

# Sydney Southeast Asia Centre

2016-2017 yearbook

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Cover image: Ancient script on a wall at Angkor Wat, Cambodia



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Sydney Southeast  
Asia Centre

2016–2017 yearbook

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## A message from the Vice-Chancellor

I am delighted that the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre (SSEAC) is celebrating its first five years. With each year, SSEAC grows and develops and this yearbook bears witness to the wonderful work it is doing both within our University community and beyond.

In only five years, the SSEAC has cemented its position as a key contributor to the realisation of the University's commitment to multidisciplinary research, networks and partnerships which improve the lives of a great many people.

SSEAC's mobility schemes facilitate engagement with researchers from the region and from international centres of excellence for the study of Southeast Asia. Its research grants seed new projects within and across disciplines that members can use to develop a new research agenda or to secure external funding.

SSEAC's flagship interdisciplinary field schools, funded by the New Colombo Plan, have inspired students to look beyond Australia and beyond their respective disciplines. In the process, they have developed their critical thinking, cultural competence and interdisciplinary effectiveness in ways that complement the learning that takes place in our lecture halls and classrooms.

The centre is also working to build the next generation of research excellence through programs for research students, its annual honours bootcamp, and the online learning tools designed by the team to support student researchers.

Its outreach initiatives have contributed to social justice in the region – most notably through work with women and disability activists in Indonesia – and to community engagement at home. In these and its other activities, SSEAC has created opportunities for leadership within the University setting and beyond.

The centre's activities in each of these domains add up to more than the sum of their parts, creating virtuous circles in which research, education and outreach reinforce each other.

Many people have contributed to the centre's success throughout its relatively short but extremely effective existence. I thank them all, but in particular, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to Professor Michele Ford, the centre's director. Her dedication and incredible passion show in everything she does and SSEAC achieves. She is ably assisted by the centre's equally committed deputy directors, Dr Thushara Dibley and Dr Elisabeth Kramer. The University is fortunate to have academics of their calibre to lead the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre.

I look forward to the news of the next five years and beyond.

**Dr Michael Spence**  
Vice-Chancellor and Principal



## A message from the Director

It is both difficult and easy to grasp the fact that the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre (SSEAC) has been in existence for five years. On the one hand, it seems just yesterday we were working on the pitch for the centre. Yet at the same time, it has been such a big part of our lives that I, at least, feel as if it has been around forever.

As the team was compiling this yearbook, we were also preparing reflective and forward-looking documents for our first five-year review. Putting together the review documents has made me proud. SSEAC's staff and membership has done a great deal in the past five years to put the University of Sydney's work on Southeast Asia on the map.

In the original academic case made for SSEAC, the University's regional expertise was described as "an untapped resource". Such is the extent of this resource that five years later we are still discovering hidden pockets of Southeast Asia expertise and engagement across the University.

There can be no doubt, however, that SSEAC has succeeded in raising the University's Southeast Asia profile throughout Australia, the region and globally, served as a catalyst for new research in and across disciplines, and helped achieve the University's vision of global citizenship for its students.

We work hard to embed the University's values of excellence and engagement in everything the SSEAC does. We see our ability to seek out internal and external opportunities, assess their strategic value and respond nimbly as our greatest strength.

We pride ourselves on our capacity to connect the dots between seemingly disparate disciplines and domains – whether by nurturing multidisciplinary teams with the capacity to address wicked

real-world problems such as the Southeast Asian haze, leveraging leadership training opportunities for activists, or by securing funding for student mobility and external research.

We also pride ourselves on our inclusiveness. In the spirit of academic generosity, we reach out to academics and students at other institutions to broaden the intellectual communities we need to deepen Australia's understanding of, and engagement with, our region.

Moving forward, we will intensify our efforts to foster interconnectivity in research and education, provide support for partnerships for research excellence, engage with leading global institutions that share our interest in Southeast Asia, and build our contribution to the student experience.

We will also work to strengthen our leadership role, enhancing the University of Sydney's reputation for tackling the complex problems the region faces and serving as a national hub for engagement between Southeast Asian scholars.

I hope you enjoy reading about our activities and achievements in the past 12 months, and I look forward to meeting you at an SSEAC event soon.

**Professor Michele Ford**  
Director, Sydney Southeast Asia Centre



## The Sydney Southeast Asia Centre

With more than 300 academics working on and in the 11 countries of Southeast Asia, the University of Sydney has one of the highest concentrations of regional expertise in the world. From its central position within the University, SSEAC offers an innovative and engaged approach that reflects the region's complexity and recognises its importance to Australia's future.

SSEAC's reach extends beyond conventional regional studies to take a broad-based and holistic approach to research, education and engagement. Scholars working on Southeast Asia specialise in an extraordinary range of disciplines, from archaeology to veterinary science. The breadth of disciplinary focus is matched by the diverse spectrum of topics we research.

Our research clusters around five themes:

- economic and social development
- environment and resources
- health
- heritage and the arts
- state and society.

As well as supporting people working in these areas, the centre connects disciplinary experts to country specialists who have the in-depth cultural and political knowledge necessary for sustained engagement through our country-based groups.

We also foster the development of robust multidisciplinary teams equipped to deal with the challenges of working across disciplinary boundaries.

Our members' academic work makes a real difference by informing decisions in government, industry and the wider community. Our activities support Southeast Asian academics to better engage in global debates in their field, to contribute to the cutting-edge research of their discipline, and to consolidate the University's relationships in the region.

We also provide a space for Southeast Asia experts from around Australia to engage with each other.

Our education programs work to enhance the learning experience of undergraduates and research students. By coordinating and facilitating interdisciplinary field schools that focus on the real-world problems faced by people in our region, we help undergraduate students develop a well-rounded perspective on Southeast Asia in all its complexity.

SSEAC also supports honours and postgraduate students through regular professional development and networking activities and a chance to be part of a regional intellectual community that complements their home discipline.

## Submissions to the five-year review

As part of our five-year review process, we received more than 100 submissions from people inside and outside the University. Below are extracts from some of those submissions.

“The centre is singular in terms of both its geographic and disciplinary breadth. The resulting opportunities for comparative and cross-disciplinary conversations among scholars at the centre serve to produce insightful and innovative research, advancing debate in Australia and around the world.”

**Aaron Connelly**  
Lowy Institute for International Policy

“Through our collaboration with SSEAC and participation in its activities, we have been able to network with many people, groups and institutions, in particular those who have interests in or who are doing work on the Philippines.”

**Anne Jalando-On Louis**  
Philippines Consul General

“Due to the opportunities provided, I now find myself working closely with colleagues in medicine, science and education. These links would not have been in place without SSEAC's support.”

**Professor Patrick Brennan**  
Health Sciences

“Through my various connections to SSEAC, I can quickly think of a number of colleagues with complementary interests, though from very different disciplinary perspectives, across the University. This has led to discussions about further interdisciplinary projects and funding, and opportunities for students to benefit from connections to expertise in other faculties.”

