

SPECULATIVE CLIMATE URBANISM AND THE SEA

The Inequalities of Building and Living
on Water in Southeast Asia

23-24 October 2023



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**Speculative Climate Urbanism and the Sea:
The Inequalities of Building and Living on Water in Southeast Asia**
23-24 October 2023 | Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

In recent years, many cities have started pivoting to carbon management and investments in climate-resilient infrastructures to deal with the urgency of climate emergencies. At the same time, the United Nations have also started prioritising climate financing, which benefits from the more quantifiable nature of carbon management and investments. The shift from the three sustainability pillars (social, economy, environment) as guiding principles, to these more quantifiable measures has however left climate urbanism prone to be captured by neoliberal planning (Long & Rice, 2019). Neoliberal tendencies to prioritise growth, coupled with quantifiable climate-proofing measures and climate financing, have paved the path for more speculative urbanisms, where the process of urbanization is mostly driven by real estate capital flows (Goldman, 2011). At the intersection of climate and speculative urbanisms lie coastal land reclamation – at once a legitimate method of climate adaptation while at the same time a lucrative land-banking exercise for real estate accumulation. Existing inequalities are further deepened as interventions favour the securitization of the privileged, at the expense of the marginalised (Garcia-Lamarca et al., 2021). Specifically, this workshop focuses on the following questions:

- How and what reclamation projects are being carried out in the region? At what scale are they happening? Who and what are the drivers behind reclaiming land and advancing societies seaward? Is there a limit to land reclamation?
- How are these projects mapped onto sustainability frameworks and concepts such as green growth and resilience? What is sustainable or resilient about these projects, and who benefits the most from these constructs? To what extent is future risk, whether climate change or disasters, being invoked in reclaiming land?
- How do people identify with reclaimed land? What are the social, economic, and cultural implications of these projects? Who gets to have access to its purported benefits and who are excluded from it? Are issues of inequality, inequity, and injustice amplified or attenuated by land reclamation and how are these manifested?
- What kinds of urban futures are projected in these visions, and to what extent are the local contexts taken into consideration?

WORKSHOP CONVENORS

Dr Nurul Azreen Azlan | Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

Dr Ven Paolo B. Valenzuela | Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE

DATE	TIME (SGT)	PANEL SESSION
23 Oct 2023 (Monday)	10:30 – 11:00	WELCOME & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
	11:00 – 12:30	PANEL 1 – URBAN IMAGINARIES
	14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 2 – NARRATIVES OF DEVELOPMENT
	16:00 – 17:30	KEYNOTE ADDRESS
	18:00 – 19:30	WORKSHOP DINNER <i>(For Presenters, Chairpersons and Invited Guests)</i>
24 Oct 2023 (Tuesday)	10:30 – 12:00	PANEL 3 – COASTAL DISPLACEMENTS
	13:00 – 14:30	PANEL 4 – COMMUNITY RESILIENCE
	15:00 – 16:15	SUMMARY & CLOSING REMARKS

23 OCTOBER 2023 • MONDAY

10:30 – 11:00	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
	<p>Tim Bunnell <i>National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>Nurul Azreen Azlan <i>National University of Singapore</i></p> <p>Ven Paolo B. Valenzuela <i>National University of Singapore</i></p>
11:00 – 12:30	PANEL 1– URBAN IMAGINARIES
<i>Chairperson</i>	Tim Bunnell <i>National University of Singapore</i>
11:00	<p>Contested Imaginaries of Indonesian Coastal Urbanism</p> <p>Jonas Hein <i>German Institute of Development and Sustainability</i></p>
11:20	<p>A Capabilities Approach and Discourse Analysis on the Implications of the Smart City Project to Marine Protected Areas in Dumaguete City, Philippines</p> <p>Aaron Micah Esteban <i>Assumption College Makati</i></p>
11:40	<p>Land Reclamation Mega-Projects in Vietnam: From Imaginaries of Climatic/ Green Urbanism to Realities of Speculative Urbanism</p> <p>Thi Mai Thoa Tran <i>Université du Québec à Montréal</i></p>
12:00	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:30 – 14:00	LUNCH
14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 2 – NARRATIVES OF DEVELOPMENT
<i>Chairperson</i>	Ven Paolo B. Valenzuela <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:00	<p>Sinking Mega Harbour: Canceled Land Reclamation in Davao City, Philippines</p> <p>Ryan Tans <i>Yale-NUS College</i></p>
14:20	<p>Navigating the Tides of Development: Examining Divergent Perspectives on the Bulacan Aerotropolis Development</p> <p>Aireen Grace Andal <i>Macquarie University</i></p>
14:40	<p>Maritorium Biocracy: Climate Urbanism in Southeast Asia</p> <p>Alban Mannisi <i>Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology & Curtin University</i></p>
<i>Online</i>	
15:00	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
15:30 – 16:00	TEA BREAK
16:00 – 17:30	KEYNOTE ADDRESS
<i>Chairperson</i>	Nurul Azreen Azlan <i>National University of Singapore</i>
16:00	<p>Vertical Reclamation and the Inequalities of Building on Sinking Land</p> <p>Lukas Ley <i>Max Plank Institute for Social Anthropology</i></p>
<i>Online</i>	
17:00	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
17:30	END OF DAY 1
18:00 – 19:30	WORKSHOP DINNER (For Presenters, Chairpersons and Invited Guests)

