

Panel Proposal:

Title: Entanglements of Connectivity and Containment: Dispossession, Mobility, and Differentiation in Contemporary Southeast Asia

Conveners: Adam Saltsman & Alexander Horstmann

Format justification:

We propose a panel as this session involves the presentation of individual original research under a conceptual framework outlined below. Further, we propose a double session of this panel since the themes are highly pertinent to contemporary Southeast Asia and since we would like to extend the conversation to include the voices of young scholars, especially those coming from Southeast Asia.

Existing participants:

- Adam Saltsman (co-convener), Worcester State University, USA
- Alex Horstmann (co-convener), FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany
- Geoffrey Aung, Columbia University, USA
- Stephen Campbell, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Panel Abstract:

In 21st century Southeast Asia, multiple overlapping forms of accumulation, dispossession, and mobility are intimately linked to the region's economic integration in dynamics of global capitalism and to state spatial practices that engender precarity at the same time they aspire toward connectivity. One finds these patterns across the region, including in Special Economic Zones and in urban spaces amidst development projects that transform the built and natural environments, displacing lower-income residents while projecting images of employment opportunities, and luxury and middle class lifestyles (Harms 2016). As well, borderlands in mainland Southeast Asia have long reflected sites of displacement, precarious labor, transportation and logistics nodes, and infrastructural projects aimed at creating productive linkages for capital (Campbell 2018, Hirsch 2009, Glassman 2010). Amidst these trends there are numerous logics that reflect expert knowledge deployed to govern the populations and relations that are surplus to national and regional imaginaries, that feature as disposable or flexible labor, or, conversely, those who constitute a desired market (Li 2016). These include the logics of investors, developers, and employers, but also humanitarian actors, development agencies, and local authority figures who are all, at times, "managing" the same populations.

In this panel, we seek to explore the myriad entanglements that lie at the intersection of these logics in Southeast Asia, and analyze, in particular, the ways in which communities and individuals who are grappling with dispossession and insecurity in various contexts navigate forms of governance that coalesce as assemblages that imply a kind of precarious political subjectivity. At the heart of our focus is an interest in the contradictions that ensnare the very idea of connectivity in Southeast Asia. That is, at the same time that infrastructural and logistical plans and development offer an imaginary of borderless economic corridors and urban centers buzzing with global linkages, this panel's various papers note the numerous ways in which

populations encounter the kinds of disconnection, differentiation, "social separateness," and incommensurability that accompany capital accumulation (Gilmore 2002, Melamed 2015). And yet, as we show, populations rendered separate, surplus, or "non-market subjects" maintain and produce alternative forms of connectivity that, ultimately, are part of the constellation of relations and discourses which play a role in the production of social space.

References:

- Campbell, Stephen. 2018. *Border Capitalism, Disrupted: Precarity and Struggle in a Southeast Asian Industrial Zone*. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Harms, Eric. 2016. *Luxury and Rubble: Civility and Dispossession in the New Saigon*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hirsch, Philip. 2009. "Revisiting frontiers as transitional spaces in Thailand." *The Geographical Journal* 175(2): 124-132.
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2002, "Race and Globalization," in *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*, ed. R. J. Johnston, Peter Taylor, Michael Watts, 261-273. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Glassman, James. 2010. *Bounding the Mekong: the Asian Development Bank, China, and Thailand*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Li, Tania Murray. 2016. "Fixing Non-Market Subjects: Governing Land And Population In The Global South." In, *Governing Practices: Neoliberalism, Governmentality and the Ethnographic Imaginary*, edited by Michelle Brady and Randy Lippert, 80–102. University of Toronto Press.
- Melamed, Jodi. 2015. "Racial Capitalism," *Critical Ethnic Studies*. 1(1)