**Dr Russell Toth**  
Economics

“Prior to my successful application for an SSEAC grant, I was surprised by the level of support available to applicants. The centre's administrative team continued to support my project over 2016, organising several letters of introduction to partner universities and organisations. The media team patiently encouraged me to develop media responses at each stage of my work.”

**Dr Jane Gavan**  
Sydney College of the Arts

“I've been on two of SSEAC's field schools. These programs changed my view of the University. They allowed me to explore and study instead of simply repeating a metric of assignments.”

**Angus McDonald**  
graduate

“As part of the Honours Bootcamp, I had the opportunity to meet other students conducting research related to Southeast Asia. It was a wonderful experience, being able to learn about other interesting research and creating new, significant networks. We also had the opportunity to meet researchers and industry professionals who are experts on the region.”

**Nate Phumitharanon**  
PhD candidate, Sydney Business School

“SSEAC offers an opportunity for new and continuing postgraduate students to meet other students, allowing us to build supportive friendships and networks that last throughout our candidature.”

**Johanna Wong**  
PhD candidate, Veterinary Science



Governance

SSEAC Director, Professor Michele Ford is assisted by:

- Deputy Director Dr Thushara Dibley
- Deputy Director Dr Elisabeth Kramer
- Communications and Events Officer Imogen Champagne
- Administration Officer Minh Le.

This small team is governed by a Board of Management, and supported by our Executive Committee and Country Coordinators, as well as by our outgoing Postgraduate Coordinator, Natali Pearson, and incoming Postgraduate Coordinator, Michael Leadbetter.

SSEAC staff work closely with the University’s professional service units, including the Office of Global Engagement, International Services, Marketing and Communications, Sydney Ideas, other multidisciplinary research centres and Southeast Asia-related initiatives, as well as the University’s various faculties.

Board of Management		
Name	Division	
Professor Stephen Garton (Chair)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Provost)	
Professor Tyrone Carlin	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Registrar)	
Professor Duncan Ivison	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	
Professor Philippa Pattison	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)	
Professor Katherine Belov	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement)	
Professor Michele Ford	Director, Sydney Southeast Asia Centre	
Executive Committee		
Name	Faculty	Position
Dr Sandra Seno-Alday	Business School	Community Outreach Adviser
Associate Professor Russell Bush	Veterinary Science	Curriculum Adviser
Professor David Guest	Agriculture and Environment	Policy and Regional Outreach Advisers
Professor Kirsty Foster	Sydney Medical School	Policy and Regional Outreach Adviser
Professor Simon Butt	Sydney Law School	Research Adviser
Dr Damien Field	Agriculture and Environment	Research Training Adviser
Country Coordinators		
Country	Name	Discipline
Cambodia	Dr Daniel Penny	Geosciences
Indonesia	Dr Jeff Nielson	Geosciences
Laos	Professor Nick Enfield	Linguistics
Malaysia and Brunei	Professor Glen Davis	Exercise and Sport Science
Myanmar	Associate Professor Bill Pritchard	Geosciences
The Philippines	Professor Stephanie Short	Health Sciences
Singapore	Dr Yeow-Tong Chia	Education
Thailand	Dr Aim Sinpeng	Government and International Relations
Timor-Leste	Associate Professor Robyn Alders	Agriculture
Vietnam	Dr Jane Gavan	Contemporary Arts

Meet some of our people



Dr Elisabeth Kramer

Elisabeth joined SSEAC in 2015 as Deputy Director. She builds upon experience in the public service, teaching, development consulting and operations and logistics, as well as her research, to support the centre’s work.

After completing undergraduate studies at the University of Sydney, Elisabeth worked in international development while completing a Master of International and Community Development. Following an eye-opening stint as operations manager for a nationwide aid project in Afghanistan, she returned to academia in 2011 and completed a PhD in Indonesian politics.

Elisabeth plays a vital role at SSEAC, coordinating the day-to-day running of the centre, undergraduate field schools, research seminars and grant applications, and managing the centre’s external relations.

In her research, Elisabeth is exploring communication and identity, looking at ways to conceptualise the construction of identity through competing ideas of ‘self’ and ‘other’ within political and social movement campaigns.



Professor David Guest

David has been with SSEAC since its inception. As the Regional and Policy Engagement Adviser, he plays a key role in identifying and facilitating opportunities for University of Sydney academics and students to engage with Southeast Asia and vice versa.

David’s research interests naturally align with Southeast Asia related issues. His research focuses on how plants recognise and respond to potential pathogens, with the aim to apply this research knowledge to help farmers in tropical countries where disease losses are highest, such as Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand.

David has worked extensively with multidisciplinary teams including public health specialists, social scientists and veterinary scientist to develop practical integrated crop management strategies that improve the livelihoods of rural communities.

For David, the interdisciplinary approach practised by SSEAC is the only way forward for researchers looking to make a strong impact.



Danielle Somers

In her role as Director of the Office for Global Health at the University of Sydney Medical School, Danielle fosters strong regional connections in health-focused research and education within and outside the University.

She has travelled through Vietnam, Timor-Leste and Indonesia, and hosted many Southeast Asian students and researchers here at Sydney, developing key strategic relationships in regards to research and innovation, teaching and learning, the student experience and community engagement.

Danielle believes that Australian researchers have a social responsibility to engage in health projects with some of our nearest neighbours, but she also knows that engagement with Southeast Asia is at its best when it’s reciprocated.

One of her favourite aspects of her role is seeing Australian researchers and students work on research projects, medical placements or undertake exchange in the region, and come back with new experiences and fresh perspectives.

# ASEAN Forum

In 2016, SSEAC worked with the China Studies Centre to present the fourth annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Forum focused on the role of China in ASEAN. The forum featured experts from Australia, Southeast Asia and the United States discussing the processes, challenges and achievements of China’s engagement in Southeast Asia.

Dr Alice Ba, Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Delaware, delivered the keynote address. She outlined the opportunities and challenges for Southeast Asian states arising from China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’ economic agenda. The rest of the forum focused on three themes that lie at the heart of the ASEAN-China relationship: security; economic diplomacy; and Chinese diasporas in Southeast Asia.

The security panel addressed the ongoing tensions in the South China Sea and how this is affecting political, military and civil relations. Presenters included Associate Professor Jing Dong Yuan from the University of Sydney, Dr Merriden Varrall and Aaron Connelly from the Lowy Institute for International Policy in Sydney and Professor Renato Cruz De Castro from De La Salle University in the Philippines.

Speakers in the economic diplomacy panel discussed the benefits and challenges posed by increasing Chinese economic interests in Southeast Asia. Dr Pichamon Yeophantong from the University of New South Wales examined environmental aspects of economic investment in ASEAN while Dr Mike Fabinyi from the University of Technology Sydney focused on Chinese trade in ASEAN marine resources. Mr Chanborey Cheunboran from the University of Sydney’s Centre of International Security Studies spoke about the economic impact of China in Cambodia and Dr Jamie Reilly from the School of Political and Social Sciences spoke about China’s economic interests in Myanmar.