24 OCTOBER 2023 • TUESDAY

10:30 – 12:00	PANEL 3 – COASTAL DISPLACEMENTS
<i>Chairperson</i>	Sara Fuller <i>Macquarie University</i>
10:30	The Paradox of Urban Poor Retreat and Elite Terraforming in Post-Ondoy Manila Maria Khristine Alvarez <i>University College London</i>
10:50 <i>Online</i>	Reclamation of Coastal District in HCM City: Economic-Environmental (Un)Sustainability and Social Equalities in Urban Development of Vietnam Nguyen Dang Dao <i>Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences</i>
11:10	“We Are Heritage!”: Reclamations, Exclaving, and Self-heritagization in Penang, Malaysia Pierpaolo De Giosa <i>Palacký University Olomouc</i>
11:30	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:00 – 13:00	LUNCH
13:00 – 14:30	PANEL 4 – COMMUNITY RESILIENCE
<i>Chairperson</i>	Priza Marendraputra <i>National University of Singapore</i>
13:00 <i>Online</i>	Futures Built on Sand: Transforming Vulnerability on a Climate-Resilient Urban Space Javed Kaisar <i>Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology</i>
13:20	Reclaiming Women’s Voices and Feminist Visions of Empowerment in the Land Reclamation Debate in the Philippines Rosallia Domingo <i>De La Salle University</i>
13:40 <i>Online</i>	Detours to Speculative Urbanism: Local Responses to Urbanization Tenn Joe Lim <i>City University of New York</i> Serina Rahman <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:00	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
14:30 – 15:00	TEA BREAK
15:00 – 16:15	COMMENTARY & CLOSING REMARKS
	Kristian Karlo Saguin <i>University of the Philippines</i> Nurul Azreen Azlan <i>National University of Singapore</i> Ven Paolo B. Valenzuela <i>National University of Singapore</i>
16:15	END OF WORKSHOP

Contested Imaginaries of Indonesian Coastal Urbanism

Jonas Hein

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Indonesia's urban coasts are subject to unprecedented anthropogenic environmental change. The Indonesian Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries lists 197 land reclamation projects (Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan, 2019) across the Archipelago. Projects are driven by powerful imaginaries of world-class urbanism and technocratic visions to control unruly coastlines. We will identify imaginaries and narratives that influence coastal planning and impact the abilities of urban coastal dwellers to access coastal resources and the coast. We consider imaginaries as collective stories about places and futures (Watkins, 2015). They are framed by certain narratives that describe possible, desired or planned developments of urban coastlines. Narratives enact realities, provide meanings for imagined alternative urban and coastal developments, and facilitate the persuasion of potential opponents (Samec and Gibas, 2021; Sandercock, 2003). We build our contribution on a qualitative content analysis of digital planning visualizations, spatial plans and newspaper articles, spatial planning documents focusing on Indonesian coastal cities complemented by qualitative interviews conducted in coastal Jakarta. Conceptually, we formulate a political ecology of land reclamation to investigate the socio-ecological renegotiation of land and water spaces and the appropriation of coastal ocean space from above and below. Our findings indicate that imaginaries frame coastal spaces as urban-marine "non-territory" (Steinberg, 2001), as an empty place that is available – if filled up with sand – for speculative, multi-purpose mega projects, which aim to provide space for climate proof urban developments.

Jonas Hein works as a senior researcher at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) in Bonn. He holds a doctorate in Human Geography from the University of Gottingen, Germany. In his research, Hein focuses on the political ecology of socio-ecological transformations. Currently, he is mainly interested in the politics of dredging in port cities and in how imaginaries shape material practices along urban coasts in Europe and Indonesia. Previously he worked on conservation and agrarian conflict in Indonesia and Colombia.

