

ARI news

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THE CELL PHONE:
India's Society Shaker

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Mike Douglass

Special Story

**COMMEMORATING
SINGAPORE
PLAYWRIGHT
KUO PAO KUN**



Prof
PRASENJIT DUARA

WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

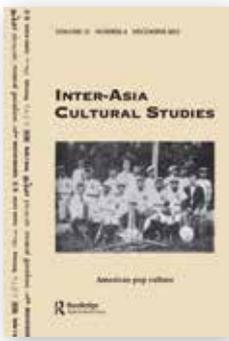
The summer in ARI is no vacation. Many of our researchers and staff, including several of our visitors, threw themselves into the Asian Graduate Student Fellowship Programme, ARI's flagship programme for graduate students from neighbouring Asia, and the Graduate Forum, a three-day workshop for graduate students who work on Southeast Asia. The Forum provides a platform for the students to present their work and to communicate and interact professionally as they mature into the next generation of academic leaders.

Moreover, we hosted a particularly large number of summer visitors from North America who chose to spend their non-teaching summer months in ARI. Visitors to the Religion and Globalisation in Asian Contexts cluster and the Historical Sociology of Asian Connections metacluster were particularly active in organising special reading groups, presenting papers and plotting future workshops and conferences with ARI. Meanwhile, ARI is also gearing up to collaborate with various international organisations and associations in the near and distant future. In October, ARI collaborated with the Asian Borderlands Research Network of the IAS in Leiden to hold the *3rd Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network* in Singapore. Efforts have also begun in earnest to organise the *Inter-Asian Conference IV* in Istanbul in 2013. ARI and NUS are founding organisers of this effort together with SSRC (NY) and Hong Kong University. We have now been joined by Yale and Göttingen Universities.

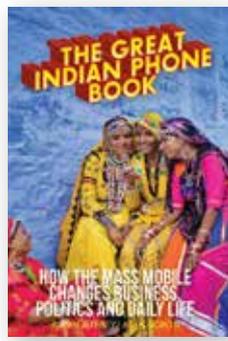
In June, Professor Mike Douglass from University of Hawai'i joined ARI (and the NUS Sociology Department) and assumed the leadership of the Asian Urbanisms cluster in August. He took over from Tim Bunnell who has turned more of his attention to the Department of Geography to attend to numerous tasks, including the management of a sizeable Ministry of Education (Tier II) grant on *Urban Aspirations in Asia* that he was

awarded this summer. Congratulations and many thanks to Tim for his able leadership of the cluster over the last several years. Tim will remain in the Asian Urbanisms cluster and retains his joint appointment with ARI. After settling in, Mike held meetings with various people associated with the Asian Urbanisms cluster and developed plans for the cluster that I am sure he will be sharing with us as they begin to take shape.

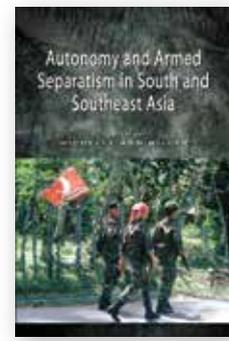
Finally, I want to announce the appointment of Assoc Prof Huang Jianli from the NUS History Department as the Deputy Director of ARI beginning on Jan 1, 2013. Jianli will be taking over from Assoc Prof Tan Sor Hoon who will be returning to the Philosophy Department and the sabbatical that she has long deferred. I want to take this opportunity to thank Sor Hoon for her crucial help as I settled into the Directorship of ARI. Jianli is an accomplished historian of modern China and of Singapore. I look forward to working with him in our administrative and intellectual capacities.



American Pop Culture
Inter-Asia Cultural Studies 13 (4)
Chua Beng Huat and Cho Younghun
 (guest eds)



The Great Indian Phonebook: How the Mass Mobile Changes Business, Politics and Daily Life
Robin Jeffrey and Assa Doron
 C. Hurst, London, 2012



Autonomy and Armed Separatism in South and Southeast Asia
Michelle Ann Miller (ed)
 ISEAS, Singapore, 2012



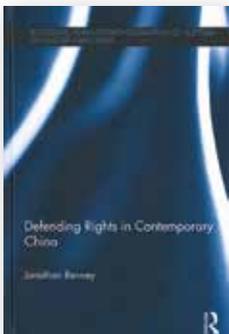
China's Futures
 Special Issue of *China Information* 26 (2)
William A. Callahan (guest ed)



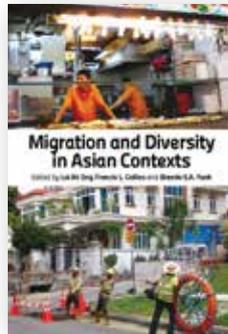
Diminishing Conflict in Asia and the Pacific
Edward Aspinall, Robin Jeffrey, and Anthony Regan (eds)
 Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2012



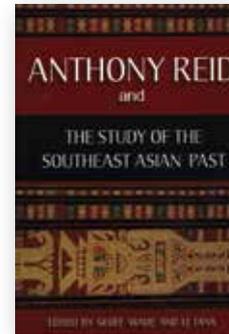
Asian Cities in an Era of Decentralisation
 Special Issue of *Space and Polity* 16 (1), 2012
Michelle Ann Miller and Tim Bunnell
 (guest eds)