Each member of the panel about Chinese diasporas in Southeast Asia examined different countries. Dr Jayde Roberts from the University of Tasmania discussed Myanmar while Dr Chang-Yau Hoon from Universiti Brunei Darussalam spoke about Chinese Indonesians. Dr Hui Yew-Foong from the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore focused on Singaporean Chinese, and Professor Kasian Tejapira from Thammasat University in Thailand analysed the political affiliations of Sino-Thais.

PwC hosted the ASEAN Business Forum the night before the forum, featuring Dr Sandra Seno-Alday from the University of Sydney Business School and Professor Vivienne Bath from Sydney Law School, who spoke on trade networks and investment between ASEAN and China.



# Politics in Action

In May 2017, SSEAC hosted its second Politics in Action event, an annual get-together designed to provide short, sharp politics updates on countries throughout Southeast Asia.

Eight academics from around the world presented 20-minute talks on a variety of states in the region to an audience of academics and members of the public.

The event began with a keynote address from Professor Duncan MacCargo from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom, who presented some key trends in the region, including the rise of big personalities, mediated populism and an increasing nostalgia for authoritarianism.

This was followed by presentations on:

- Timor-Leste by Dr Maj Nygaard-Christensen, Aarhus University
- Myanmar by Professor Ardeth Maung Thawng, University of Massachusetts
- The Philippines by Associate Professor Aries Arugay, University of the Philippines
- Indonesia by Mr Thomas Power, Australian National University
- Vietnam by Dr Paul Schuler, University of Arizona
- Thailand by Dr Patrick Jory, University of Queensland.

The country updates were followed by a superb wrap-up by Dr Nicole Curato from the Centre of Deliberative Democracy at the University of Canberra, who emphasised the need to reconsider the extent to which elections reflect democratic progress and how political activity beyond elections plays into political change.



Capitalising on the expertise gathered for the public event, SSEAC also hosted targeted events for postgraduates and early-career researchers. Postgraduate students took a workshop on applying for academic jobs. At the early-career researcher day, academics explored the joys and challenges of supervising higher degree research students and applying for grants in the Australian context.

The three events provide a suite of activities that not only improves our understanding of Southeast Asia, but also gives SSEAC members an opportunity to meet and connect with colleagues who share their interest in Southeast Asia, both here at the University and at other Australian and international institutions. This is an integral aspect of the centre’s work as we strive to build and develop our shared interests in the Southeast Asian region.

We look forward to hosting this event again in 2018.

Politics in Action presenters came from around Australia and the world to give democratic updates on their country of expertise



# Thailand in Comparative Perspective

SSEAC hosted an international symposium on the theme of Thailand in Comparative Perspective in September 2016. The two-day event showcased insights and debate into the comparative outlook on recent developments in Thailand from a diverse body of knowledge.

The symposium aimed to produce a systematic comparative analysis of Thailand by examining eight core themes: politics and society; geography and environment; political economy; language and education; arts and culture; religion and society; history and historiography; and law and society.

Keynote speakers included Dr Anjalee Cohen from the University of Sydney, Dr Bjoern Dressel and Professor Peter Jackson from the Australian National University, and Dr Chavalin Svetanant from Macquarie University.

The broad range of themes encouraged participants to engage with Thailand across fields other than social science, resulting in an open and inclusive symposium. Visiting academics commented on the high quality of the papers presented as well as on the joy of watching senior academics, early career researchers and young scholars learn from each other.

‘Unlike many conferences, I felt that this one really did interrogate the theme. The overall quality of the papers was high. I was particularly impressed by a number of the younger Thai scholars. The size and timing were perfect. I don’t think I have attended another conference where the final session was fully attended!’

**Dr Patrick Jory**  
University of Queensland

The opening plenary session brought together scholars from diverse backgrounds and experiences for a roundtable discussion. Professor Philip Hirsch, Dr Patrick Jory, Dr Arjun Subrahmanyam and Dr Tyrell Haberkorn, along with moderator Dr Aim Sinpeng discussed Thai studies through the lens of geography, history and human rights and debated how each discipline could better engage with others to create a more robust field of studies.



Book launches over the two days included publications from Dr Jory’s *Thailand’s theory of monarchy: The Vessantara Jataka and the idea of the perfect man*, and Professor Peter Jackson’s *First queer voices from Thailand: Uncle Go’s advice columns for gays, lesbians and kathoeyes*.

The centre’s Country Coordinator for Thailand, Dr Aim Sinpeng, convened the symposium with support from Professor Hirsch. Having spent her childhood in Thailand and her academic career studying the politics of the country from a comparative perspective, Dr Sinpeng was encouraged to see that more than half the participants had come from Thailand.

At a time when academic freedom is under threat in their home country, a symposium of this size and theme reaffirmed the relevance of their research and highlighted the strong support and interest in Thai studies at the University of Sydney.



‘Thailand’, courtesy of Juan Antonio Segal via Flickr



## Other events

SSEAC hosts a wide variety of events each year, capitalising on local and international expertise to deliver public events that speak to our academic and associate memberships.

We partner with institutions across the University and beyond to build an events calendar that has something for everyone, as well as promoting events related to Southeast Asia hosted by our friends and colleagues in other organisations.

### What we did in 2016

In August, the centre partnered with the Philippines Consulate General and the Australia Philippines Business Council and guest of honour Her Excellency Minda Calaguian-Cruz, the Philippines Ambassador to Australia, to present research. A multidisciplinary expert panel discussed different ways in which unique Philippine contributions are inextricably woven into the fabric of Australian society.

In November 2016, we hosted a follow-up event exploring voices of Indigenous Australians of Filipino descent.

In September, SSEAC partnered with the Malaysia and Singapore Society of Australia to host the launch of Dr Poh Soo Kai's book, *Living in a Time of Deception*, a study of Singaporean history from the post-war period to 1965.

Also in September, we partnered with Sydney Ideas and the Department of Linguistics to host a panel on Forest Subcultures in Upland Laos. Speakers considered whether there are lessons to be learned from the low-impact lifestyle of Lao hill tribes.

In addition, we hosted two seminars related to our state and society cluster, hosting Dr Dan Slater from the University of Chicago and Dr Laode M Syarif of Indonesia's Anti-Corruption Commission.

Several SSEAC members were among the contributors to the *Routledge Handbook of the Environment in Southeast Asia*, edited by Professor Philip Hirsch. We hosted the book's launch in October 2016, where speakers discussed the importance of considering environmental issues from a range of disciplinary perspectives.