A Capabilities Approach and Discourse Analysis on the Implications of the Smart City Project to Marine Protected Areas in Dumaguete City, Philippines

Aaron Micah Esteban
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This paper examines the multifaceted implications of the 174 hectares Smart City proposal on a reclaimed land in Dumaguete City, Philippines, which envisions to be a mixed residential and commercial area. Scientific experts have expressed concerns regarding the potential for an ecological disaster that could have long-lasting consequences for the local environment which poses a significant and enduring threat to four marine protected areas. This study endeavors to uncover the underlying power dynamics, ideologies, and societal values that shape the understanding and representation of this issue. By closely analyzing the discourses and narratives surrounding the proposal, the study aims to shed light on the potential ramifications, including the loss of livelihoods, ecosystem services, and cultural heritage, even during the suspension of the project. To comprehensively analyze the social, economic, and cultural implications of this ongoing threat to the marine protected areas, this study adopts Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach and employs discourse analysis. The paper has three primary objectives: 1) it investigates how the capabilities approach can address issues of equity, fairness, and power dynamics in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, even in the context of the project's suspension, 2) it examines how the ongoing threat aggravates existing inequalities and injustices, particularly impacting marginalized communities and vulnerable groups, and 3) it highlights the vital importance of continued vigilance in protecting social justice and ensuring the fulfillment of human capabilities. The findings in this study aim to offer insights that have practical implications for policy-making, advocacy initiatives, and the promotion of sustainable development within the region.

Aaron Micah Esteban is Assistant Professor at Assumption College Makati, and is currently Coordinator of Theology Department and OIC Chair of the General Education Department, Higher Education. He recently received his PhD in the Department of Philosophy at De La Salle University, where he also obtained his MA in Philosophy. His research interests include philosophy of art, ethics, and environmental philosophy.

Land Reclamation Mega-Projects in Vietnam: From Imaginaries of Climatic/Green Urbanism to Realities of Speculative Urbanism

Thi Mai Thoa Tran

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Land reclamation in Vietnam is said to date back from about one thousand years ago and to have contributed significantly to the nation's territorial expansion. Under the late-socialist regime, land reclamation has been actively promoted by the State for various economic and geo-political reasons. "To advance to the sea" is seen as vital for the country to successfully exploit the "ocean economy", to position itself as an advanced "marine country" capable to compete against other regional and global economic powers, and finally to secure its coastal border against hostile territorial claims of its marine neighbors. And yet, due to funding constraints, land reclamation in Vietnam remained mostly incremental on small scale - a few hundreds of hectares at most - until just a decade ago. With the involvement of big developers, a new wave of huge land reclamation projects – up to several thousands of hectares – started to be proposed in various places. At the same time, there have been changes in the State's official discourse in favor of land reclamation. Besides well-used arguments mentioned above, a new thread of justifications has emerged as land reclamation proposals are now projected along novel dimensions of national climatic and ecological policies. By comparing two recently initiated land reclamation mega-projects in Vietnam, I would highlight how discourses of "green growth" and "climate change adaptation" are mobilized by the State in different ways to strengthen these projects' legitimacy. I would argue that despite these discursive imaginaries, these land reclamation projects could only at best be described as specific spatialization of a national regime of speculative urbanism as they are both strongly led by tourism real estate business. My analysis will also raise important questions about these projects' potential social and ecological impacts, challenging the claims of the State and the developer in promoting them. Using discourse analysis based on planning documents and media archive, my study will contribute to a better understanding of land reclamation in Vietnam at the intersection of green/ climatic and speculative urbanism.

Thi Mai Thoa Tran is a fourth-year PhD student in Urban Studies at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Canada. Her current research project investigates the discourse and practices of "green urbanism" in the context of Ha Long, a middle-sized country in Northern Vietnam from a critical perspective. She has a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's degree in development studies. Her broader research interests include politics of urban development in Vietnam, urban political ecology, aspirations and imaginaries of urban futures and everyday life in Vietnamese cities, with comparative perspectives across Southeast Asian and Chinese cities. She tries to combine the approaches of Marxist political economy and post-colonialism in her research.

Sinking Mega Harbour: Cancelled Land Reclamation in Davao City, Philippines

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In Southeast Asia's coastal cities, powerful pressures favor land reclamation. Not only does reclamation create valuable new land in crowded coastal areas, but it also advances the line of defense against flooding and sea level rise. Accordingly, hundreds of new projects have been proposed throughout the region, including 187 proposed or ongoing projects in the Philippines, according to reporting in 2022 by Raizza Bello and Michael Bueza for Rappler. Yet at the same time, reclamation degrades coastal ecosystems and displaces communities, potentially undermining nature-based flood defenses and worsening social inequality. Consequently, land reclamation is controversial. In many cases, the twin pressures of real estate development and coastal defense propel new projects forward, but in some cases, opponents deter reclamation. In this paper, I explore the conditions under which reclamation proposals fail by tracing the rise and fall of the Mega Harbour project in Davao City, Philippines. The project, which would have reclaimed and developed four islands in the Davao Gulf, was terminated in 2017 due to concerns about its "commercial viability, legal and social implications, and the project's possible effects to the environment", according to a statement by Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio. In its place, the Davao Coastal Road project was undertaken along the same stretch of shoreline to alleviate traffic congestion and to protect against storm surges. Drawing on interviews, local news reports, and primary source documents, I document the logic of Davao City's coastal development strategy as it evolved from major reclamation to a more modest coastal road and barrier. My findings will illuminate the political conditions that constrain the practice of land reclamation during an era of speculative urbanism.