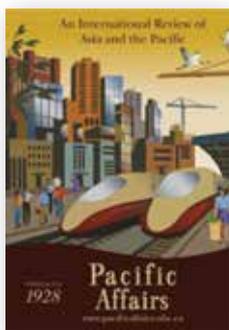
Defending Rights in Contemporary China
Jonathan Benney
 Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2012



Migration and Diversity in Asian Contexts
Lai Ah Eng, Francis L. Collins, and Brenda S. A. Yeoh (eds)
 ISEAS, Singapore, 2012



Anthony Reid and the Study of the Southeast Asian Past
Geoff Wade and Li Tana (eds)
 ISEAS, Singapore, 2012



Celling South Asia: The Mobile Phone's Impact on a Region
 Special Issue of *Pacific Affairs* 85 (3), 2012
Robin Jeffrey and Assa Doron
 (guest eds)



Creativity and Academic Activism: Instituting Cultural Studies
Meaghan Morris and Mette Hjort (eds)
 Hong Kong University Press and Duke University Press, 2012



The Cultural Politics of Talent Migration in East Asia
Brenda S. A. Yeoh and Shirlena Huang
 (eds)
 Routledge, Milton Park, 2012

THE CELL PHONE: INDIA'S SOCIETY SHAKER

In a country where one of the ancient texts declares that “if a Sudra [low-caste person] ... listens in on a Vedic recitation, his ears shall be filled with molten tin”,¹ cheap mobile phones can be explosive. In India between 2000 and 2012, the telephone, and communications generally, have passed from the control of a tiny elite to become the daily experience of the mass of the population.

In India between 2000 and 2012, the telephone, and communications generally, have passed from the control of a tiny elite to become the daily experience of the mass of the population.

In the year 2000, India had 2 million mobile-phone subscribers. It had 900 million in August 2012, and the cost of a basic phone is as little as a week's wages for a poor labourer (about INR 500 or SGD 12), and three hours of talk-time can be bought for half a day's wages. For millions of poor people, a mobile phone has become the first “consumer durable” they have ever owned.

In the film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, a single Coca-Cola bottle, dropped into a stable society, caused disarray and disruption. The mobile phone is no passive Coke bottle. It's an interactive, talking, writing, picture-taking, data-keeping, broadcasting trouble-maker—trouble-maker, at least, if you believe that societies are fine as they are and that change and challenge are problems.

Over the past ten years, the mobile has shaken up politics, business and innumerable aspects of daily life in India.

In politics, the availability for the first time of mobile phones to devoted (but poor) party workers played a major part in the surprise victory of a Dalit-based (formerly “untouchable”) political party in elections in the vast state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) in 2007.²



Photo Credit: Assa Doron



DR ASSA DORON
Australian National
University



PROF ROBIN JEFFREY
Visiting Research Professor
Asia Research Institute

The UP story illustrated the potential and the limitations of technology. Fired-up party workers, coordinated through their mobile phones, made the difference in 2007. But many were disillusioned with the government they put in power; commitment drained away; and their party lost office in the following elections in 2012. It's the people at the end of the phone who make the difference.

In business and commerce, the mobile has raised high hopes that farmers and fisherfolk will be able to negotiate better prices, avoid middlemen and get fast and reliable information about conditions and practices. Some of that has come to pass, but perhaps more important is the way the mobile phone brings marginalised people into relations with government and institutions.

Most Indians don't have bank accounts. Organisations like EKO, a mobile-phone based enterprise that provides basic banking services through small shopkeepers, suggest the possibility of bringing bank-account security to tens of millions. That can mean a lot for someone who previously had to hide hard-earned cash on their person or in a tin box in a hut. It can also mean reliable payments from government or employers without interposing paymasters who may demand a slice of a cash payment as a bribe.

In households, mobile phones throw up new questions. Should a bride surrender her mobile phone when she moves into her husband's home? Some mothers-in-law demand it. And who should be permitted the autonomy that a cell phone provides? "No love marriages, mobiles or unescorted visits to markets for [women] up to age of 40" proclaimed a local council in a village 45 kilometres from New Delhi.³ Its all-male members were concerned that mobile phones were making the young restless and disobedient.

The ability of the cell phone to turn its owner into a broadcaster provides a new weapon for the weak. CGNet Swara, a media initiative based in central India,⁴ allows tribal people to report news by phone in their own voices and language. After checking, stories are disseminated by phone to subscribers. English summaries are circulated on the Internet. Local officials now have to be aware that demands for bribes may be recorded and passed on to their superiors or broadcast widely.

The cheap cell phone is not a cure-all for India's ills. Mobile telephony is controlled by the powerful, and mobile phones can be used to identify and track people. But India's mobile-phone explosion shakes society and politics more vigorously than anything since the imposition of British rule.

Assa Doron is a former postdoctoral fellow at NUS, now at the Australian National University in Canberra. Robin Jeffrey is a visiting research professor in ARI and the Institute of South Asian Studies. The Great Indian Phone Book: How Cheap Mobile Phones Change Business, Politics and Daily Life, will be published by C. Hurst in the UK, Hachette in India and Harvard University Press in North America at the end of 2012.