In November 2016, we hosted several events related to Indonesia. Dr Dian Fiantis of the University of Andalas in West Sumatra presented a seminar on the aftermath of volcanic eruptions, particularly in relation to soil composition and environmental regeneration.

The following week, we held a roundtable discussion on mental healthcare in Indonesia, co-hosted by the history and philosophy of science unit, with representatives from an Indonesian hospital and a advocate for patients.

Finally, we partnered with the team from the popular ABC television show *The Chaser* to host Indonesian comedian Sakdiyah Ma'ruf, winner of the 2015 Vaclav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent. In collaboration with our Sydney Ideas team, Sakdiyah talked with Julian Morrow about comedy, religion and where to draw the line.

### What we did in 2017

Our first events for the year were linked to our economic and social development cluster, with a presentation by the University's Dr Dyah Pitaloka on the leadership strategies used by rural women in Indonesia with type 2 diabetes. Dr Ben Belton of Michigan State University presented data from the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy, focusing on rural transformation in Myanmar.

In March, we hosted two pre-eminent scholars from the United States: Professor Joe Errington of Yale University and Professor Aihwa Ong from the University of California at Berkeley.

Professor Errington, a linguist, presented his theory of Indonesian as an 'un-native' language, while Professor Ong presented insights from her latest book, *Fungible Life: Experiment in the Asian City of Life*. Both speakers offered our postgraduate students valuable advice on conducting field research.

Partnering with the Research for Development Impact Network and Sydney Ideas, SSEAC's Deputy Director Dr Thushara Dibley interviewed Oxfam UK Senior Strategic Adviser Dr Duncan Green on his most recent book *How Change Happens*.

Dr Green discussed his experiences in international development, sharing his views on topics such as the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, power relationships between governments, international and local non-government organisations (NGOs), and the impact of decreasing government funding for development projects.

In May, we hosted the launch of the book *Fieldwork in Timor-Leste: Understanding Social Change Through Practice*, co-edited by Dr Angie Bexley and Dr Maj Nygaard-Christensen.

In conversation with Dr Thushara Dibley, Dr Nygaard-Christensen described the motivation for bringing together chapters from a range of researchers of different disciplinary backgrounds. The launch underscored the book's broad appeal to audiences outside of academia who are also interested in Timor-Leste's political, social and economic transitions since independence.

Also in May, SSEAC presented a seminar on 50 years of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in collaboration with Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The event featured Malaysia's Permanent Representative to ASEAN, Her Excellency Dato' Shariffah Norhana Bt Syed Mustafa and Singapore's Permanent Representative, His Excellency Tan Hung Seng, discussing ASEAN's history and future. Their talk touched upon Australia-ASEAN engagement as well as the ASEAN Economic Community and issues of regional security.

This public forum followed a high-level roundtable involving all the permanent representatives to ASEAN and senior representatives from universities across the greater Sydney region, chaired by the University of Sydney's Registrar, Professor Tyrone Carlin.



Sakdiyah Ma'ruf in conversation with Julian Morrow from *The Chaser*



## Investing in Women

SSEAC is partnering with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on a \$46 million project to promote women's economic empowerment in Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Vietnam.

In collaboration with the Business School's Women and Work Research Group, SSEAC has assembled a high-powered multidisciplinary team involving Professor Marian Baird (work and organisational studies), Professor Michele Ford (Southeast Asian studies), Dr Elizabeth Hill (political economy) and Dr Sandra Seno-Alday (international business).

This team is working within and across disciplines to fill the knowledge gap around women, work and entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia.

This project is an example of how SSEAC seeks to leverage expertise across the University to secure research funding, facilitate ground-breaking academic work and assist in its translation in ways that make it accessible to policy-makers and other stakeholders in Australia and in the region.

### Introducing: Dr Sandra Seno-Alday

**Dr Sandra Seno-Alday from the Sydney Business School is a key member of SSEAC's Investing in Women team.**

After 15 years in the corporate sector specialising in international business development and organisation in Southeast Asia, Dr Sandra Seno-Alday wanted to take her work to the next level.

Having completed a PhD in International Business at the University of Sydney, Dr Seno-Alday is now a lecturer at Sydney Business School and a member of the SSEAC Executive.

As part of her research into international businesses, Dr Seno-Alday is interested in women in leadership in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. She is especially fascinated by relationships and connections, one of SSEAC's key concerns. "The centre helped me feed my interest in regional relationship networks in Southeast Asia," she says.



## Australia Awards Fellowships

The University of Sydney is committed to enhancing collaborations with the Southeast Asian region through training and development programs for participants from countries in the region.

As part of this commitment, the University hosts several Australia Awards Fellowship (AAF) programs, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which aim to deepen and broaden links with leaders and professionals in other countries.

The AAF programs are an excellent opportunity to build deep connections with colleagues in Southeast Asia, as fellows spend an extended period in Australia and work closely with academic staff at the University.

In Round 16, the University received funding for six programs involving Southeast Asian participants.

Training focus	Country	Number of fellows
Training for GPs	Myanmar	15
Safety and sustainability of food systems	Africa/Asia, including the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Vietnam	15
Inclusive schooling	Indonesia	15
Leadership and equality training	Indonesia	15
Medical research capacity building	Vietnam	15
Medical education and research	Vietnam	15
Total		90

In a recent program organised by the Office for Global Health, medical staff from Vietnam came to Australia to develop their clinical research skills. Building on skills developed during an SSEAC-funded clinical research workshop in Vietnam in November 2016, this fellowship aimed to:

- expose participants to clinical research in Australia and help them to gain a realistic understanding of different ways to conduct research
- help participants understand the team nature of research and experience various processes involved
- produce a detailed study research protocol to be implemented when participants returned to their home institutions
- inspire participants to become clinical researchers and improve healthcare in Vietnam.

Professor Arthur Conigrave speaking to the Australia Awards Fellows; image courtesy of the Office for Global Health





## Southeast Asia: Emerging nuclear states

Associate Professor Justin Hastings from the Department of Government and International Relations has been awarded an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship to investigate how illicit networks might proliferate by tapping into the legitimate global spread of nuclear materials and dual-use technologies – components that can be used for civil society or warfare.

This project will use an economic and geographic framework to conceptually integrate terrorists, criminals and rogue companies into nuclear-related trade networks and assess the nuclear proliferation threat illicit networks pose in emerging civil nuclear states.

Associate Professor Hastings will create a map charting the points of nuclear trade worldwide. Through collaboration with researchers from the Georgia Institute of Technology in the United States and nuclear engineers from the Korean Institute of Science and Technology, the project will identify which links in the chain might be vulnerable to bad actors and assess how this vulnerability might be mitigated.

Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia will be used within an economic-geographical framework as examples of emerging nuclear states to determine where vulnerabilities occur in the nuclear trade process. All three countries have a substantial and growing nuclear trade within the region and further afield, with limited safeguards at this point.

