's policies, and the Morodok Techo Stadium that will host the 2023 Southeast Asian Games. The new axis does not only showcase Cambodia as an ultra-modern country ready to face global challenges and to play an important regional role. It also imposes Hun Sen's 'premiership' as a site of power as important (if not more) as kingship. My paper discusses the visualities and materialities of the spatial politics at play. Using the disciplinary lens of visual culture and new materialism, it unpacks the resonances between the two episodes, and explores how this process of dynasty-making (Hun Sen is grooming his son Hun Manet to take over) unfolds in the city, the narratives that are associated with it, and the 'strongmen' (Ben-Ghiat 2020) symbolism and 'new monarchy' that are woven into the urban fabric.

Stephanie Benzaquen-Gautier is an art historian. She is currently a research associate at the History department, University of Nottingham, UK. She was previously an ERC-Research Fellow in the project 'Cultures of Occupation in Twentieth Century Asia' (COTCA), with a research project on the photo-politics of Khmer-Western cultural relations. She received her PhD at the Erasmus University Rotterdam ('Images of Khmer Rouge atrocities, 1975-2015'). Her research addresses the relationship between images, violence (against humans and nature), activism, and socio-political change, with a focus on Southeast Asia. She has conducted research as Fellow at the Forum Transregionale Studien and the ICI Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin (2018-2019), the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC (2012), the Stone Summer Theory Institute at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago (2010), and at the Theory Department at Jan van Eyck Academie in the Netherlands (2005-2006). Her work has appeared in *South East Asia Research*, *International Criminal Law Review*, *Cinéma & Cie*, *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, *Mémoires en Jeu*, *Journal of Perpetrator Studies*, and *Media, Culture & Society*. She is currently working on her first monograph, *Beyond skulls: Western visual culture and the Cambodian genocide*.

**The Monarchy and the Railways in Java:
The Impact of the Establishment of the Colonial Railway Network
on Contemporary Urban Morphology**

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This paper discusses the role of the monarchy in Java in establishing the railways in the colonial period. How did the rulers of the Principalities (Surakarta and Yogyakarta) and the Sultanate of Cirebon become involved in and grant their land for the development of a new type of transportation infrastructure in the 19th century? The aim of this study is to reveal the impact of the colonial-era railway network as an urban artifact and the monarchs' participation in railway building on the contemporary urban morphology of Java. The conceptual framing is based on Aldo Rossi's theory of the evolution of urban artifacts, which emphasizes the urban artifact as the main element of the city's morphological and cultural evolution. Java's contemporary urban morphology demonstrates the power of the monarchy to shape its cityscapes and how some aspects of city layouts today are related to railway development in colonial times.

Harmilyanti Sulistyani is a lecturer in Interior Design Department at Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) Surakarta. She studied architecture (M.Sc.) at Gadjah Mada University and Sebelas Maret University (B.A.). Her research activities focus on colonial architecture, and railway stations in particular, and bridges the gap between the history of architecture and heritage. Hence for her PhD Harmilyanti pursuing to exploring the railway station architecture in Java, an overview of the circumstances that shaped the establishment and the use of the railway in the colony. The research reveals that there was an interaction between colonial forces and local people in the colony during the infrastructure development. Harmilyanti obtained her PhD from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in 2022.

**Visible Presence, Unseen Hand:
The Royal, the Real, and the Spectral in Bangkok**

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During the reign of King Rama IX (Bhumibol), the omnipresent image of the just and generous monarch who followed the precepts of dharma (*thammarat*) was assiduously maintained and visibly promoted. Despite the palace's known control of great wealth, the king's embrace of moderation as Buddhist virtue ("sufficiency economy") in the face of the rampant consumerism represented by Thaksin Shinawatra and his followers had widespread appeal. During this period, the image of charitable leadership was also maintained in the Crown Property Bureau's policy of charging low rents on shophouse and other properties in the heart of Rattanakosin Island, the old city of Bangkok. Yet even before the end of the reign, signs of a new vision had begun to emerge. Since then, evictions and gentrification have picked up speed; a scheme to create an environmentally and socially disastrous boardwalk on the Chao Praya was narrowly averted; and traces of both pre-modern and modern alternatives to the ethnonational state pursued by the military leadership in the name of the monarchy are disappearing ever faster. But do such attempts at planning truly reflect royal policy, or is a clique of military despots manipulating the royal image for its own economic advantage? A fearful silence discourages transparency and thereby appears to encourage unrestrained development. This pattern arguably sustains the interests of all parties – the monarchy, the military, and the democracy activists – by sustaining an indeterminacy and aversion to conflict that together fit the prevailing stereotype of Thai culture. Bangkok urbanism thus symbolizes and reproduces the stasis that has long characterized Thai politics.