Photo Credit: Purusottam Singh Thakur and CGNet Swara, with permission and thanks.

¹ Patrick Olivelle (ed. and trans.), *The Dharmasūtras. The Law Codes of Ancient India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 12.1, p. 98.

² Robin Jeffrey and Assa Doron, "Mobile-izing: Democracy, Organization and India's First 'Mass Mobile Phone' Elections", *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 71, no. 1 (February 2012), pp. 63-80.

³ *The Hindu*, 13 July 2012.

⁴ *Tehelka*, 1 September 2012, pp. 48-9.

WAY AHEAD

DR HYUNOK LEE
Postdoctoral Fellow

We live in a world where the number of publications is your only means of survival. At least this is how I feel as a junior academic and recent graduate. However, I cannot help asking myself the question: What am I doing? I try to remind myself of my initial passion and belief that I can contribute to make a better world. But I can only hope that these are permeated somewhere in my work. I volunteered interviewing Prof Mike Douglass, seeking his wisdom.

Q: You worked on a wide range of subjects with extensive networks of scholars and policy makers and was recently also involved in public education. How were these elements developed throughout your career?

MD: Let me put it in my frame. For many years, I engaged in applied development studies. I taught in the school of development studies in East Anglia, UK, and moved to the Institute of Social Studies in Hague, the Netherlands, then I moved to urban planning studies in the US where there was no development studies. I chose development studies for two reasons. First it is inherently trans-disciplinary. It doesn't have a home discipline. So it allowed me to explore many perspectives on the same subject. At the same time it is applied. It asks the question, "so what?". Because of that I was able to become involved in many activities. For many years I was going back and forth between teaching in a University and working for the United Nations or as a consultant to governments.

I finally decided to stay in the University because it provided a three-way discipline: teaching, practice, and research. Teaching is the best teacher. I learned more as a teacher than I ever did as a student. Teaching makes you think about how to explain certain things to others. Practice also keeps me up to date with what is going on in the world. Research gets you into theories. Each contributes together and I couldn't do one without the others. Having said that, my days as a developmentalist are hopefully coming to an end because of the term itself, developmentalism, not that I am not

interested in applying knowledge. In most cases, developmentalism tends to focus on technical hardware and it is interested in sectors. I am not rejecting them. However, the absence of society, or associational life within this discourse contributes to its silence on the most important dimension, namely, social and personal relationship. I came to the conclusion that placing history on a linear path to development misdirects us. It moves awareness away from social relations, culture, and public spaces of cities.

Q: How did this realisation influence your work?

MD: I wanted to change the discourse about development away from the reduction to material values and economic growth. So I started adopting livable cities as an umbrella to bring in social relations and public life. The more I did this, the more unsatisfied I became with the tabulated survey results, usual kinds of positivist social science, which had already been the subject of much critical assessment, particularly with the idea of objectivity in research. It can be useful but it is not the only way to do it. So then I became interested in visual modes of producing knowledge such as photography and films to better reveal the layers of human interactions from the human body to the global scale.

Q: You mentioned that you refused to be a country specialist. How was it possible?

MD: The best way for me has been to have partnerships with scholars who have deep, lived experiences in particular settings.

Q: The current knowledge production system encourages publishing very narrowly focused research. It seems that it is hard for junior scholars to follow your way.

MD: There is no such thing as a small topic or big topic. It depends on how you deal with it. I would suggest that you can do what you want to do. It is a craft. Follow your own lights. Be the scholar you like to be.

Q: What is your view on how scholarship has changed over the last decades? Any words of advice for junior scholars?

MD: The general trend is moving away from the positivist research. Some places are still stuck in it. This presents a problem because you end up being stuck in research beneath the paradigm. You just do little pieces of the paradigm instead of challenging it. If you



Hyunok Lee and Mike Douglass

follow the idea of paradigm, it is actually above the proof itself. If we keep spending our time only doing those, we might find it difficult to anchor ourselves. I think that ARI could benefit from taking a step back and reflecting on what distinguishes its approaches to research from other institutions. The starting place is values. What kinds of values do you tend to push forward? Second is what kind of explanations and methodologies do you use? How do you explain the world? The last two questions may not be applicable to some clusters. What happens to your knowledge in terms of making the world a better place? Finally, who uses this knowledge? If every cluster could answer these questions, we will be surprised that there is more coherence than might seem to be the case. Finally, we could benefit from collectively exploring innovative methodologies. Social media, for example, offers new ways – and pitfalls – for peer-to-peer production of knowledge.

But why are you doing all this? These days, the idea of human flourishing is re-entering my thoughts. Each of us wants to flourish. We want to be meaningful. The way in which the societies are organised now doesn't do that well. So how can we through our academic lives, not only for ourselves but for the society at large, contribute to human flourishing? It is almost banal to say it but that's what I think.

Q: What are you planning to bring to ARI?

MD: Let me focus on the space of hope for now. Physical space is indispensable for human flourishing. My interest is looking around the world and finding how people claim or make those spaces? And how human agency affects people's lives in a positive way. Without being too romantic about it, I believe that the more we look, the more we will find these spaces. We are just not looking. I would like to direct attention to what people really do to create better life spaces and community spaces. I would really like to be in a mode of mentoring and facilitating other people to produce knowledge rather than simply doing research on my own.

