

The 36th Southeast Asia Seminar

Cities and Cultures in Southeast Asia

Sponsors: Cebuano Studies Center, University of San Carlos

Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

**(“Southeast Asian Studies for Sustainable Humanosphere” Research Program and
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Date: 20-23 November 2012

Venue: College of Architecture and Fine Arts Theatre

College of Architecture and Fine Arts

University of San Carlos, Cebu City, Philippines

Southeast Asia has some of the world’s largest and most vibrant cities. Roughly 250 million people or over 40% of the population in the region live in urban areas. Mega-cities like Manila, Jakarta, and Bangkok are home to more than ten million people each, and serve as administrative and financial centers as well as migration, transportation and communication hubs. Singapore is touted as a “global city,” a status to which Kuala Lumpur also aspires. “Secondary cities” like Cebu, Chiang Mai, Penang and Surabaya have histories and cultures that are as rich as those of the national capitals from whose shadows they are emerging as part of larger, polycentric urban systems (including corridors) and networks across the region.

This seminar looks at the social and cultural processes and practices out of which cities emerge, grow, decay, and change. Cities are concentrations of people, goods, capital, and infrastructure in space and across time, but they are also sites of power; objects of fantasies, aspirations, and “planning”; cultural, national and world “heritage”; subjects of literature, cinema, and other forms of representation; arenas of contestation, struggle, and negotiation involving individuals, groups, communities, and institutions; and base points for cultural interaction, social innovation, and economic and political transformation. The blurring of boundaries between cities and countrysides, and

increasing connections and hierarchies within and between cities and between megacities and second-tier and smaller urban areas are making themselves felt in the culture, politics, and economy of Southeast Asian countries. The speakers in this seminar will address vital issues and concerns relating to the history of cities and heritage conservation, the role of communities in the making and remaking of cities, and ways in which politics and economy inform urbanization and are played out in the city. The seminar includes a one-day field trip within Cebu City.

PROGRAM

Monday, 19 November 2012

Arrival of participants in Cebu City, Philippines

Tuesday, 20 November 2012

WELCOME REMARKS

**Fr. Dionisio Marcelo Miranda, SVD,
President, University of San Carlos**

**Prof. Hope Sabanpan-Yu
Director, Cebuano Studies Center, University of San Carlos**

**Prof. Hiromu Shimizu
Director, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University**

KEYNOTE SPEECH 1

**Resil Mojares, “Claiming a City: The Case of Cebu City, the
Philippines”**

SESSION 1: HISTORY, HERITAGE, LITERATURE

How do cities figure in history and the imagination? Pre-colonial Southeast Asia had been highly urban, with maritime cities connecting to each other and to their hinterlands in dense trading networks that were local, regional and global in scope. Colonial cities in Southeast Asia served not only as entrepôts, but also contact zones and laboratories for spatial, social, and gendered political experiments. Both male and female local literary writers and essayists have also astutely documented transformations in local societies that took place in the colonies and how cities could be imagined. This session provides an historical overview of the city in Southeast Asia, as well as efforts to conserve or preserve sites of cultural and historical importance in the name of “heritage”. It also looks at how cities are represented and what meanings they embody and convey in history and literature.

Industrious, Cosmopolitan, Dominant, Doomed: The City in Premodern Mainland Southeast Asia

Chris Baker

Our image of premodern cities in the region has been shaped by foreign visitors’ accounts which emphasize their function in external trade. But local sources give a different picture. Eighteenth-century Ayutthaya was big, booming, industrious, cosmopolitan, and doomed to disappear. How do we interpret this urban experience in the context of the new global history?

Is the Queen Washing Dirty Linen in Public?: The State of Heritage Preservation and Governance in the Queen City of the South

Jose Eleazar R. Bersales

For over a decade now, there has been a growing interest in the private sector towards urban rehabilitation and heritage preservation in Cebu City ostensibly as a vehicle for

increasing tourism arrivals beyond the usual sun, sea and sand. An important step was in fact taken in the early 1990s by architects and urban planners aimed at revitalizing the waterfront area of the city, originally its Spanish-era town center, along the lines of heritage preservation and instilling pride of place among Cebuanos.