The fellowship will culminate in a workshop in Singapore at which governments and industry from emerging nuclear states within the region will discuss best-practice procedures and safeguards for the trade of nuclear materials and dual-trade technologies.

Australia is one of the world's largest exporters of uranium as well as a considerable amount of dual-use technologies. This project and workshop aim to give the Australian Government and other regional actors confidence that when they ship out these potentially catastrophic materials, they won't be hijacked by illicit networks within the region or re-exported to rogue states.

By minimising proliferation risks, the project will ultimately improve the capacity of the Australian Government and industry to participate in the global nuclear trade by increasing the effectiveness of strategic trade controls and nuclear materials security.



Image courtesy of UNIS Vienna via Flickr

## Southeast Asia: Integrating language and society

Dr Nerida Jarkey from the School of Languages and Cultures has been awarded an Australian Research Council Discovery Project grant to investigate language and lifestyle differences.



Dr Jarkey is concerned with the ways in which speakers use grammar to convey meaning, and how this might relate to cognition, culture and the expression of social identity.

This interest makes her well placed to be a lead investigator in her new ARC Discovery Project, 'The integration of language and society', which will study related groups in areas of Papua New Guinea, Africa, Asia, Amazonia and Australia in contrasting physical and social environments.

In 2015, Dr Jarkey was awarded a SSEAC conference grant to present a paper at the 25th annual meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistic Society (SEALS) on an aspect of grammar in the Southeast Asian minority language of White Hmong. The paper drew

on rigorous topological research of the language that is highly relevant to the new project, which will study the associations between the substantial social and lifestyle differences between human societies, and the particular features of the structure of their languages.

The project's aim is to provide insights into the human dynamic by drawing inductive generalisations concerning significant associations between societal and language parameters, for example, varying techniques of address relating to kin systems and social hierarchy.

It is unique in its capacity to traverse such a wide landscape of languages due to the breadth of the collaboration.

The two other lead investigators are Professor Alexandra Aikhenvald and Professor Robert Dixon from James Cook University. The three will be aided by partner investigators Professor Anne Storch of University of Cologne and Professor Maarten Mous from Leiden University.

The only Southeast Asian linguist in the group, Dr Jarkey feels that her ongoing research on a minority language is partly thanks to feeling valued and supported by the institution she works in.

"SSEAC has helped me feel that my research on White Hmong is really part of my core business, and is genuinely valued by the institution, not just something I do on the side," she says.

Image courtesy of Mor via Flickr



## Cambodia: Redefining collapse

Professor Roland Fletcher, Director of the Angkor Research Program has been awarded a five-year Australian Research Council Discovery Project grant to investigate the demise of the ancient city of Angkor to uncover potentially serious global implications for our future.

Research on Angkor has been upending conventional beliefs regarding the ancient city for the past 20 years. Now, in a new stage of research, this project aims to build on the previous 20 years of interdisciplinary work on the region to discover what happened to the people of Angkor after the destruction of their city and what it could mean for low-density cities facing climate change in the present day.

Since 1998, the Angkor Research Program has been the cornerstone of the University of Sydney's engagement with Cambodia. Researchers from across the University have determined that the city of Angkor was a gigantic, low-density urban centre and the site of an extensive canal system. The system's purpose was to control excess water and distribute it to the surrounding rice fields, thus levelling out the risk of instability in a region marked by intermittent drought and monsoon.



While incredibly innovative for its time, the system was nevertheless irreparably damaged by the unprecedented amount of water brought on by the mega-monsoons characteristic of the extreme period of climate change that marked the transition of the Warm Medieval period of the 14th century to the Little Ice Age of the 16th century.

With the destruction of the infrastructure that held the city together, the population dispersed. The ruling class and elite resettled in the modern-day capital of Phnom Penh, continuing in present-day Cambodia. Angkor and the whole of the central heartland was abandoned. The landscape, which had been developed and transformed to accommodate a gigantic settlement, reverted to forest and small-scale farmland. In the centuries to follow, a new arc of urbanisation occurred, following the Mekong River from the southeast of the country up and around Tonle Sap Lake in the northwest.

For five years (starting 2017), the Angkor Research Program led by Professor Fletcher will ask: Why did the heartland empty out? What happened to the people of Angkor? And what does this mean for present-day, low-density industry cities facing climate change?

The findings will be immensely important for industrial cities such as Sydney, Shanghai and London. Like Angkor, these cities were created through a massive re-engineering of the landscape, are dependent on infrastructure of an irreparable scale and are facing a period of climate instability.

According to Professor Fletcher, if these cities fail in the same pattern as Angkor, history tells us it may not merely mean a dispersal of population, but a clearing out of a region's heartland with potentially catastrophic consequences. This groundbreaking research will uncover a phenomenon the world needs to understand to find out if we are all at risk.

Professor Roland Fletcher on site in Angkor

## Vietnam: Combating chronic disease

Dr Greg Fox, a Senior Lecturer in Respiratory Medicine and member of the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research, has received a National Health and Medical Research Council grant to research and implement an integrated health-sector strategy to combat chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma in Vietnam.

As an implementation research project, the overall aim is to develop the evidence required to reduce the burden of COPD in Vietnam and engage local and national policymakers in translating the established protocols into new practices and policy that can ultimately be applied widely across the region.

The five-year project will take place over three phases:

1. Stakeholder engagement to analyse current policies and practices
2. A stepped-intervention cluster randomised trial
3. Translation of the findings of the trial into evidence that informs policy and practice.

One of the University of Sydney Medical School's key affiliated research groups, the Woolcock Institute has strong ties to hospitals and research centres in Vietnam. Dr Fox has previously worked extensively in the country as part of the Woolcock's tuberculosis (TB) program and has been part of five successful, competitive research grants in his time there.

In Vietnam, one of the 15 high-burden TB countries in the world, more than 130,000 people contract the bacterial lung disease every year. Efforts to combat TB in Vietnam have high public-health importance for Australia

as Vietnam is the third-largest carrier of TB to Australia. But this is not the only reason academics and physicians are investing in Vietnam.

"The Vietnamese health system provides a context in which you can implement real system change," Dr Fox says. As a middle-income country in Southeast Asia with a hierarchical health system, Vietnam has the capacity to change policy and practice and lead the way in the region.



The research team for the new project includes Associate Professor Joel Negin, Head of the Sydney School of Public Health, and Professor Guy Marks from the South Western Sydney Clinical School at the University of New South Wales and the Woolcock Institute, as well as the directors and heads of key national health bodies in Vietnam and 55 local clinical staff.

The randomised trials for the research project will take place at 40 clinics throughout Vietnam, with 1000 participants during the first phase and about 3000 overall.

Dr Greg Fox examining a chest X-ray at a district TB clinic in Vietnam



## Laos: Stabilising ethnic boundaries

Professor Nick Enfield from the Department of Linguistics has been awarded an Australian Research Council Discovery Project grant for a study of language and ethnic boundaries.