“You need to be brave. Be the scholar you want to be. You are never too young to be who you want to be”, Mike said. Every day we try to craft ‘valid’ questions. But how often do we allow ourselves to explore the question of our own intellectual identity? Maybe it is one characteristic of ARI as an intellectual space which encourages cultivating this kind of reflexivity.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

26 NOVEMBER 2012

RETHINKING THE ASIAN CENTURY WITH THE ARTS

This workshop is organised by the Meta Cluster on Asian Connections and Cultural Studies Cluster of ARI, NUS, and Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, in collaboration with the Asian Civilisations Museum. The interdependence of different societies in Asia has been increasing and the region is becoming more interactive, including in the area of culture and the arts. This is often expressed in rather pre-mature celebratory expressions such as the Asian Century or the Rise of Asia. The dangers, pitfalls, and violence of these interactions have to be grasped as well as the opportunities and desires for greater exchange with spaces within and beyond Asia. The legacy of the last few centuries of Western domination has arguably left more awareness of the critical and transcendent functions of the arts, but also powerful institutional and market forces that limit the capacity of artists, writers, and other performers to shape their ethos. This workshop will begin to probe the new role of the arts in our time.

Contact person for further details:

Ms Valerie Yeo: ariyeov@nus.edu.sg

3 – 4 DECEMBER 2012

GLOBAL INSURGENCIES – REMAKING THE PUBLIC CITY IN ASIA

In Asia and beyond, we are witnessing a sea change of the idea of the city that is fundamentally altering prospects for a shared urban future. In contrast to the long held idea of the city as a form of collective social life with governance for the common good and industries and markets in service of social needs, we now see the city portrayed as an “urban sector” that is an “engine of growth” with government in service of a corporate economy as maker of wealth that is highly uneven in its distribution of income and assets. Driven by corporate interests, governments are willingly or unwittingly propagating this narrative and its urban intentions by selling off vital public spaces and facilitating the construction of privatised zones for business complexes, exclusionary living and consumption. Vernacular architecture, historic sites, lower and middle-class neighbourhoods and local commercial spaces are lost in this corporatisation process. This conference aims to address two key issues: Corporate Capture and Undermining of the Public City; Projects to Remake the Public City.

Attendance at this event is by invitation only.

Contact persons for further details:

Prof Mike Douglass: michaeld@nus.edu.sg

Dr Peter Marolt: marolt@nus.edu.sg

18 – 19 DECEMBER 2012

CHANGING ROLE OF THE STATE IN ASIA

In spite of broadly similar external challenges faced by Asian countries, the state there is as much shaped by social and political forces from within. The state is increasingly relied upon by its citizens to manage economic uncertainty as well as guarantee a measure of economic stability and social security. Economic liberalisation involving a free play of market forces is under critical scrutiny. Shifts in economic, political and social conditions require a reappraisal of the role of the state in Asia. This conference seeks to address several major empirical and theoretical questions such as: What is the impact of the global financial crisis on different regions of Asia?; How is the state responding to growing social and economic inequalities?; What is the involvement of the state in the provision of social protection in the face of growing inequalities and the global financial crisis?; What is the relationship between government, bureaucracy and business and how is it shaping development policy?

Contact person for further details:

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31 JANUARY – 1 FEBRUARY 2013

REPLAYING THE PAST: PERFORMANCES OF HINDU TEXTUAL HERITAGE IN INDIA AND BALI

In the so-called “new Asian century”, the idea of “Asia” has come to stand for the “new”, rather than the old, suggesting a point of disjuncture between Asia’s heritage (religious or otherwise), its temporally complex present, and its vision for the future. At the broadest level, we ask: how is Asian antiquity made relevant to an Asia that is rewriting itself, and is Asian modernity made distinctive by this relationship? This workshop will provide an opportunity to explore how Hindu textual heritages—both Sanskrit and vernacular—are appropriated and performed in contemporary contexts, with a comparative focus on India, both an august centre of Asian antiquity and one of the world’s fastest growing new economies, and Bali, an exemplary site for the showcasing of “Asian Heritage” within its context of being a rapidly-modernising Indonesian island.

Contact persons for further details:

Dr Andrea Acri: ariaa@nus.edu.sg

Asst Prof Andrea Marion Pinkney: sasamp@nus.edu.sg

21 – 22 FEBRUARY 2013

ORDERS AND ITINERARIES: BUDDHIST, ISLAMIC, AND CHRISTIAN NETWORKS IN SOUTHERN ASIA, C. 900 - 1900

The presence and importance of orders, as corporate structures of ritual and interpretive religious specialists, has long been noted in the history of South and Southeast Asia. Most often, however, these discussions have been compartmentalised within fields of study focused on a single religious tradition. This workshop seeks to open new lines of conversation by bringing together scholars working on Buddhist monastic lineages, Sufi tariqas, and Christian orders in Southern Asia, to bring their own specialised research into conversation with recent developments in the broader field of trans-regional history. The workshop seeks to understand better the motivations for extending religious communities geographically in the southern Asian region, as well as conceptions of affiliation that have shaped the movement and localisation of religious specialists. The workshop will also explore the ways in which the presence of religious orders shaped processes of recognition and competition within and across the expansionary religious traditions of Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity.