Ryan Tans is Lecturer in Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Yale-NUS College. He studies business politics, urban governance, and climate change adaptation in Southeast Asia. His work has appeared in publications such as *Journal of East Asian Studies*, *Asian Politics and Policy*, and the *East-West Center Policy Studies* series.

Navigating the Tides of Development: Examining Divergent Perspectives on the Bulacan Aerotropolis Development

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The Bulacan Aerotropolis is a major development project to be constructed in a 2,500-hectare coastal flats/wetlands in Bulacan (Philippines). It is envisioned as an integrated urban area centred around an international airport. However, the development has sparked significant concerns related to marine sustainability, disaster risks, and displacement of fishing communities. This paper examines the contrasting discourses presented in government, corporate, and non-governmental institution documents. Specifically, this paper offers a comparative analysis of public document sources focusing on 1) the Republic Act No. 11506 (the enabling law for the project); 2) official documents from the San Miguel Corporation (the company responsible for the development); and 3) and publications by non-governmental institutions.

Preliminary findings suggest diverging logics. The government documents predominantly emphasise economic development—key drivers for job creation, infrastructure growth, and regional competitiveness—that prioritises top-down planning process and the marginalisation of local voices. The corporate documents highlight the project's potential for attracting foreign investments, enhancing connectivity, and positioning the Philippines as a global hub. Framing the project as a global hub reflects a colonial logic of dependency on external actors and perpetuates an economic structure that favours multinational corporations. In contrast, the non-governmental institution publications express concerns regarding the environmental impacts, displacement of local communities, and potential social inequities arising from the project. This logic emphasises inclusive and participatory approach, countering the potential exploitation of local resources and limited control over decision-making processes.

This work hopes to contribute to the ongoing debates surrounding the Bulacan Aerotropolis, providing valuable insights into the multiple perspectives and interests at play and offering a nuanced understanding of the project's potential implications and the challenges it poses for sustainable and inclusive urban development. Further engagement with local communities are needed to gain deeper insights surrounding the Bulacan Aerotropolis.

Aireen Grace Andal is a PhD researcher in Social Sciences at Macquarie University, Australia. She is also a research fellow at the Centre of Global Urbanism (Ural Federal University). Her research pays particular attention to the cities of the global South and the importance of counter-mapping research through participatory approaches. Her recent research interest is on island urbanism. Some of her past publications include topics on coastal cities, sea nomads, blue urbanism in Southeast Asia, and island waterfront. She is a scholar from the global South and her academic life is devoted to making Southern cities heard, seen, and acknowledged.

**Maritorium Biocracy:
Climate Urbanism in Southeast Asia**

Alban Mannisi

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While the efforts to bring out disregarded knowledge to resolve our toxic exogenous anthropisation are slowly producing innovative environmental pedagogy, the inertia of thinkers, designers, engineers and politicians towards these ecological dynamics keep raising doubts about our contemporary priorities. Although many societies have reformulated the exogenous patterns imposed on them at the heart of the 20th century, the maritime and terrestrial environments, because forgotten for so long, are being administered according to the modes of endless washing proposed by opportunist sustainable business models fed on transient history.

Surprisingly, unsung biospheres arise from the imperious environmental inquiries sparked by climate deregulation, community displacement, and sea-level rise considerably impacting on cultural landscapes of our planet; the Maritories. Damaged, those regions including their social capitals which generated our worldwide mobility for millennia, are now considered crippling by Western management Models.

Also, a better understanding and consideration of these realities in the management of our extended ecosystem is imperative today, such as their ability to resolve climate deregulation, sea-level rise and community disarray is undeniable. Due to the overwhelming illiteracy of environmental pedagogy towards these indigenous social ecologies and engineering, the Research Design Inquiry Maritorium Biocracy is committed to working to change this situation.

Maritorium Biocracy is a Series of Research Design Inquiry led by Dr. Alban MANNISI, on the Maritime and Terrestrial space [i.e., Maritory] dynamics and issues conducted in Singapore, Bali_Indonesia, Ishigaki_Japan, Sardinia_Italy [2023], Penang_Malaysia, and ChongSan-Do_Korea. Each iteration is conducted in a specific maritorium area through various public and private collaborations with local stakeholders and institutions aiming to engage innovative response.