The Nam Noy Valley lies in upland Laos. Three different communities call this valley home, living and working in close proximity. They insist on maintaining their linguistic and ethnic differences despite sharing land and resources and maintaining structured social relations through participation in each other's rituals, practices and social events.

It's these three linguistically distinct communities and their interethnic stability that have captured the interest of Professor Nick Enfield, Chair of the Department of Linguistics and SSEAC country coordinator for Laos.

The inhabitants of the Nam Noy Valley and their distinct languages: Kri, Sek and Bru, will be the chief focus of the ARC Discovery grant project, 'Do language boundaries stabilise ethnic boundaries?', which will run from mid-2017 to 2020.

The project has three interrelated, overlapping strands. The first builds on Professor Enfield's existing work on the Kri language and involves two of his PhD students writing grammars on the languages of Sek and Bru, and an integrated study of the extent and nature of social interrelations among the groups.

In the second strand, investigative partners from Hong Kong University and Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, will make a detailed qualitative assessment of the degree of convergence among the three languages. Finally, the investigators will use a newly developed framework to test possible causal explanations of the role of language in maintaining or reinforcing stable ethnic boundaries.

The project aims to provide a better understanding of the mechanisms underlying ethnic and cultural diversity. In this particular case, the project will explore whether distinct language boundaries between geographically close communities strengthens the existing cultural and ethnic divide.

In terms of ongoing impact, according to Professor Enfield the study will provide a better understanding of the causes and consequences of ethnic diversity. In Australia and worldwide. Overcoming poor inter-ethnic communications can help to maximise people's social and economic participation in society and thereby help to secure Australia's place in a changing world.

Image courtesy of Nick Enfield via thekri.org



## Indonesia: Volcanic soil fertility



Image courtesy of Matthew Webb

In 2016, Professor Budiman Minasny from the School of Life and Environmental Sciences was awarded a Sydney Southeast Asia Centre Regional Mobility grant to collaborate with Dr Dian Fiantis of Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia, on characterising the geochemical properties of volcanic ash samples collected from various volcanoes in Indonesia.

Volcanic eruptions are a natural phenomenon that can have catastrophic consequences for humans and wildlife, but their aftermath leads to some of the most productive soils in the world. These soils have the capacity to sustain high human population densities, such as Indonesia's 255 million.

Using instruments available at the Soil Security Laboratory at the University of Sydney, Dr Fiantis analysed samples of volcanic ash to collect data to determine how this ash contributes to soil fertility in volcanic regions. The analysis contributed to the basic science of soil formation, and the quantification of geochemical properties of volcanic soils will lead to a better understanding of the global significance of Indonesia's soil. Findings from the analysis and collaboration led to several publications in international journals as well as presentations at conferences around the world.

Professor Minasny went on to secure a SSEAC Sabbatical Visitors Grant to host Dr Fiantis in Sydney in November 2016. Their work in Sydney and surrounding areas has provided a valuable opportunity to derive new theories on soil diversity.

"The funding allowed Dr Dian Fiantis to work in our laboratory on soils formed from recent volcanic activities in Indonesia," Professor Minasny explains. "These new materials are a contrast to the old and weathered landscape of Australia. Knowing how soils formed from time zero enabled us to reconstruct the history of the soil and made us aware of the fragility of our soils."

Dr Fiantis gave a public presentation with SSEAC in November 2016. In her seminar, 'The aftermath of volcanic eruption: How ashes turn into productive soils and support Indonesia's dense population', Dr Fiantis explored what volcanic ash is, how it can make fertile soil, and its role in capturing carbon from the atmosphere.

Collaborative research such as this between the University of Sydney and Universitas Andalas, the oldest university in Indonesia outside Java, has a strong impact and will serve as a reference for other scientists working on volcanic ashes and soils both in Indonesia and around the world.



Grants

A hallmark of the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre is its support for research excellence by experts on Southeast Asia.

We support researchers from across the University of Sydney seeking to engage with Southeast Asia through a grant scheme offering funding in the fields of research, mobility, language, and school engagement. Many of our members are also awarded high-profile national and international grants.

Grants are provided to seed projects in the centre’s five areas of research strength, to support research excellence and encourage academic collaboration with researchers in the region and further afield.

In the 2016-17 year, 48 grants were made to University of Sydney academics and their collaborators.

Our flagship grant program is our Cluster Research Grant, which aims to provide a pathway for new academic projects on Southeast Asia or for scholars who are engaging in the region for the first time.

Cluster Research Grants awarded in 2016-17

Cluster	Topic	Recipient	Faculty
Economic and social development	Weaving it all behind? An ethnography of a northern Thai village	Dr Non Arkaraprasertkul	Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning
Environment and resources	Rapid identification of emerging pathogens in marine aquaculture	Dr Paul Hick	Science
Health	Harnessing women’s social networks to improve maternal and child nutrition behaviours in East Java, Indonesia	Dr Neeloy Alam	Sydney Medical School
	An assessment of the acceptability and implementation of the Indonesian Mental Health Act (2014)	PENDING Dr Nikolaos Tiliopoulos	Science
Heritage and the arts	Opera as a maritime trade: Chinese theatre in Southeast Asia	Dr Josh Stenberg	Arts and Social Sciences
State and society	Identifying socio-cultural risks of adolescent pregnancy in East Indonesia	Dr Sarah Bernays	Sydney Medical School

Our Workshop Grant program supports international meetings that lead to a special journal edition, an edited book on a topic related to Southeast Asia, or a substantial policy intervention.

Workshop Grants awarded in 2016-17

Recipient	Faculty	Workshop
Professor Warwick Anderson	Arts and Social Sciences	History of medicine in Southeast Asia
Dr Aim Sinpeng	Arts and Social Sciences	Internet, politics and democracy in Southeast Asia
Professor Luke Nottage	Law	International investment arbitration across (Southeast) Asia
Professor Bill Pritchard	Science	Is Myanmar different? The social and economic drivers of change in rural Myanmar placed in global context
Associate Professor David Wang	Engineering and Information Technologies	Sustainable membrane processes for synergistic energy and water applications

Other grants awarded in 2016-17

Category	No. awarded	Countries
Conference (Academic) for papers on Southeast Asia	3	Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand
Conference (PhD) for papers on Southeast Asia	14	Philippines, Spain, Indonesia, Vietnam, United States, Taiwan, Melbourne, Malaysia
Mobility	5	Brunei, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Southeast Asia, Malaysia
Research Capacity Building	2	Myanmar, Indonesia
Sabbatical Visitor	2	Malaysia, United States
Schools	7	Indonesia, Southeast Asia
Visiting PhD Scholar	5	Singapore, United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Netherlands