Contact persons for further details:

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Prof Anne M. Blackburn: amb242@cornell.edu

27 – 28 FEBRUARY 2013

THE BRIGHT DARK AGES: COMPARATIVE AND CONNECTIVE PERSPECTIVES

Attempts to globalise the discipline of the history, philosophy and sociology of science by including the content and contexts of the Asian traditions of science along with Western/modern science have generally adopted two different approaches. The comparative perspective attempts to answer the famous Needham Question: Why did modern science emerge in Europe but not Asia despite the great achievements of Asian sciences in the Bright Dark Ages? The connective perspective attempts to show how modern science became possible only because its creators were able to draw upon, and build on, the achievements of these Asian traditions of science.

Comparativists generally assume that the traditions of science in the different civilisations grew in isolation from each other, and that connections across civilisations only had a marginal impact on the science that developed within civilisations. By contrast connectivists perceive the Asian traditions as influencing each other crucially in the Bright Dark Ages, and these traditions as shaping the emergence of modern science in Europe. The workshop will examine how comparative and connective perspectives shape our understanding of the historical sociology and philosophy of science not only in the Asian civilisations (Chinese, Indian, Islamic-Arabic) but also early modern Europe.

Contact person for further details:

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11 – 12 MARCH 2013

TRANSNATIONALISM, GENDER HIERARCHIES AND MASCULINITY IN ASIA

This workshop will address issues of masculinity and men's experiences in contexts of heterosexuality, migration, and transnationalism. Studies that theorise gender in transnational contexts have overwhelmingly focused on women's experiences. These include the feminisation of migration, foreign domestic workers, marriage migration, and transnational sex work among others. Men and masculinity often figure peripherally in such studies. Although attention to masculinity has increased substantially over the past decade, the marginalisation of men in gender theory and related scholarship remains prevalent. Our objective is to place masculinity, and especially heterosexual masculinities, at the centre of analysis. We seek to understand how men become embedded and disembedded within social relationships by examining questions such as: How masculinities are constructed under particular conditions, including particular contexts of migration and regimes of neoliberal commodification and value?; How do heterosexual men live their lives in relation to women and other men?

Contact persons for further details:

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Assoc Prof Eric Thompson: socect@nus.edu.sg

ASIAN URBANISMS CLUSTER (AUC) FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Prof
MIKE DOUGLASS
AUC Research Leader

AUC is developing three themes that will serve to organise research, grant proposals, workshops and conferences, publications, and related events and activities. Each theme will have a faculty member to steer it and will make every effort to link with other clusters and academic programmes at NUS. The three themes are:

1 Disaster governance.

The intention is to bring social sciences, arts and humanities, and physical/technology sciences together to make Singapore a hub in Asia for research and training on disaster prevention, adaptation and humanitarian assistance. The term "governance" is adopted to give emphasis to public involvement in all aspects of research and practice related to natural disasters. With its rich history of transdisciplinary research on key dimensions of disaster governance in Southeast Asia, ARI is well positioned to be the centre of this activity. Asia's urban transition that is focusing on very large urban regions, most of which are located in disaster-prone coastal regions, brings to the fore the importance of AUC research on disaster governance.

2 Heritage and the vernacular city.

This theme brings AUC together with programmes such as SDE that are concerned with culture-built environment interdependencies in cities. The term vernacular city is used to direct attention to both historically inherited urban structures and living culture as they are expressed through place-making and local production of urban spaces by people who reside in the city. This research theme seeks to make international linkages with organisations in and beyond Singapore that are doing similar research, such as the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS).

3 Spaces of hope.

This theme covers a wide range of research on social mobilisation, the rise of civil society, discontents, and insurgencies. It also includes cyber-activism. Most of these activities take place in cities and can be seen emerging with the rise of urban middle and working classes, communications technologies, and political change. It reaches beyond protest to consider projects to create alternative urban spaces. It also links with such issues as citizenship, transnational migration, multicultural societies, utopian visions, and the right to the city.

METACLUSTER NEWS

Prof
PRASENJIT DUARA
Historical Sociology of Asian Connections,
Research Leader

The Historical Sociology of Asian Connections metacluster had a very active summer. Our reading group continued to meet regularly and conducted some joint sessions with visitors especially from the Religion and Globalisation in Asian Contexts cluster. Additionally, several short-term visitors spoke on topics such as the implications of the Bandung conference for the hill peoples (zomia), on changing memories and values of water, on the cultural and material conditions for avoiding the middle income trap, etc. Major workshops and conferences co-sponsored by the metacluster were *Visions, Individuals and Networks: India-China Connections, 1900-1960*; *Southeast Asian Development Models for Africa* and the *3rd Conference of the Asian Borderlands Research Network: Connections, Corridors, and Communities*. Several more events are lined up for the last quarter of this year which can be consulted in the upcoming events tab.