Unfortunately, a change in city mayorship following elections that happen once every three years put these plans to the back burner. In 2004, however, a new provincial governor was elected ushering in for the first time a province-wide project on cultural mapping, heritage promotion, legislation and preservation which in fact continues to this day. Unfortunately, Cebu City is a distinct juridical entity separate from provincial government jurisdiction and was therefore not compelled to follow or adopt the initiative. Given the palpable absence of city government leadership in heritage, the private sector in the city, especially tour operators, carried out initiatives that complemented to a certain degree the accomplishments at the provincial level.

It is these initiatives as well as opportunities missed by the city that will in part be the subject of this paper I the state of heritage preservation in Cebu City. In doing so, this paper discusses problems on the subject at hand and what needs to be done to resolve them.

Sex and the City: Exploration of Gender and Identity in Selected Cebuano Novels

Hope Sabanpan-Yu

This paper explores the interface between gender and the different spaces fictional women inhabit in a selection of Cebuano novels by women. Ideas on the home and the city provide a productive area for exploration of gender identities and roles and women's issues such as the pervasive connection to the domestic space and women's place in the modern city. Drawing on the anthropologist Shirley Ardener and urban sociologists Alejandra Massolo and a tradition of women writers consisting of Gardeopatra Quijano, Austregelina Espina-Moore and Hilda Montaire, this paper uncovers a particularly female lens on the city.

The City in Philippine Gay Literature

J. Neil C. Garcia

By virtue of American colonialism and neocolonialism, Filipinos have been increasingly socialized in Western modes of gender and sexual identity formation, courtesy of a sexualization that rode on a variety of biomedical discourses (like public hygiene, guidance and counseling, psychology, feminism, even AIDS). This has resulted in the entrenchment of the ‘homo/hetero’ dichotomy as the key organizing principle in the now-heavily-freighted sexual lives of educated Filipinos, especially those living in the large urban centers where Westernized knowledges hold sway.

The neocolonial city as the is therefore the location of ‘perverse implantations’ of global genders and sexualities, and indeed, it is to these selfsame processes that the Philippines owes the reality of local gay culture as well as, in more recent times, LGBT politics and identities. Even as the city in many other cultures around world has functioned in more less the same way, there are many encouraging narratives that the mostly urban-based sexualization of Filipinos has engendered, and these are the narratives of cultural hybridity and appropriation, which may also be read (using a different kind of political optic) as narratives of postcolonial resistance.

More specifically, we can say that these narratives include LGBT activism itself, which—as Filipinos espouse and practice it—is certainly not reducible to the same political ‘thing’ that it arguably is, elsewhere in the globalized world. While we must accept the fact that it was the American sexological regime that pathologized Filipino LGBTs in the first place, as the present-day example of increasingly politicized Filipino gays, lesbians, and transgenders illustrate, we must also recognize that it was precisely this very stigma that paradoxically enabled them as well, in all sorts of interesting and unpredictable—and, possibly, even ironically ‘anticolonial’—ways.

In this paper I shall perform a broadly postcolonial reading of a selection of stories and poems written by Filipino gay writers, in English and in Filipino, that have appeared in print in the last three decades. In my reading I shall be paying close attention to the ways the city is depicted not only as a privileged location for sexual

self-realization, affording the sexual ‘exile’ structures for community-formation and support outside the traditional family, but also as an ambivalent habitational trope (for both global and national gay ‘belongingness’) that is at once welcoming and alienating—at once enabling and subjugating—precisely because of its own inescapable contradictions, as the site of neocolonial knowledge-dissemination and subject-formation.

Wednesday, 21 November 2012

SESSION 2: CITIES AND URBAN COMMUNITIES

How do ideas of cities shape the life processes and trajectories of their residents, and how do people make and remake their cities? This session looks at the fraught relationship between state-led urban planning, on the one hand, and the local communities living in the areas that are the target of state intervention, on the other hand. The diversity of voices and everyday practices of local communities often registers as “disorder” and “unruliness” that necessitate, but also challenge, state visions of progress, development, and standardization. This session critiques top-down approaches to designing, regulating, and reforming cities and urban populations, and offers case studies that highlight the complexity of interactions and negotiations between states and communities, and the crucial role of local communities in promoting the social and ecological health of their cities.