Maritorium Biocracy Inquiries works to decipher the environmental construction of these realities and the apparatus of their oblivion; to counter recent anthropisation and speculative landscape that appear as soon as their spaces reappear profitable for extrativist civilisations. [www.scapethical.org/maritorium-biocracy/]

Alban Mannisi is a landscape urbanist, director of SCAPETHICAL, Built Environment Practice and Research Platform. His recent projects and inquiries decipher the globalisation of sustainable narrative and the foundation of localised citizen resistance to translate intangible landscape components in environmental design. Intrigued by how connected histories and hybrid cultures model our scape, he has lived, practiced, or taught in France, Korea, Singapore, England, Thailand, Japan and Australia, involving him in a variety of projects among various countries in collaboration with the professionals in various fields. Academic, Doctor in Spatial Planning and Urbanism, from Tokyo Institute of Technology and Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-La Villette, he taught at National University of Singapore, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Hanyang University and Naresuan University. He is currently Associate at the School of Design and the Built Environment of CURTIN University in Perth and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia. [www.scapethical.org]

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Vertical Reclamation and the Inequalities of Building on Sinking Land

Lukas Ley

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Despite sinking land and dissolving shores, coastal cities in Southeast Asia continue to expand and grow. Residents of Jakarta or Manila have demonstrated extreme resilience in the face of rising seas and flooding. One reason might be that coastal inhabitants are used to adjusting to wetness and unstable ground and have engaged in what I call “vertical reclamation” since at least the 1980s, long before sea level rise became an internationally accepted urban hazard. In Semarang, where I have been conducting ethnographic research since 2014, this practice is known as *peninggian* (lifting or elevating). I demonstrate that the bottom-up engineering practice of elevating streets and house floors – widespread in wetland neighborhoods called *kampungs* – allows residents to borrow time from dysfunctional hydraulic infrastructure and urban grounds. As land continues to sink, this practice can feel like treading water or reproducing a status quo that freezes inhabitants in a constant tangle with unstable soils and water. While residents of wetland *kampungs* struggle with regular flooding, Semarang’s shoreline is undergoing large-scale infrastructural changes: central and provincial governments just built a massive coastal road that is 27km long and doubles as seawall. How does such speculative development relate to the temporality of vertical reclamation? To address this question, I zoom in on the sociomaterial and temporal consequences of using (granular) landfill along shores. Studies of land reclamation demonstrate how sand and gravel are “part of an engineering project” towards territorialization (Arnez 2021:300) but also how it is used to arrest staggering land subsidence (Siriwardane-de Zoysa et al. 2021) and buttress urban shores. How do large-scale infrastructure projects relate to coastal adaptation in a minor key, the smaller, uncoordinated attempts to synchronize with sinking land, such as residential techniques of infill, house repair, and street lifting? While disrupting these relations with time, I argue, constructing seawalls also underwrites the unboundedness of soils while framing sea level rise as a future threat instead of a slow and violent present.

Lukas Ley is an environmental and urban anthropologist working at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany, where he leads a DFG-funded Emmy Noether research group on the infrastructural lives of sand in the Indian Ocean World. His research is broadly concerned with marginalization, temporality, and the material environment within urban landscapes. Current research projects investigate the role of sand in building urban commons and dispossession in Denpasar, Indonesia, and the future of concrete in Marseille, France. Ley's first book, *Building on Borrowed Time: Rising Seas and Failing Infrastructure in Semarang* published by University of Minnesota Press in 2021, was awarded the Social Science Prize by European Association for Southeast Asian Studies and received an Honorable Mention for the Harry J. Benda Prize of the Association for Asian Studies.

The Paradox of Urban Poor Retreat and Elite Terraforming in Post-Ondoy Manila

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This paper considers the paradox of urban poor retreat from waterways and elite terraforming along the coast in the context of resilient city making in the age of climate catastrophe. Drawing upon the experience of Metro Manila, I trace the origins of ‘danger zone’ evictions to four allied programmes that rescripted expulsion as adaptation. I juxtaposed forced urban poor retreat with the rise of elite terraformations along the bay by examining the ways in which ‘danger zone’ evictions and terraforming projects align with development plans on one hand and with disaster resilience and climate adaptation plans on the other. Using the lens of agnotology (Slater, 2022), I demonstrate how ignorance was willfully produced by urban and environmental planning expertise around terraformation, flood risk, and sustainability, to create the false choice between urban development and environmental protection, and to further entrench the ideology of good governance. Unpacking the layers of these contradictions shows how resiliency revanchism (Alvarez and Cardenas, 2019) is consolidated across programmes and plans to fulfil agendas of urbanisation and adaptation.