INTER-ASIA ROUNDTABLE 2012

Prof
CHUA BENG HUAT
Cultural Studies Cluster,
Research Leader

This year's Inter-Asia Roundtable was organised by the Cultural Studies research cluster, with the theme of "Methodological and Conceptual Issues in the Study of Cyber Activism". An important development in cultural practice, globally and especially in Asia, is the rapid expansion of use of social media across a wide range of social issues, from the distribution and consumption of pop culture to political electioneering and revolutionary uprising. The analysis of cyber events tends to be retrospective; namely, a "cyber event" is identified after it has already occurred and the role of social media is retrospective constructed as an explanation. Secondly, discursively, epidemiological concepts tend to be metaphorically evoked to describe different aspects of the cyber event; e.g. viral and infection. The Roundtable invited six papers from technical specialists who are applying and/or designing systems to analyse the massive flows of cyber information and analysts who are working on conceptual frameworks for the analysis of cyber activism. Also invited, from the region and Singapore, were cyber activists who are active bloggers or managers of blog sites. The small gathering generated a great deal of learning on the technical difficulties in researching cyber activism. One significant observation made was the difficulties in using actual epidemiological models in analysing the speed, spread, and density of "viral" infection of cyber events. It would appear that at this point of our knowledge, these terms will remain metaphorical in the discourse of cyber activity.

Professor Pheng Cheah gave a keynote speech on "The Biopolitics of Recognition: Making Female Subjects of Globalization", at the conference on *Negative Cosmopolitanisms: Abjection, Power, and Biopolitics*, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, 11-13 October 2012.

Professor Chua Beng Huat gave a keynote speech on "Disrupting Liberal Assumptions in Urban Development", at the *2nd International Conference on Territorial Encounters, Future Cities Laboratory*, ETH Zurich, 10-11 September 2012.

Professor Mike Douglass gave 2 keynote speeches: "Livable Cities – Asia's Urban Future in a Global Age", at the *NUS Global Cross-Disciplinary Tournament 2012*, NUS, 28 July 2012; "Globalizing Southeast Asia's Urban

Transition", at the *6th Asian Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies*, ARI, 20 July 2012.

Professor Douglass was also appointed Research Leader of the Asian Urbanisms Cluster of ARI on 1 August 2012.

Professor Prasenjit Duara gave the keynote speech, "Chinese Civilization and the Problem of Sustainability", at the *4th International Sinological Conference*, Academia Sinica, Taipei, 20 June 2012; and at the Asian Studies Association of Australia, Sydney, 12 July 2012. He also gave another keynote speech on "Circulatory and Competitive Histories: Temporal Foundations for Global Theory", at the conference on *Deparochializing Political Theory*, University of Victoria, Canada, 4 August 2012.

Professor Brenda Yeoh gave 2 plenary speeches: "Migration and Family in Asia", at the *2nd Asian Population Association Conference*, Imperial Queen Park Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand, 26-29 August 2012; "Internationalisation", at the *DASSH Conference and AGM 2012*, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, 13-14 September 2012.

Dr Ronit Ricci has been named Winner of the American Academy of Religion's Best First Book in the History of Religion Award for 2012, for her book *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), written during her time in ARI from 2008-2010.

and to consider his significance in a wider context of the regional and international arena. The co-organisers of this event spoke volumes of the multi-faceted Kuo. Besides ARI, the other partners were the National Museum of Singapore, The Tangent (a bilingual civil society group), and The Theatre Practice (a theatre company founded by Kuo). This conference was organised in memory of the tenth anniversary of Kuo's passing in 2002.

There were 17 scholars presenting papers on various aspects of Kuo, his works, and his legacy. Besides local scholars, others came from the Philippines, Taiwan, China, Australia, UK and the US. Some of them had closely analysed Kuo's dramatic texts while others presented Kuo in the contexts of philosophical traditions, social activism, identity construction, and drama education. Interestingly, two scholars from the US situated Kuo vis-à-vis the recently hotly debated notion of Sinophone literature and culture, reflecting an interest in re-defining Chinese literature in a global context.

Differing from a typical conference—rightly so for a devoted practitioner like Kuo—there were two panels of theatre practitioners speaking of Kuo's influence on them, as well as, in a greater context, the cultural scene of the past three

decades. The speakers were among the most important dramatists of a younger generation such as Han Laoda, T. Sasitharan, Ong Keng Sen, Alvin Tan, Kok Heng Leun, Ivan Heng, Ang Gey Pin, and Nelson Chia. They were either collaborators or students of Kuo. The two panels were in English and Chinese respectively. It was testimony of Kuo's influence in both English- and Chinese-speaking communities in Singapore.

Together with the conference, there was an exhibition *A Life of Practice – Kuo Pao Kun* presented by the National Museum of Singapore which opened at the end of the first day (the exhibition ends on 24 February 2013). A book launch of two volumes of *The Complete Works of Kuo Pao Kun*, including *Volume Four: Plays in English and Volume Nine: Life and Work: A Pictorial Record*, was graced by the eminent architect and intellectual Mr Tay Kheng Soon. After the end of each day, conference participants were invited to watch the plays *Goh Lay Kuan and Kuo Pao Kun* (directed by Ong Keng Sen) and *The Impending Storm: The Silly Little Girl and the Funny Old Tree* (directed by Fu Hong Zheng). All these programmes were part of the year-long Kuo Pao Kun Festival 2012 presented by The Theatre Practice.