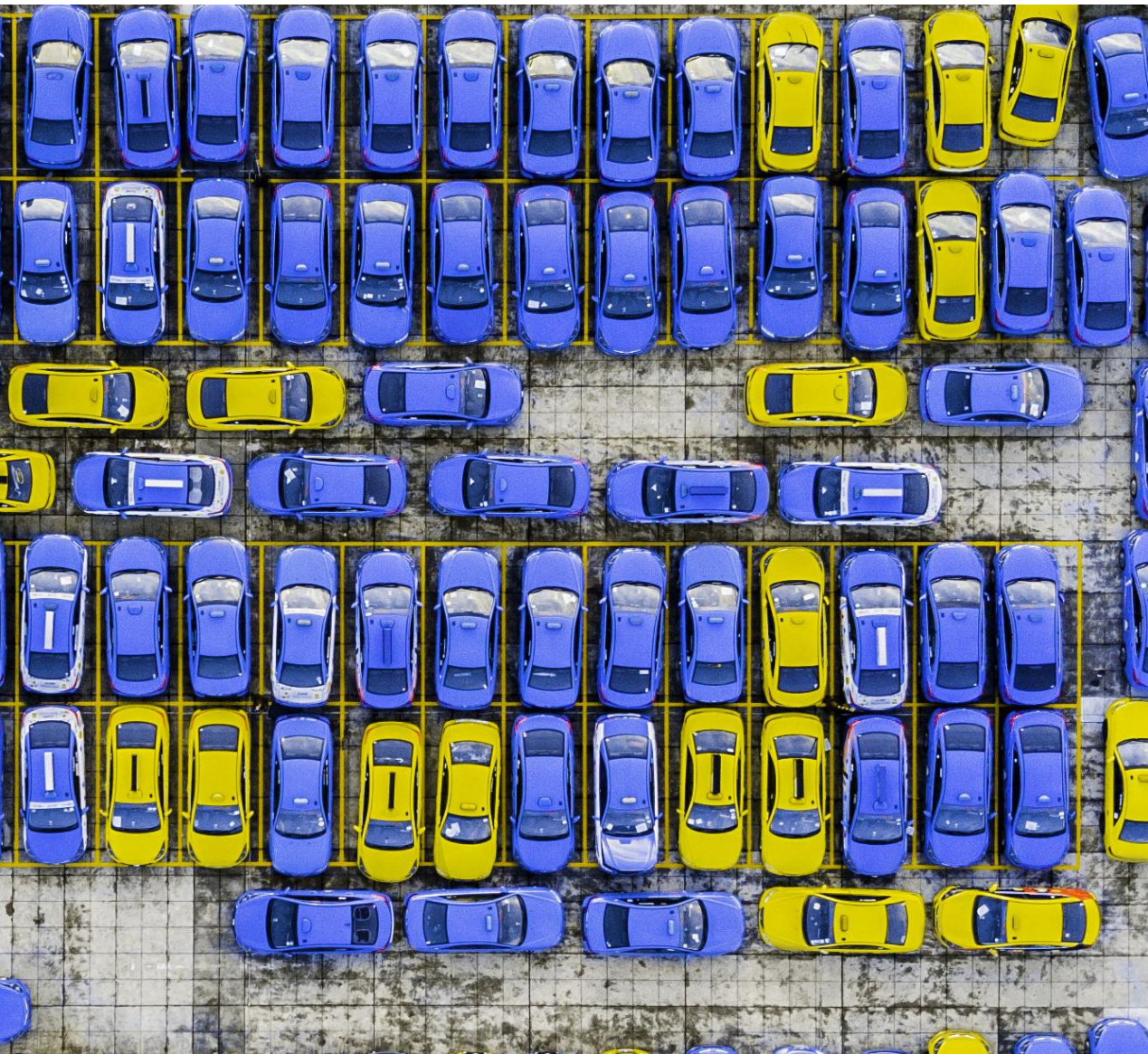


Image courtesy of Shenal Murray



## Connecting women in Indonesia and Australia

Through its leadership training for the Indonesian women's movement, SSEAC is creating links between Indonesian and Australian activists, and contributing to a deeper understanding of the universality of the struggles faced by women around the world.

The centre ran its second leadership training course for emerging leaders from the Indonesian women's movement from 22 January to 3 February 2017. Funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the training is part of the Australian Government's Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction (MAMPU) program.

The leadership training course aims to improve the leadership, organisational and advocacy skills of participants by providing interactive sessions focused on practical skills and introducing participants to organisations and individuals working on similar issues in Australia.

While in Sydney, the women met with various representatives from Australian organisations working on women's issues in the private, government and community sector. The guest speakers shared their insights into issues ranging from the laws and systems in place protecting women in Australia to the way women's groups in Australia have engaged with government to

campaign about domestic violence. This also provided the participants with insights into Australia's NGO sector, and into the similarities and differences between women's activism in Australia and Indonesia.

Participants were surprised that Australian women face many of the same challenges. "It turns out that there still exists a culture of patriarchy and women's activists here are struggling for almost the same issues [as us]," one Indonesian participant said.

The Australian women who met with the Indonesian leaders benefited from meeting their counterparts. Dr Nina Berry from the Australian Breastfeeding Association, who spoke about fundraising strategies and extended campaigns, was "impressed by the passion and dedication of women I met – their courage and their tenacity inspired me".

Hannah Gissane from the Equality Rights Alliance said she learned from "seeing the women's rights movement outside of the context I know so well. I found it very useful to be in a space where we could share the tools and strategies we're all using to address gender equality issues."

Like many of the centre's programs, the women's leadership training offers not only an opportunity for participants to develop their skillset, but also contributes to deepening the connections and mutual understanding between communities in Australia and Southeast Asia.

## A healthy partnership: Sydney and UNICEF

One in three of Indonesia's 255 million residents is below the age of 18, so the health of Indonesian children and adolescents is a central focus for the nation.

In February 2017, the University of Sydney entered into a knowledge partnership with UNICEF Indonesia with the aim of helping Indonesia to alleviate poverty, protect the environment and ensure more widely shared prosperity under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The partnership is committed to developing research capacity through connections with Indonesian institutes and universities. It will also connect researchers, practitioners and policymakers to establish baseline data about health issues in Indonesia.

Earlier in the year, University of Sydney Professor of International Public Health Mu Li and Lecturer in Health Policy Dr Anne Marie Thow travelled to Indonesia to conduct a nutrition policy review.

Data from this project will enable UNICEF to engage with the Indonesian Government to strengthen its investment in nutrition. It's just the beginning of the partnership's focus on adolescent nutrition in the region.

Investing in nutrition is essential for development. Indonesia simultaneously experiences a high burden of undernutrition and high rates of obesity, with increasing rates of diet-related chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes. As nutritional status and eating behaviours acquired during adolescence have important implications for health and wellbeing



throughout a person's lifespan, this life stage provides a window of opportunity for a successful transition into healthy adulthood.