Exploring Linguistic Diversity in Urban Landscapes

Nathan Badenoch

Urbanization is bringing more and more complexity to urban cultural landscapes of Asia, which are already diverse and rich. Language provides a useful window on the cultural dynamics of diversity, and at the same time can be an interesting proxy for socio-economic change. For example, examining language as an identity marker

highlights struggles between majority-minority that play out in urban areas. Language is also a key component of network formation, which is driven by any number of social, economic and political strategies. Multilingualism is closely intertwined with linguistic diversity, and is under constant pressure from the homogenizing forces of state policy, and globalizing sectors society. But is monolingualism the necessary final outcome of urbanization? The dynamism of language use in urban areas may suggest otherwise.

There are two complementary analytical approaches that can be used to examining linguistic diversity in urban settings. First is looking at language use trends within and between diverse communities. This perspective is often concerned with how language choice operates across the “boundaries” of the personal sphere of households and other spaces in the public sphere. Observing the linguistic landscape is the second approach, and involves analysis of the visual use of language around urban areas, including public signage and other written language. Here we can see what language is being used to broadcast messages, by whom, to whom and for what purposes. Taken together, the use of spoken and written language highlight the dynamics of cooperation and competition, community formation and struggle to assert power. In this presentation we will look at a number of examples from large and smaller cities around the region, including Singapore, Vientiane (Laos), and Mae Sai (Thailand). We will explore the relevance of the idea of a “sociolinguistics of globalization” for urbanizing Southeast Asia.

Alternative Definitions and Possibilities of “Consistency” in Growth of Asian Cities

Kenta Kishi

In my lecture, problems and possibilities of contemporary urban development project will be examined through a discussion of the re-discovery of positive potentials of urban community in contemporary Asian cities.

First of all, this lecture will focus on the meaning and force of an urban thought, “Consistency,” that always gave us glorious images of city’s future, and is usually

presented as an important aspect of gigantic development project. The word “Consistency” might be accepted as a useful slogan for understanding the complexity and multiplicity of factors and their relationships in massive urban change. However, if this simple slogan is produced without respect for the diverse and silent voices and memories of local communities and their spaces, these voices and memories will easily be defined as problematic factors, such as disordered spaces, noisy voices, rough and poor people, and etc. We can clearly predict that they will easily be eliminated or neglected in urban growth.

A result of the above problem can be found in various cities in advanced countries. Damaged local communities were rejected in favor of the progress of city and these broken communities are generating devastations in both their life and space. This fact produced by the conventional way of “Consistency” should be understood as a “limitation of planning”. We have to understand that many of the Asian cities are facing this difficulty now, and we must invent a methodology to cross and connect our diverse knowledge, experiences and techniques, in order to avoid this predictable crisis. In either case, “Consistency” might be a necessary notion for urban growth, since it can handle complexity and multiplicity and draw our hopes and visions of future city in a clear scenario. However, this “Consistency” should be developed through collaboration between diverse stakeholders of city, especially, including local communities. In this lecture, below two experimental urban development projects that cooperated by Kishi together with local community will be introduced, in order to propose some hints for above critical issue.

1) “Dialogical Urban Strategy” (A Practice of Scenario Planning Methodology) @Jyvaskyla city in Finland.

2) “Urban Ecosystem in Asian City” (A Practice of Micro-Project/Networking Methodology) @Surabaya city in Indonesia.

I will propose some hints in order to overcome the problems identified in the above discussion through the introduction of my actual urban projects that were developed and realized through cooperative work with diverse participants from local communities.

Emergencies: Planning Discourses and Semi-Autonomous Communities in Urban Southeast Asia

Loh Kah Seng

This paper examines the development of a new discourse of urban crisis in Southeast Asia after World War Two. Originating with Anglo-American experts with planning experience in the West, the discourse merged colonial anxieties over disease, unruly Asians and the spread of communism to propose the eradication of slums and squatter settlements, the making of new cities of planned concrete housing and the establishment of model industrial citizenries. In the discourse, Asian cities were typecast as “emergencies”, where disorderly urban growth was deemed injurious to the creation of stable postcolonial states and necessitated urgent state and expert intervention.

Throughout Southeast Asia, planning and rehousing efforts were keenly contested by semi-autonomous local communities, even in Singapore where the efforts ultimately proved successful. The paper will also consider if remnants of these discourses may be found in expert-based disaster management approaches being practiced in the region today.