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**A Malay Sultan, a Chinese Property Developer,
and a Private Gated City in the Ocean:
A Tale of Informality From Above**

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Forest City is an audacious project that, on the face of it, seems technologically and politically impossible to build. A private, gated city for up to 700,000 people by one of China's top property developers, Forest City is being constructed on artificial islands atop the largest seagrass field in Malaysia and was conceptualized primarily as a securitized enclave and investment vehicle for Chinese nationals. How is it that a Chinese property developer was able to secure permission to construct a private, gated city on a series of artificial islands that damages the surrounding ecology and livelihoods of Indigenous and Malay villagers and creates an elite ethnicized enclave controlled by a foreign company? This paper examines the Sultan of Johor's role in facilitating the creation of Forest City using the framework of 'informality from above', a concept developed by Ananya Roy to argue that informality is not exclusively the domain of the landless poor who squat without permission on public or private land, but is a characteristic of how elites get luxury urban mega-developments off the ground. While the Sultan of Johor is known to wear many hats as an official royal figure and as a businessman, this article draws attention to some of the conflicts of interest and ambiguities relating to his role in urban development.

Sarah Moser is Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at McGill University in Montreal. As an urban and cultural geographer, Sarah's work examines new urban mega-developments being built from scratch in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. She is particularly interested in the translational circulation of urban policy, the cultural politics and role of nation building in new city projects, and the rhetoric of 'smart' and 'eco' cities.

**A State of Paradox:
The Residual Informal Powers of Constitutional Monarchs in Southeast Asia**

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Constitutional monarchies have become common place in the Southeast Asian states of Cambodia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Under the traditional, western understanding of constitutional monarchies, the monarchs' powers are drastically limited, and their role relegated to that of a ceremonial figurehead. However, as Professors Andrew Harding and Maartje de Visser propose, Asian monarchical systems are not examples of legal transplants; but rather, a form of legal *métissage* – a unique system where the powers of monarchs are determined by *both* western notions of constitutional monarchy and enduring practices and symbolism inherent in indigenous cultures. In Malaysia, for example, while the role of the monarchs in lawmaking have been rendered largely symbolic (and to some extent, non-existent), Malaysia's system of theocratic constitutionalism ensures the continuing relevance and significance of the Malaysia's monarchs as influential symbols with the capability of effecting social and political change. Article 3 of the Constitution identifies Islam as the Federation's religion and appoints the Malaysian monarchs as heads of Islam. The prevalence of Islam in Malaysia and the Constitutional statement that being Muslim is an "essential attribute" of a Malay person, coupled with the deep respect held by Malays and non-Muslim Indian and Chinese minority communities, have conferred the Malaysian monarchs great power to influence developments and social sentiments notwithstanding constitutional limits to their formal powers. In other words, the consequence of this *métissage* is the retention of royal powers by monarchs – specifically, informal royal powers – which the monarchs can use to effect urban change. Such informal power is similarly boasted by the Cambodian and Thai monarchs. This paper seeks to introduce, compare and contrast the constitutional roles of these three monarchies to the informal roles they are entitled to play as a result of enduring indigenous practices and sentiments in relation to them.

Noémi Chaw is currently a final-year, post-graduate Juris Doctor candidate and Research Assistant at Singapore Management University's Yong Pung How School of Law. Believing that the law does not exist in insolation, Noémi has sought cross-disciplinary research opportunities that allow her to explore the relevance and relationship between law and other fields of study. During her appointment as a Research Assistant over the past year, she has assisted various authors in the preparation of a special edition of the *Asian Journal of Law and Society* and conducted research into the similarities and differences between the societal and constitutional role of monarchs with a view of improving our understanding of their modern-day roles. Noémi hopes to expand on her research and present a legal perspective to the topic of this conference.

**Kings, Prisons, and Ritual Work:
Infrastructures of Incarceration and Freedom in a
Political Economy of Development/Devaluation**

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The Dara'ang Development Project (DDP; 2016-2019) in Chiang Mai, Thailand, sets our scene of a project's influence on participants' orientations. Drawing on the DDP, this paper conceptualises debt to the Thai king through the lens of hazardous living experienced by some of the most marginalized in Thailand's agricultural industry. It looks beyond accepted narratives of political economy in Southeast Asia to theorise, with Lauren Berlant's work on infrastructure and transition, development as a narrative environment. By looking at the DDP as a narrative environment and infrastructure for transformation, I compare this with the societal infrastructures that individuals supported by the DDP live and work within. Tracing the prison experience of one individual, I suggest that agrarian imaginaries and monarchical subjects' orientations ritualise monarchic power, and re-reading these ritualise resistance. Through the Kingly pardon and Graeber's (2017) essay on monarchs as children and people as nursemaids of the king, I ask how a single person's role as subject and ritual labourer, might be read as ritual work and emblematic labour; as a form of social reproduction that props up monarchical power. By drawing the economy of contemporary development and monarchical power together, this paper seeks to contribute to accounts of hope in ethnography and the environmental humanities to remember the practice of hope as ritual work that claims and reclaims multi-temporality, and to propose a view of hope that departs from ascensionist/declensionist accounts popular today in views of climate futures.