Maternal and child health is another factor central to this partnership. Educating women is one of the best ways to ensure a family has strong health practices throughout their lives. In a country where more than half the population is under 30 years of age, focusing on children and adolescents an investment in the future.

The partnership will also benefit University of Sydney students by providing in-country experiences with UNICEF, which has been a trusted development partner with the Indonesian Government for more than 60 years.



Indonesian women leaders at the University of Sydney

Image courtesy of Matthew Webb



## Next generation of research excellence

### The Sydney Southeast Asia Centre is committed to developing the skills and networks of the next generation of Southeast Asia scholars.

We do this through a range of innovative professional development programs for honours and postgraduate students. These annual programs enhance the University of Sydney's reputation as a hub for developing expertise on and within the region.

#### Honours Bootcamp

Each year, SSEAC holds an Honours Bootcamp for students from around Australia who are working on a topic related to Southeast Asia. In 2016, the bootcamp drew students researching topics ranging from livestock ownership in Timor-Leste to the culture of the Thai manufacturing industry.

Honours students from the University of Sydney welcomed their counterparts from the University of New South Wales, the University of Queensland, Monash University and Deakin University for a three-day program where they honed their presentation skills, learned about publishing and discussed career pathways.

"Following the SSEAC Bootcamp, I have greater confidence in my presentation skills, a clear and concise thesis argument, and a long list of new and inspiring contacts," says Emily Donald from the University of Queensland.

#### Postgraduate Retreat

In 2016, SSEAC's annual Postgraduate Retreat focused on interdisciplinary collaboration. Participants met a number of academics who discussed the challenges and opportunities associated with collaborating across disciplines and across countries, before embarking on a collaborative project with other students in the cohort.

Students learned about the principles of teaching, then developed a unit of study designed for higher degree research students learning about collaboration.

"The retreat was hugely beneficial to my professional development and a way of connecting with my higher degree research peers," one student said.

#### Three-Minute Thesis

Higher degree research students also participated in the second annual Three Minute Thesis competition, which was held at the ASEAN Forum.

Postgraduate students were asked to present a compelling oration on their thesis topic and its significance in just three minutes in front of a panel and their peers.

The winner, Regina de Gracia, presented the results of her research into the development of reasoning and emotional management skills among deaf people in the Philippines. Participating in the competition, Regina explains, means she can now "confidently talk about my work with others without fear of being too technical or tortuous ... in less than three minutes."



2016 Three Minute Thesis Challenge Runner Up, Rosariah Indah

## Postgraduate profile: Hendri Yulius

Sexuality has never been acknowledged as a basis for citizenship rights in Indonesia, so how can the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movement go beyond identity politics to secure rights across an incredibly diverse demographic?

An activist, writer and master's student in Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney, Hendri Yulius aims to answer this question in his research project. His thesis, with the working title of 'Intimate assemblages: the rise of sexual citizenship and LGBT political identities in Indonesia', draws mainly from Yulius's years of experience with LGBT issues in Indonesia.

Yulius became involved in local gender and sexuality landscapes in Jakarta as an undergraduate student in 2009 before obtaining a Master of Public Policy from the National University of Singapore. He was selected as one of the Global Youth Advisors for the United Nations Population Fund New York, 2009-10, then worked for the United Nations Development Programme Indonesia on sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

In early 2016, the United Nations program on LGBT issues was scrapped. Yulius pinpoints this time as the peak of anti-LGBT hysteria in Indonesia. The scrapping of the program was also a catalyst that led him to the research he is conducting at the University of Sydney.

As part of his research, Yulius interviewed local LGBT organisations, international humanitarian organisations and government officials. He also analysed historical archives to help him understand why, when and how the LGBT identity emerged in Indonesia, what drivers enable it, and why it is increasingly perceived as a political identity.

Gender and sexuality activists in Indonesia are part of a larger, transnationally connected movement. Nevertheless, the term LGBT, alongside its identity politics, frequently obscures multiplicities and

differences among Indonesians with non-normative genders and sexualities who do not always embrace LGBT identities. Further, the overemphasis on sexual identity potentially limits understanding of the intersectionality between ethnicity, social class and religion that complicates their lives and the discriminations they experience.

Yulius supports a pragmatic way forward: a shift beyond a political identity framework that puts visible sexuality and gender in the spotlight and treats them as a single vector to a consideration of diverse ways of gaining acceptance and protection.



Yulius says that the support he has received through SSEAC has been invaluable to his research. In 2016, he was invited to co-write, with Sharyn Graham Davies, a chapter for Professor Michele Ford and Dr Thushara Dibley's upcoming book, *Activists in Transition*. His chapter, titled, 'The unfulfilled promise of democracy: gay and lesbian activism in Indonesia', provided a bridge to Yulius's current research project, while workshopping ideas and research with the centre's academics has helped shape his research approach.

Image courtesy of Benson Kua via Flickr



## Connections through cooking

Every year, SSEAC offers small grants to primary and high schools throughout Australia to develop programs that introduce students to Southeast Asian studies and culture. These grants are designed to encourage young people to explore regional cultures with the aim of building greater understanding between Australia and its closest neighbours.

In 2016, one of SSEAC's school grants was awarded to the Cleveland Street Intensive English High School to run an Indonesian cooking class for students in a vocational education and training hospitality elective.

The school used the grant to expand an existing program in which students prepare and serve a weekly vegetarian meal to staff and students. The teacher running the program, Mr Louie Racht, engaged an Indonesian teacher to work with the students to prepare Indonesian chicken soup (*soto ayam*). According to Mr Racht, the students "loved the food, loved the cooking, and loved the teacher – it was an excellent day".

Cleveland Street Intensive English High School welcomes new migrants, refugees and international students who study English intensively in preparation for transitioning into the Australian school system or workplace. The cooking class offers a way for students to develop their language skills while gaining work skills such as customer service, workplace safety and hygiene, and cash handling. Importantly, the class also encourages students to work together as a team in a multicultural environment.

The Indonesian teacher Mrs Relyta Neilson not only taught the students how to make *soto ayam*, but also shared with them her story of migrating to Australia from Indonesia with minimal English language skills and very few connections to Australian communities.

Now, Mrs Neilson is a fluent English speaker and actively involved in her children's school and the broader community in which she lives. Mr Racht said Mrs Neilson's experience of migration was inspiring for his students, all of whom are recent migrants to Australia from countries including Brazil, China, Iraq and Mongolia.

"It was very, very good because I like the food. It was beautiful food and Mrs Relyta was really fun."

**Jonathan, student**

"It was the best day in school and the food was great. I never ate this food before in my country."

**Gorgees, student**



Food preparation with Indonesian teacher, Mrs Relyta Neilson



With more than 300 academics working on and in the 11 countries of Southeast Asia, the University of Sydney has one of the highest concentrations of regional expertise in the world.

From its central position within the University, the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre offers an innovative and engaged approach that reflects the region's complexity and recognises its importance to Australia's future.

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