Prof Chua Beng Huat giving his welcome address



Assoc Prof Johan Lindquist has commenced a 1-year appointment in the Asian Migration Cluster with effect from 25 June 2012. He has been appointed Visiting Research Professor (3 months) and Visiting Senior Research Fellow (9 months). At ARI he will continue his research on the forms of labor recruitment and brokerage shaping contemporary transnational migrant mobility from Indonesia to countries across Asia and the Middle East. He will also be working on a radio documentary about the Indonesian island of Batam.



Dr Paul Alexander Rae has commenced a 6-month appointment as an Assistant Professor under the FASS Writing Semester Scheme with effect from 1 July 2012. He is Assistant Professor at the Theatre Studies Programme of NUS. At ARI, he will be working on a monograph entitled *Real Theatre: Essays in Experience*, and an edited volume, *It Starts Now: Performance Avantgardes in East and Southeast Asia*.



Dr Hong Song-lee has commenced a 6-month appointment as an Assistant Professor under the FASS Writing Semester Scheme with effect from 1 July 2012. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Work, NUS. During her fellowship, she will focus on home safety issues for older adults living alone to enhance independence and dignity in the face of environmental press in later life.



Dr S. Ravi Rajan has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Senior Research Fellow in the Science, Technology, and Society Cluster with effect from 2 July 2012. He is currently Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz. At ARI, he will work on his book manuscript, *Engineered Conflicts: The Environment and the Politics of Expertise in Modern India*, and start a new cross-Asian comparative research project on the regulation of the risks of bio and nano-technologies.



Dr Thum Ping Tjin has commenced a 1-year appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow in the Cultural Studies Cluster with effect from 9 July 2012. He specialises in the transnational history of maritime Southeast Asia. His current research and work at ARI will study transnational movements between Southeast Asian port cities.



Mr Gan Luhui has commenced a 6-month appointment as a Research Assistant with effect from 11 July 2012. He will be working on the project "Estimating and Projecting Urbanization and City Growth" under the supervision of Prof Gavin Jones and Dr Leontine Alkema from the Department of Statistics and Applied Probability.



Dr Nausheen Hafeeza Anwar has commenced a 1-year appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow in the Asian Urbanisms Cluster with effect from 1 August 2012. She is Assistant Professor of Urban Studies at the Institute of Business Administration, Karachi. At ARI she will work on a book project and continue work on migration, Islam and citizenship based on her extensive fieldwork on the Burmese-Rohingya and Bangladeshi populations in Pakistan.



Dr Ji Yingchun has commenced a 2-year appointment as a Research Fellow in the Changing Family in Asia Cluster with effect from 21 August 2012. Her research interests include social demography, family sociology and medical sociology. While at ARI, she will focus on family and health behaviors in China.



Prof Pheng Cheah has commenced a 1-year appointment as Visiting Research Professor in the Cultural Studies Cluster with effect from 27 August 2012. He is Professor in the Department of Rhetoric, University of California at Berkeley. At ARI he will be completing a book project and beginning a new one on globalisation and the three Chinas as seen from the perspectives of the independent cinema of Jia Zhangke, Tsai Ming-Liang and Fruit Chan.



Prof William A. Callahan has commenced a 1-year appointment as Visiting Research Professor in the Asian Connections Metacluster with effect from 3 September 2012. He is Professor of International Politics and China Studies at the University of Manchester (UK), and the Co-Director of the British Inter-university China Centre, a project that knits together expertise from Oxford, Bristol and Manchester universities. At ARI he will examine how Chinese and Indian elites are thinking about "The Asian Century".



Dr Suzanne Naafs has commenced a 1-year appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow in the Changing Family in Asia Cluster with effect from 3 September 2012. At ARI she plans to work on a book manuscript and journal articles based on her dissertation and conduct research on educated youth unemployment and changing family dynamics in Indonesia.



Prof Meaghan Morris has commenced a 3-month appointment as Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Cultural Studies Cluster with effect from 6 September 2012. She is Professor of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia, and Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Cultural Studies at Lingnan University, Hong Kong. At ARI, her project involves a study of kung fu pedagogy cinemas considered in relation to the work of historical imagination.



Dr Benjamin Hopkins has commenced a 3-month appointment as Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Open Cluster with effect from 17 September 2012. He is Assistant Professor of History and International Affairs at the George Washington University. He is currently working on a comparative history of frontiers across empires, using the history of the governance of the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier.



Prof Martin van Bruinessen has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Senior Visiting Research Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation in Asian Contexts Cluster with effect from 18 September 2012. He is Emeritus Professor of Comparative Studies of Modern Muslim Societies at Utrecht University. His current research concerns non-fundamentalist transnational Islamic movements active in various parts of Asia, including the Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya and the Fethullah Gülen movement.



Dr Kumiko Kawashima has commenced a 1-year appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Asian Migration Cluster with effect from 28 September 2012. At ARI, she will expand on her current research project on a new form of labour migration involving educated young people from a developed economy and their customer service work in a special economic zone.