Huiying Ng (she/they) is a doctoral researcher at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich, part of the Volkswagen freigeist project "Environing Infrastructures" in Southeast Asia. She is a scholar-practitioner and writer working towards critical and empathic rural-urban agricultural learning networks, agroecology, and community-led action research in Southeast Asia. Huiying has presented a mixture of individual and collective work on commons and food in the Netherlands, Canada, Singapore, Bangkok, and her work has appeared in Haus der Kulturen der Welt's (Germany) Technosphere magazine, and the exhibition IN THE FOREST, EVEN THE AIR BREATHES curated by Abhijan Toto for the GAMeC in Bergamo, Italy. In shared collaborative practice, since 2019, she has been developing the city-wide Soil Regeneration Project, a community-led action research process, and has been part of several Singapore-based groups (Foodscape Collective, TANAH, and soft/WALL/studs) since 2015. Her works can be found on cargocollective.com/huiyingng.

The Crown Property Bureau (CPB) and Urban Expansion in Thai Provincial Areas: Case Studies of the CPB's Markets in Nakhon Pathom and Songkla

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This article investigates the relationship between urban development in Thailand's provinces and the Crown Property Bureau (CPB). It is worth noting that previous studies pertaining to this topic primarily focused on the CPB's lucrative sectors in Bangkok, claiming that its revenues in provincial areas were low-margin and rarely influenced the CPB's investment decisions. However, from an urban development perspective, this study contends that the CPB's role in regional areas of Thailand is significant, and it deserves further investigation.

The study's main question is how the CPB's investments in markets and commercial buildings have influenced the development and the underdevelopment of Thailand's city centers. To answer the question, this work has expanded upon the theory of agglomeration economy as a framework to examine the CPB's markets in Nakhon Pathom and Songkhla, two economically significant cities in Thailand's central and southern regions, respectively. Based on the data from commercial activities of the CPB and other relevant documents regarding cities' expansions and developments, it is found that the CPB's investments in regional areas and its provincial expansions are inextricably linked, and that this relationship has evolved over time. Upon its founding in the twentieth century, the CPB under the direct rule of the monarch was the primary actor in regional investments by establishing markets as business centers. However, following the overthrow of the absolutist state in 1932, the monarch was no longer able to dictate both the CPB and the state. As a result, the CPB had limited ability to maximise its interests and had little impact on the trajectory of urbanisation in provinces. Also, the CPB's interest in land investment did not resume until the late 1980s, but by that time the future of provinces' economic and town growth was already in the hands of the government and private sectors.

Pattarat Phantprasit recently received her Ph.D. in Area Studies from the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, Japan in 2022. Her dissertation, "The Making of Honour and Masculinity of the Siamese Army from the 1900s to 1932," investigates how the Siamese/ Thai army's military ideology was constructed and challenged. According to the work, the Siamese army's peculiar feature of not being used to wage wars outside the kingdom led to its ideology of loyalty to the monarchy and positioning itself as 'the protector of the throne.' Also, the concept of 'honour' and 'masculinity' became the core idea of the Siamese army's legitimacy which were repeatedly emphasized to all soldiers. Pattarat's focus has shifted from the Thai army of the past to the Thai army of today, including its relationship with the monarchy and roles in domestic development.

Trin Aiyara is an independent researcher. Until May of 2022, he was an assistant professor in economics at the School of Political Science and Law, Walailak University, located in Nakhon Srithammarat, Thailand. He holds Ph.D. from National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) in Tokyo, Japan. His doctoral dissertation "The Rise of China and High-speed Politics in Southeast Asia" investigates impacts of contestation over resources in domestic politics on the formulation of high-speed railway development policy, which the Chinese agencies have involved. He also got Bachelor of Arts (Economics) from Thammasat University and Master of Arts in Development Economics from University of East Anglia. Before working in an academia, he was an executive staff of the Chief Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister of Thailand (Yingluck Shinawatra). His research interests are political economy issues, particular state-market relations. His previous researches cover several topics, including roles of Chinese actors in the Thai economy, the economic transformation in Southern Thailand.