Maria Kristine (Tin) Alvarez is a PhD candidate at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL. Her research critically examines flood-resilient city-making in post-Ondoy Manila. She is the recipient of the 2018 Gilbert F. White Thesis Award from the American Association of Geographers’ Hazards, Risks, and Disasters Specialty Group, as well as a DPU60 Doctoral Scholarship Award from her current department. Tin’s peer-reviewed publications on the political ecology of evictions and urban informality include a Top Cited Article in *IJURR*, a Long Read article in the inaugural issue of *Radical Housing Journal*, a commentary in a special issue of *Journal of Urban Technology*, and a Debates paper in *Urban Studies*. Her essays on housing politics and left politics in the Philippines have also appeared in *The Funambulist*, *Jacobin US*, *Jacobin Germany*, and *New Left Review* (Sidecar), two of which have been translated into Spanish and Greek and re-published in other outlets.

**Reclamation of Coastal District in HCM City:
Economic-Environmental (Un)Sustainability and
Social Equalities in Urban Development of Vietnam**

Nguyen Dang Dao

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The Can Gio Tourist City in Vietnam received approval for building within the perimeter of a UNESCO Mangrove Biosphere Reserve in HCM City in 2020. The reclamation project, developed by Vingroup, the country's biggest real estate corporation, demands the reclamation of an extensive area of land along Can Gio's coast. It has drawn criticism despite being a significant economic development project because of the threats to the Can Gio mangrove forest and the local community, which has already been dealing with serious environmental issues like contamination, flooding, and land landslides. Therefore, this paper investigates how the reclamation of coastal wetlands reflects the predominant neoliberal approach to urban development in Vietnam, which often requires tradeoffs between economic development and ecological reservation as well as generating social exclusion toward the marginalized local community. The research uses policy analysis, map analysis, fieldwork, and interviews in Can Gio to unpack the drivers, current dynamics, and future risks of the project. With a focus on social and environmental justice, the paper applies the theoretical approach of "urban eco-skepticism" of Rademacher and Sivaramakrishnan to help explain how unsustainable and excluded reclamation is in urban development in Southeast Asia. The author first introduces the history and plan for the flagship coastal land reclamation project in HCM City, "a world-class city and tourism hub of Vietnam". Next, the ongoing situation of the compromise between economic development and ecological resilience between various stakeholders will be examined. The paper pays particular attention to the social and ecological implications of the project for the local community. The paper concludes by discussing the project's future trajectory in light of the current real estate market and local landscape to spark discussion about having a more sustainable, green, and inclusive form of urban development.

Nguyen Dang Dao is a government researcher at the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences and a Yenching Scholar at Peking University. His expertise includes urban ecology, urban inclusion, and international development. Dao has intensive research experiences at leading institutes such as Cornell University Center for Cities, the University of Oxford, the University of Pennsylvania, and The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung as an ASEAN-EU Next Generation Think Tank (EANGAGE) Fellow. His publications have been featured on *Springer*, Asia Development Bank Institute, *ASEAN Magazine*, and Asia-Europe Foundation. His latest book chapter is titled "EU-ASEAN Smart Green ASEAN Cities Program: Towards Better Urban Connectivity in Southeast Asia."

**“We Are Heritage!”:
Reclamations, Exclaving, and Self-heritagization in Penang, Malaysia**

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In 2022 the inhabitants of Tanjung Tokong fishing village on Penang Island, Malaysia, staged a protest against the plans to demolish some of their buildings to make space to the activities of an international school under construction nearby. This was only the tip of the iceberg of a complex history of displacement. Tanjung Tokong is believed to be one of the oldest settlements on the island where fishers, farmers, traders, pirates, and sea sorcerers lived side-by-side, prior to the British acquisition. Since then, however, their descendants have struggled to stay put. This holds true especially for the fishers because of challenges posed by urban transformation and land reclamation. Situated at the intersection of urban anthropology and critical heritage studies, this paper focuses on land reclamation and heritage-making practices along the littoral, but from below: approaches other than, and oftentimes opposite to, official ones.

By focusing on the last fishing village in this northeastern tip of Penang, the paper first historically contextualizes dispossession and displacement, from the British administration to the post-independence period. Then, it presents the challenges posed by contemporary land reclamation projects. More recently, the act of reclaiming land from the sea for high-end commercial and real estate development has been approached as an enclave-making process. Yet, this paper considers the “exclaving” effects that land reclamation play outwards, especially for fishers’ socionatural connections to the sea. Finally, the paper reveals the ways fishers deploy heritage discourses to reclaim a future on an island where there seem to be no place for them. Inspired by more intimate articulations of the self and the sea, they navigate this exclave-making process through “self-heritagization”, but rejecting top-down approaches as “dead heritage”. Furthermore, they use their own experience to warn other fishing villages about future land reclamation projects.