Ms Tharuka Prematilake has commenced a 1-year appointment as Research Assistant with effect from 1 October 2012. She received her Bachelor of Communications (Mass Communications) degree from RMIT, Australia (Vice Chancellor's List Award Winner 2011 & Overall Top Student 2011). Her research interests are on media and health reporting, women and children, cross cultural communications, religion and globalisation, labour migration and international relations, focused on the Asia-Pacific region.



Prof Sankaran Krishna has commenced a 3-month appointment as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Open Cluster with effect from 1 October 2012. He is Professor of Political Science at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in Honolulu where he chaired the department (2000-2003) and was Director of the Center for South Asian Studies (1998-2000). At ARI, he will be working on a paper that compares two southern Indian leaders—C. Rajagopalachari and E. V. R. 'Periyar' Naicker—in their attitudes to the Partition of India, and the very different conceptions of the nation that underlay this difference.



Prof Donald J. Treiman has commenced a 3-month appointment as a Visiting Research Professor in the Changing Family in Asia Cluster with effect from 1 October 2012. He is Distinguished Professor of Sociology Emeritus at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). This year the American Sociological Association Section on Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility honored him with the Robert M. Hauser Distinguished Career Award. In 2008 he carried out a national probability sample survey in China, which focused on the determinants, dynamics, and consequences of internal migration. At ARI he will continue to analyse data from this survey and from other recent Chinese sample surveys.



Dr Wu Keping has commenced a 3-month appointment as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation in Asian Contexts Cluster with effect from 1 October 2012 and will be appointed as a Senior Research Fellow for two years with effect from 1 January 2013. At ARI she will work on the ways Buddhist, Christian and popular religion groups provide public good in the Jiangnan region and how religious ideas, experience as well as organisation jointly engage people in the larger society.



Dr Du Yongtao has commenced a 3-month appointment as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Open Cluster with effect from 2 October 2012. He is Assistant Professor of history at Oklahoma State University where he teaches Asian history. At ARI, he will be working on a project that investigates the long term transformation of China's household registration system between the 14th and the 18th century.



Ms Norsahida Bte Mohamed Salleh has commenced her appointment as a Management Assistant Officer with effect from 8 October 2012, and will be assisting with general administration, asset management and finance. Prior to joining ARI, she worked with the People's Association till 2008, providing customer service, and administrative and constituency support.



Dr Lin Qianhan has commenced a 1-year joint appointment as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Changing Family in Asia Cluster and the Department of Sociology with effect from 8 October 2012. At ARI she will be working on her research project concerning how parental migration affects the development of children in China.

4 SEPTEMBER

SOUTHEAST ASIAN DEVELOPMENT MODELS FOR AFRICA

DR JONATHAN BENNEY
Postdoctoral Fellow

In collaboration with Leiden University, ARI organised a workshop on *Southeast Asian Development Models for Africa*, held at ARI on 4 September 2012. The workshop was motivated by the “Tracking Development in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa” project, a research project funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and hosted at Leiden University. The project is now reaching its conclusion.

The aim of the Tracking Development project has been both to explain the success of Southeast Asia in reducing poverty and increasing development, and to consider whether the factors relevant to that success might be replicated in sub-Saharan Africa, where, despite considerable academic attention and foreign aid, GDP has remained stable since the 1960s and the rate of poverty reduction is slow.

In his introductory address, the project leader, Prof David Henley, suggested that the project had identified three key preconditions which were needed to stimulate Southeast Asia's economic development, and which have generally not been present in sub-Saharan Africa. These are macroeconomic stability (low inflation and limited currency over-valuation), economic freedom for farmers and entrepreneurs, and pro-poor public spending on agriculture, public

services and rural infrastructure.

These factors can be identified in countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam, and in each case they have been a precursor to the export industrialisation which is largely believed to be the key factor in economic development. In African countries such as Nigeria and Kenya, the policy focus has been on immediate economic diversification and industrial development, with a consequent neglect of agriculture.

Four presentations from project members examined pairwise case studies: cashew nut production in Tanzania and Vietnam; development policy-making in Indonesia and Nigeria; rural development programmes in Malaysia and Kenya; and the development of educational systems in Uganda and Cambodia. In each case, the neglect of local and rural factors by African elites and policy-makers has led

to limited growth and poverty reduction.

The subsequent discussion, facilitated by Prof Henley, Prof Prasenjit Duara of ARI, and HE Johannes W. G. Jansing, the Dutch Ambassador to Singapore, examined some of the broader differences between Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, including corruption, entrepreneurial culture, electoral processes, and education. Prof Duara suggested that authoritarian governments and political corruption in Southeast Asia might in fact have had positive effects on development, and that some people had argued that there had been a convergence between the interests of rent-seekers and interests of the poor in the political systems of Southeast Asia. Different styles of education of local elites — with American developmentalism particularly influencing the Asian elites, and with the London model of Marxist economics influencing the African — were also identified as significant.

In summary, the project has emphasised the need first to draw the attention of African decision-makers to real reasons for Asian development success, and second to recognise and support developmentalist tendencies and potentials in Africa according to developing country models, not developed country models.