**Land, Politics, and Development in Contemporary Indonesia**

This panel brings together scholars of politics, sociology, anthropology, and development, based in Indonesia, Canada, the UK and US to examine several aspects of land and politics in Indonesia. The papers address historical and current land reforms, relations between local states and extractive interests, and the implications of land politics for wider questions and trends in Indonesian social, economic, and political development and change. They do this based on archival, interview, ethnographic, and other research methods, offering collectively a comprehensive and new picture of this critical dimension of politics in Indonesia and beyond. In particular, all the papers interrogate the concept and issue of extraction of capital from land and the variety of ways this is resisted or reformed. Long-term and wider implications of land politics and land regimes are also considered and debated by all papers on the panel, such that we take important steps toward building an interdisciplinary perspective on the broad relationships between land, politics, and development in the Indonesian context.

**Chair/Convener**: William Hurst, Professor-Politics/Area Studies University of Cambridge

**Dispossessing Land While Owning It: Palm Oil Smallholders and Indonesia’s Agrarian Roots of Neoliberalism**

Perdana Roswaldy, PhD Candidate-Sociology, Northwestern University

With the neoliberal push for a smaller state and further land privatization, how should one explain postcolonial states' strong grip on land governance? Scholars of Indonesia have shown many means of neoliberalization in the country, mostly by focusing on monetary restructuring in manufacture, notably to overcome the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. As such, neoliberalism requires a major financial crisis to significantly change state-led development projects. I examine Indonesia's neoliberalism through the sociolegal history and invention of palm oil smallholders. I stress the relationship between agrarian reform and neoliberalism in formerly developmental nations by focusing on smallholders as a unique agrarian class that is crucial for land transfer, rural indebtedness, and monetary restructuring desired by global financiers. Juxtaposing archives and spatial analysis, I argue that Indonesia creates smallholders through land redistribution to sustain its land monopoly while supporting global capitalist interest in land rush. Restructuring legal systems for popular land distribution programs and forming a distinctive labor-farming class embodied in smallholders thus may aid neoliberal political economic projects in many agrarian-led developmental states such as Indonesia.

**Oligarchy in motion: Dirty politics over ‘clean’ energy transitions in Indonesia**

Takahiro Kamisuna, PhD Candidate-Development Studies, University of Cambridge

Why do oil and coal-producing states spontaneously implement anti-fossil fuel/pro-green policies that undermine existing interests of state and business elites? Although the international pressure has accelerated the clean energy transitions, the drastic policy shift to new clean energy, moving away from the authoritarian legacy of petroleum state, is domestically surprising, given that oligarchs risen from the former authoritarian petroleum state has continuously entrenched in democratic Indonesia. Hence, this research elucidates the political dynamism of clean energy transitions in oligarchic democracy in Indonesia, by focusing on the energy transitions from oil, coal and now nickel. The implementation of investment and trade policies over energy resources seems to be domestically successful, but simultaneously inconsistent and counterintuitive given the oligarchic entrenchment in energy and resource sectors. The research argues that the shift in capital intensive energy commodities from oil, coal to nickel reflects the institutional rearrangement of oligarchic interests, hinging on the changing international climate. The combination of cross-temporal comparative analysis and actor-centric investigations reveals how politico-business state relations, or oligarchy, has reshaped state formation for natural resource governance, *vis-à-vis* its exploitations. While recent literature on energy politics either focuses on international pressure towards energy transitions or domestic interests of industrialsation, this research reveals how the ‘rule of the game’ has been reshaped to sustain the oligarchic interests by switching between economic liberalisation and nationalism. Overall, the research offers a contextual framework to explain the political economy of energy resource governance and exploitations over the energy transitions.

**Political Life under Corporate Occupation**

Tania Li, Professor-Anthropology, University of Toronto

Concessions issued to oil palm plantation corporations now blanket 22 million hectares, a third of Indonesia’s farmland. Still more land is leased to corporations for other plantation crops and mines. Massive corporate presence in rural areas reconfigures politics in three ways: first, it segments space and consigns social groups to radically different life trajectories; second, it rearranges the relationship between citizens and members of the state apparatus (government officials at all levels, politicians) who are officially tasked with smoothing the path of the corporations; third, it limits possibilities for collective action, since people negatively affected by corporate presence have no means to remove the occupying power. Since corporate concessions are renewable, and Indonesia has no history of restoring concession land to the former landholders after the concession expires, these transformations are not just massive, they are permanent. Drawing on ethnographic research in West Kalimantan’s oil palm zone, the paper examines the political configuration of corporate occupation and its implication for livelihoods and citizenship today and in future.

**Agricultural Legacies and Peasantry Embeddedness: Explaining Land Reform Variation in Southeast Asia**

Rahardhika Utama, Postdoctoral Researcher-Sociology, Universitas Atma Jaya

Why does land reform thrive in some countries but fail in others? Using a comparative historical approach to analyze cases from Southeast Asia, I propose two main explanations for why land reform succeeds in some countries but not others. First, land reform thrives in countries with smaller agricultural burdens. Agricultural burdens include barriers to labor moving out of agriculture and barriers to agricultural productivity. For example, larger land areas make it more difficult and costly to invest in infrastructure, technology adoption, and policies that promote agricultural productivity, including land reform. Most Southeast Asian countries inherited agricultural burdens from colonial plantations. After independence, however, some countries were more effective in addressing these burdens, resulting in varying land reforms. I argue that the state’s ability to address agricultural burdens is contingent upon the historical political development of agriculture. Second, land reform fails in countries where conflicting political and agrarian relations between the state and peasants predominantly shaped the political development of agriculture, which I conceptualize as peasantry embeddedness. I identified two types of peasantry embeddedness in Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, the agrarian conflicts resulted in the institutionalization of the disembedded peasantry, the state neglected peasants' interests in agricultural development. In this type of peasantry the state disparages peasants’ political interests and the overall agricultural sector. In contrast, embedded peasantry in Malaysia enables a congruent political relationship between the state and peasants. Further, it promotes thriving agricultural development, including implementing transformative land reform policies.

**Discussant**: Rachel Silvey, Professor-Geography, University of Toronto