Pierpaolo De Giosa is a sociocultural anthropologist working at the intersection of critical heritage studies, urban anthropology, and marine and coastal research in Southeast Asia. With the research project “Malaysian Reclaimed Landscapes: Urbanization, Heritage, and Sustainability along the Littoral”, he is a recipient of a Marie Curie-Skłodowska Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Department of Asian Studies of Palacký University Olomouc. He is the author of the book, *World Heritage and Urban Politics in Melaka, Malaysia. A Cityscape below the Winds* published by Amsterdam University Press in 2021. Other publications stem from his ethnographic research in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste.

**Futures Built on Sand:
Transforming Vulnerability on a Climate-Resilient Urban Space**

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Bangladesh is the largest delta in the world which formed by Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers. This delta is hydrologically active that continuously reshape the land, through both erosion and sedimentation. One particular river island, Bhasan Char, is situated at the Meghna estuary of the Bay of Bengal, approximately sixty kilometers away from the mainland. Presently, this location serves as a home to a substantial number of Rohingya refugees who have been displaced from Myanmar and are currently residing in Cox's Bazar. Between 2017-2020, the Bangladesh government established one of the world's largest refugee camps on Bhasan Char that emerged in the Bay of Bengal approximately two decades ago, is composed of fine silt, sand and clay, devoid of any previous history of human settlement prior to this project. The camp incorporates a diverse array of urban and climate-resilient coastal amenities, such as roads, markets, administrative buildings, hotels, cyclone shelters, embankments, among others. A significant quantity of sediment and sand was dredged and transported from riverbeds and seabed to fill the low-lying areas and construct infrastructures on the island, including a nine-foot high embankment encompassing the newly developed urban space. This "gray camp" does not function as a detention or asylum-seeking center, nor does it grant all refugee rights. This paper seeks to navigate the everyday life of the Rohingyas and Bengalis who are temporarily living on the Char, as most of the people who are currently living on the island have no experience of living in such a landscape before. Specifically, this research interested in exploring how these impermanent Rohingyas and Bengalis negotiate the newly emerged coastal urban spheres on an impermanent island. The paper also explores the negotiation of the Rohingyas with such coastal urban infrastructures on the island, and the complex dynamics and ambivalences that emerge through these "development" initiatives. It is important to note that this paper is currently in the primary stage of a PhD project and extensive fieldwork has yet to be conducted. Therefore, the majority of the content presented will be based on secondary resources and a brief field visit.

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Reclaiming Women's Voices and Feminist Visions of Empowerment in the Land Reclamation Debate in the Philippines

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This paper proposes to investigate the critical role of women's organizations, specifically The National Federation of Peasant Women (AMIHAN), in addressing the issue of coastal land reclamation in Manila, Philippines. The study will employ a feminist urbanism analysis, with a specific emphasis on the approved environmental compliance certificates (ECCs) for reclamation projects such as the 419-ha Horizon Manila project. By analyzing relevant documents and reports, the research aims to explore the gendered dimensions of coastal land reclamation and highlight the active engagement of women in challenging the injustices and inequalities stemming from these projects. Using a feminist urbanism lens, the research will examine how coastal land reclamation impacts women's experiences and perspectives. It will investigate the unequal distribution of resources, increased vulnerabilities, and the loss of livelihoods and community spaces within the specific context of the aforementioned reclamation projects. By centering women's voices and agency, the study aims to uncover the strategies, actions, and advocacy efforts undertaken by AMIHAN and other women's groups to resist and raise awareness about the detrimental effects of coastal land reclamation on urban environments. The implications of this research for feminist studies lie in its contribution to the understanding of feminist urbanism as a framework for analyzing environmental issues and activism from a gendered perspective. By focusing on the specific case of coastal land reclamation and women's organizations in the Philippines, the study expands the feminist discourse on urban studies, environmental justice, and gendered impacts of development projects. The insights gained from this study aim to contribute to the creation of sustainable and just urban environments that address the intersecting dimensions of gender, environment, and social justice, and prioritize the needs and rights of marginalized groups, particularly women.

Rosallia Domingo is a lecturer and a doctoral candidate in Philosophy at De La Salle University-Manila, Philippines. She holds a Master of Arts in Gender Studies from the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary. Her current research interests include the production of frameworks of future artificial intelligence (AI) interventions in the development of inclusive and safe urban spaces in the Philippines. She is part of the recently completed research project entitled *SafeHer Transit: What Women Want in their AI-Powered Safety App* with the aid of a grant from the Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica. Her dissertation is a philosophical investigation grounded in a normative framework that links ethical and epistemological aspects of AI in creating intersectional solutions to the gender and racial bias problem in facial recognition systems.