Constitutional Monarchy and Johore Development: Theory and Reality

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Mega projects are typically political and have a complex business and patronage ecosystem, given the scale and resources they command. The Forest City projects are situated within the larger network of China's Belt and Road Initiative, and the marketing, directed to mostly Chinese buyers, indicates proximity to Singapore as the unique selling point – even though the spatial and socio-economic impact of the projects are felt locally in the wider area of Johor Bahru. The widely reported business interests of the Johor Royal Family shows that there is an ambiguity in the concept of "Constitutional Monarchy" : On one hand, the Constitution does not expressly bar Sultans and the Royal families from taking part in business activities; however on the other hand, the concept of "Constitutional Monarchy" would be meaningless if there are no such restrictions. Closely tied to this ambiguity is the fluidity and ambivalent nature of legal concepts which stipulate that the meaning and significance of legal concepts are to be examined beyond "law in the books". Thus while Malaysian legal history would support "Constitutional Monarchy" in Malaysia, the law does not operate in a vacuum and that it could be understood differently in reality among the relevant development stakeholders. This paper seeks to examine these questions surrounding the connections between the Johor Royal family and the development projects in Johor while framing them against the backdrop of "Constitutional Monarchy". It analyses how the power distance between the stakeholders and the Royal family's degree of influence has shaped the extent of the Forest City mega project, as exemplified through the spatial, environmental, and socio-economic impacts of these projects on the Iskandar Malaysia development region.

Mohd Nazim Bin Ganti Shaari teaches Constitutional Law and Jurisprudence at the law faculty of Universiti Teknologi MARA in Malaysia. He actively monitors the public discourse regarding "Constitutional Monarchy" in Malaysia with a view to educate the public regarding the dangers of neo-feudalism.

Nurul Azreen Azlan teaches Urban Design at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. She is interested in how and why spaces and infrastructure are produced and governed in relation to politics, the impact of privatisation of public goods, and how historical processes, particularly colonisation, has shaped the resultant built environment and spatial practices.

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Dan Zhang is a postdoctoral fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, who focuses on the reuse of heritage buildings, urban tourism, and heritage tourism. Her dissertation studies on the relationship between residential heritage and urban development. Her working paper at the Asia Research Institute is a comparative research on urban heritage tourism among Asian cities, the research area involved Mainland China, Taiwan, and Singapore.

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Francis E. Hutchinson is a Senior Fellow and Co-ordinator of the Malaysia Studies Programme at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. His research interests include state-business relations, elections, federalism, decentralization, local economic development, and cross-border regions. Francis is the Managing Editor of the *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*, and has authored or edited eight books, including *The Defeat of Barisan Nasional: Missed Signs or Late Surge?* (ISEAS, 2020), and *Asia and the Middle Income Trap* (Routledge, 2016). He has published on economic and political issues in Southeast Asia in the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Asian Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, *Geoforum*, *Asian Affairs*, *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature* and *Southeast Asian Affairs*.

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Jane M. Jacobs is Professor of Urban Studies at Yale-NUS College. Her specialist area is social and cultural geography and she has published on postcolonial geographies, architecture and society, high-rise urbanism, and the politics of heritage. She is author of *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (1996), *Cities of Difference* (1998), *Uncanny Australia* (1998), and *Buildings Must Die: A Perverse View of Architecture* (2014). Prof Jacobs manages the pleasant confusion of sharing her name with the influential, but now deceased, urbanist Jane Jacobs. Because of this, she has become an expert in professional disambiguation.

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Ofita Purwani is an Urban Studies Foundation International Fellow at Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. She is also an Associate Professor at the School of Architecture Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia. She was a Visiting Scholar at Yale-NUS College, Singapore in January-July 2020. She obtained her PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2014. Her interests range from Javanese built environment, Southeast Asian urbanism, traditionalism, heritage issues, tourism, urban studies, spatial politics, invented traditions and sociology. She is currently working with Prof Jane M. Jacobs on a project entitled, Southeast Asian Royal Cities Today; How Monarchy Influences Urban Development.

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Tim Bunnell is Professor in the Department of Geography and Director of the Asia Research Institute (ARI), where he is also leader of the Asian Urbanisms cluster. The primary focus of his research is urbanisation in Southeast Asia, examining both the transformation of cities in that region and urban connections with other parts of the world. Tim's books include *From World City to the World in One City: Liverpool through Malay Lives* (Wiley, 2016) and *Urban Asias: Essays on Futurity Past and Present* (Jovis, 2018; co-edited with Daniel P.S. Goh), and he has also published in a wide range of journals in Geography and urban studies. He is currently involved in two different collaborative urban research projects, one on planning and city futures in Southeast Asia, the other on smart cities in global comparative perspective.

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