Thursday, 22 November 2012

SESSION 3: ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND POLITICAL NEGOTIATION

In the post-colonial era, national capitals are primate cities that command a disproportionate share of their countries' population, wealth, and power. More, rates of urbanization in Southeast Asia have been increasing in tandem with the rapid economic development of the region. Capital accumulation and middle-class consumption have reshaped the city through the proliferation of gated residential

communities, malls and other property developments, central business districts, and industrial estates. But pollution and environmental problems; contestation over land use and rights; poverty; and class, ethnic, and social tensions also manifest themselves in and through the city, in the form of urban congestion, a burgeoning informal sector, slums and squatter colonies, and political and everyday violence. This session looks at how economic inequality and political contestation are played out in urban spaces and in the increasingly blurred boundary between city and country.

Economic Inequality and the Urban-Rural Divide: Differences and Changes in Southeast Asia

Pasuk Phongpaichit

Southeast Asian countries are similar in many ways. Yet there are big differences in trends of inequality in recent decades. Why do these trends differ? Do we need to rethink about the significance of the urban-rural division?

Organized Politics of Indigeneity and Casual Politics of Citizens in Jakarta, Indonesia

Masaaki Okamoto

One thing phenomenal about metropolitan Jakarta in the era of democracy is the rapid increase of the new middle and upper-middle class. These Jakartans are influential in the field of culture and consumption. But, politically, they could just be called petit-reformist. As citizens living in and round Jakarta, they are, of course, disgruntled with the never-ending corrupt oligarchy politics and urban problems such as appalling traffic jam and heavy flood. They are casually political in the cyber-space and public polling and they have created new political waves as swing voters in three consecutive general elections of 1999, 2004 and 2009. But these waves have not produced fruitful

political and bureaucratic changes partly because they are far less interested in organizing themselves to forge a concrete and feasible change.

Jakarta has another category of Jakartans: the so-called indigenous Jakartans or ethnic Betawi. They represent themselves as the culturally and historically “right” indigenous people of Jakarta and have formed the Betawi-based social organizations and interest groups. With the start of democratization, they have successfully elected a Betawi local bureaucrat to the post of provincial governor of Jakarta in 2007 and he has discreetly put ethnic Betawi as mayors and district head in Jakarta province. The ethnic Betawi have become dominant in the local bureaucracy for the first time in history of Jakarta.

The paper will discuss this contrasting politics by two different categories of Jakartans and show a new possible future for class and identity politics in metropolitan Jakarta by analyzing the historical roots of this contrast and the electoral and bureaucratic politics in Jakarta.

Discipline as False Remedy: Contestation of Moralized Class Politics in Metro Manila

Wataru Kusaka

Most studies on the Philippine’s class politics have been conducted from the perspective of unequal distribution of wealth and mode of production between two parties such as peasants/ landlords, labors/ capitalists, and the rich/ the poor. The perspective, however, misses moral aspect of class politics.

I think that two aspects constitute class politics. First is interest politics, a struggle over distribution of resources and wealth, which can be settled down by adjusting distribution or changing mode of production. Second is moral politics, a struggle over definition of rightness, and draws moral border that divides right “we” and wrong “they.” Reconciling moral conflict is difficult as it denies legitimacy of others. Then, I would like to use the concept of moralization of class politics to signify a phenomenon in

which interest politics over unequal distribution of resources is transformed into moral politics over right “we” and wrong “they.”

It is believed that moral “citizen” is indispensable to democracy. Yet, the concept of “right citizen” is double edged as it constructs “wrong and illegitimate non-citizen.” The moral border and division between “civil” and “uncivil” tends to coincide with the class cleavage as the neo-liberal ideology divides the middle class that can contribute to the nation’s economy, paying certain amount of tax, and the poor that depends on redistribution or “dollar-out.”

In the field of urban governance, the urban poor who dwell in informal settlements and make a humble living through informal economy such as street vending are tend to be regarded as “non-citizen” by the rich, middle class, and the state, as they violate morality of law-abiding. This presentation focuses on the moralized class politics contested between the urban poor and the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) headed by Bayani Fernando. Then it argues that the MMDA’s disciplinary governance is a false remedy as its moral discourse camouflage the real problem of the city, that is unequal socio-economic structure in which the poor cannot help violating laws just to survive.

KEYNOTE SPEECH 2

Florian Steinberg, “ADB's Green Cities Initiative: Developing Livable and Sustainable Cities in Asia”

Friday, 23 November 2012

One-day Field Trip within Cebu City

Saturday, 24 November 2012

Departure of participants