Detours to Speculative Urbanism: Local Responses to Urbanization

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This paper will critically evaluate the role of Kelab Alami and Pasar Pendekar Laut, community organizations initiated by a marine-ecology educator and fishers from Mukim Tanjung Kupang, Johor since 2008. This paper draws on speculation as a concept to interrogate the role of an environmental conservation group and its education-based tours as potential acts of place-making and reclaiming. While Goldman's speculative urbanism and Bear's speculation as a technology of imagination set the stage to analyze the act of speculation in relation to capital that (re)produces geographies and timescapes of inequality, we seek to reverse the order: to study speculative acts, produced during moments of uncertainty, that are ambivalent to capital accumulation (Goldman 2021; Bear 2020). We seek to contextualize Kelab Alami's work as a form of infrastructure that articulates and rehearses connections between environment, poverty, the state, and developers. We argue, tentatively, that citizen science programs can generate spaces of shared responsibilities and reassert the presence of the kampung amongst rapid urbanization.

The paper will be organized into three sections. First, it will trace the spatial reorganization of fishers by myriad coastal development and reclamation projects of Iskandar Malaysia. Second, it will lay out the history and structure of Kelab Alami, as well as map out its tours, scripts, and audience. This will set the stage for tracking the collaboration with the Shattuck St. Mary-Forest City International School. Thirdly, it discusses how local responses expand the narrative of successes and failures of Iskandar Malaysia's urbanization process, or the media-branded 'ghost town' of Forest City. By situating grassroots' speculative acts constrained within speculative urbanisms of various scales, as well as the challenges to organize internally within the village, we seek to interrogate the possibilities and limits of rural-urban futures from below.

Tenn Joe Lim is a PhD candidate in the Earth and Environmental Studies program at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. His research interests include the co-constitutive nature of logistics and landscapes and what that might mean for rural-urban futures. In particular, he is interested in looking at global shipping, land reclamation, and urban reconfigurations within Southeast Asia. He also teaches courses in Urban Studies at Hunter College.

Serina Rahman is a lecturer with the Southeast Asian Studies Department at the National University of Singapore, where she teaches on environmental politics; religion, magic and society, and Southeast Asia by sea. Trained as a conservation scientist, her practice is in community empowerment through citizen science, community research and ecotourism, and artisanal fisheries resource management; all of which is done at Kelab Alami, a community organisation in Johor, Malaysia that she co-founded in 2008. Her research also includes (un)sustainable development, Malaysian rural politics and political ecology. Serina is an Iskandar Malaysia Social Hero Award Winner for Environmental Protection (2014) and was highlighted as a Channel News Asia Climate Warrior in 2021. In another lifetime, she was once a mermaid, but is now trying to make the most of a sentence as a human living amongst fishermen in southwest Johor, Malaysia, where she does most of her research, community practice and writing. The sea is her lifeline.

ABOUT THE ORGANISERS & CHAIRPERSONS

Kristian Karlo Saguin is Associate Professor at the Department of Geography, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of the Philippines. His research interests include political ecology, urban political ecology, aquaculture and fisheries, urban studies, agrarian studies, urban agriculture, urban peripheries, resource geographies. His recent book *Urban Ecologies on the Edge: Making Manila's Resource Frontier* (2022, University of California Press) summarizes these intersecting themes by exploring urbanization as a frontier-making process that extends beyond the city. He is currently working on several projects that explore various urban and environmental issues in and around Metro Manila, including smart urbanism, urban infrastructure and reclamation, density and wastes, and counter-mapping in the city.

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Nurul Azreen Azlan completed her PhD at the Technology University of Delft, Netherlands, where she investigated the spaces of protest in post-colonial Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She is interested in spatial justice, from the politics around the production of space to the availability of space for people to access public life. She is currently on sabbatical leave from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

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Tim Bunnell is Professor in the Department of Geography and Director of the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore, 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 working with Jess Clendenning and a team of other colleagues comparing Nusantara with other ex novo administrative capital cities in Southeast Asia.

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Ven Paolo B. Valenzuela is Research Fellow (Asian Urbanisms Cluster) at the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore. He has been deeply involved in studies on climate change and disasters over the past decade and employs transdisciplinary methods to holistically understand contemporary global challenges. He was involved in global policymaking on climate change and disasters and his works has been cited by key scientific reports such as the IPCC 6th Assessment Report. Dr Valenzuela's research approach transdisciplinary methods to holistically understand contemporary disaster risk reduction, climate change, and sustainable development issues and concerns. His current research interest focuses on the social dimensions of advance-type adaptation to climate change and disasters (e.g. ports, seawalls, land reclamation, floating settlements).

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