Monarchy in Southeast Asia and their Impact on Urban Development Now

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Workshop on Monarchy in Southeast Asia and their Impact on Urban Development Now
25-26 August 2022 (online via Zoom)

CALL FOR PAPERS DEADLINE: 11 APRIL 2022

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.

**SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS**

Paper proposals should include a title, an abstract (300 words maximum), and a brief personal biography of 150 words for submission by **11 April 2022**. Please also include a statement confirming that your paper has not been published previously, it is not committed elsewhere, and that you are willing to revise your paper for potential inclusion in a special issue submission (in collaboration with the workshop organizers and other participants).

Please submit your proposal using the provided template to Ms Valerie Yeo at valerie.yeo@nus.edu.sg. Successful applicants will be notified by the **beginning of May**. Panel presenters will be required to submit drafts of papers (8,500) words by **1 August 2022**. These drafts will be circulated to fellow panellists and discussants in advance. Drafts need not be fully polished. Indeed, we expect that presenters will be open to feedback from fellow participants.

**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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Contact Info:

Valerie Yeo  
Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

Contact Email:  
valerie.yeo@nus.edu.sg