

# Sydney Southeast Asia Centre

2017-18 Yearbook

## Contact us

[sydney.edu.au/sseac](mailto:sydney.edu.au/sseac)

+61 2 9114 0953

[sseac@sydney.edu.au](mailto:sseac@sydney.edu.au)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**





We acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country.



Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®) is a globally recognised certification overseeing all fibre sourcing standards. This provides guarantees for the consumer that products are made of woodchips from well-managed forests and other controlled sources with strict environmental, economical and social standards.

# Sydney Southeast Asia Centre

2017-18 Yearbook

## Contact us

sydney.edu.au/sseac  
+61 2 9114 0953  
sseac@sydney.edu.au



## Discover

### Welcome

|  |   |
|--|---|
| A message from the Vice-Chancellor ..... | 2 |
| A message from the Director .....        | 3 |

### About us

|   |   |
|---|---|
| About the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre..... | 4 |
| Governance .....                            | 6 |
| Meet some of our people .....               | 7 |

### Highlights

|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| ASEAN Forum 2017 .....              | 8  |
| Politics in Action .....            | 9  |
| ASEAN-Australia Dialogue 2018 ..... | 10 |
| Other events.....                   | 12 |
| Fostering high-impact research..... | 14 |

## Research

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Myanmar: Garment workers.....   | 15 |
| Southeast Asia: Nature-society transformations .....                      | 16 |
| Southeast Asia: The changing legalities of new<br>gene technologies ..... | 17 |
| How we support research excellence.....                                   | 18 |

## Engagement

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Expanding collaboration in the region..... | 21 |
| Australia Awards Fellowships .....         | 22 |
| Building stronger ties with Cambodia.....  | 23 |

## Education

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Interdisciplinary field schools.....         | 25 |
| Next generation of research excellence ..... | 26 |
| Back to the future - past meets present..... | 27 |
| Reaching out to schools.....                 | 28 |

# A message from the Vice-Chancellor



The Sydney Southeast Asia Centre (SSEAC) exemplifies the University's commitment to creating and sustaining a culture of research excellence and a distinctive Sydney education built on values of excellence and engagement for the benefit of Australia and the wider world.

SSEAC's education initiatives have positioned it to make a valuable contribution to our new curriculum, with its emphasis on challenging our students at the boundaries of their developing expertise and at the points where disciplines intersect.

SSEAC's flagship interdisciplinary field schools inspire students to look not only beyond Australia, but beyond their respective disciplines. In the process, they develop their critical thinking, cultural competence and interdisciplinary effectiveness in ways that complement the learning that takes place in our lecture halls and classrooms.

SSEAC is also working to build the next generation of research excellence through online learning tools designed to support our student researchers and face-to-face programs for research students from around Australia.

In the research domain, SSEAC makes an important contribution to the realisation of the University's commitment to multidisciplinary research, networks and partnerships, with the aim of generating research that is not only excellent but which improves people's lives.

SSEAC's research grants seed projects within and across the disciplines, which members can use to develop a new research agenda or to secure external funding. A new incubator program will further support the work of emerging scholars and multidisciplinary teams. Meanwhile, SSEAC's mobility schemes facilitate engagement with researchers from the region and from international centres of excellence for the study of Southeast Asia.

I am also pleased to note SSEAC's willingness and ability to take a leadership role in the academy and beyond – particularly through its innovative programs for early career researchers from across Australia and its training programs for women activists and activists with disabilities in the region.

These programs put the University's values into practice and demonstrate the real-world benefits of our knowledge of, and networks in, Southeast Asia.

The University recently renewed its commitment to SSEAC for a second five-year term and we look forward to continuing collaborations with our Southeast Asian regional partners.

**Dr Michael Spence**  
Vice-Chancellor and Principal  
The University of Sydney

# A message from the Director

Thanks for joining us to celebrate another year of achievements by SSEAC and its members.

Highlights this year include a series of new Australian Research Council and other grants on Southeast Asia topics and our involvement in the ASEAN–Australia Dialogue, held in March 2018 in the lead-up to the first-ever Australia–ASEAN leaders summit. I trust you will enjoy reading about these and other highlights in the pages that follow.

Before you do, though, I would like to reflect a little on SSEAC's future. Last year we completed our first five-year review. Based on the Review Committee's resounding endorsement, the University Executive signed off on a second five-year term, which will run from 2019 to 2023. Thus, having spent a great deal of time reflecting on our past, we are now looking to our future.

As I observed in my director's welcome last year, SSEAC embodies the University's core values of excellence and inclusiveness.

Another core value is our commitment to lead by example as we forge new paths for engagement with our region. These core values are at the heart of our new strategic plan, which focuses on three key goals:

- transforming the University's research engagement with Southeast Asia
- equipping our students to engage in meaningful and ethical ways in Southeast Asia
- positioning the University as a change agent in Australia's relationship with the region.

We will pursue our first goal by continuing to support excellent research in and on Southeast Asia. Our efforts will focus on empowering emerging scholars and multidisciplinary research teams.

We will invest in targeted postdoctoral positions and programs to support early career researchers and seed multidisciplinary teams, and continue to champion research that transforms the lives of



people in the region. We will also strive to position the University of Sydney as a driver of global scholarly networks on Southeast Asia.

Our strategy for the second goal focuses on embedding a Southeast Asia perspective in the University of Sydney's distinctive education. We are committed to supporting the University's 2020 mobility target of having 50 percent of our students undertake some study overseas, through our award-winning interdisciplinary field schools.

We will continue to provide students with a supportive learning environment for multidisciplinary engagement with the region through our honours bootcamps and our postgraduate retreats, and will increase our efforts to foster networks of students and graduates with a shared interest in Southeast Asia.

To achieve our third goal, we will work to challenge popular narratives about Australia's place in the region by injecting an informed perspective into public debate; to cement our reputation as a hub of Southeast Asia excellence among decision-makers in Australia and Southeast Asia; and nurture the strategic partnerships that support our research and education programs.

I look forward to your continued support as we work towards these goals.

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

# About the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre

sydney.edu.au/sseac

SSEAC is a University-wide, multidisciplinary initiative that responds to the complexity of Southeast Asia as a region and to its growing importance in our rapidly changing world.

Drawing on the expertise of more than 300 academics across a broad range of disciplines, SSEAC:

- supports research excellence
- encourages a new generation of Southeast Asia experts
- brings students from different disciplines together to learn from the region and its people
- partners with government, business and civil society to address real-world issues.

Our researchers work in and on all 11 countries in Southeast Asia across five thematic areas:

- Economic and Social Development
- Environment and Resources
- Health
- Heritage and the Arts
- State and Society.

SSEAC supports its members by providing funding opportunities and creating an academic community around engagement in our countries of focus. In providing a focal point for Southeast Asia-related research, we are connecting researchers across the institution and fostering new links and multidisciplinary approaches to the region.

SSEAC has worked closely with the Australian Government since 2014 to provide leadership training to activists from Women's Empowerment and Disabled People's Organisations across Indonesia. Through these courses, SSEAC fosters links between Indonesian and Australian activists and contributes to a deeper understanding of the universality of the struggles they face.

Our flagship interdisciplinary field schools have given more than 200 students the opportunity to engage in real-world learning in Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. In 2017, SSEAC received the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in the category of Outstanding Education Engagement and Innovation for this initiative. These field schools have drawn together students from disciplines including architecture, communications, economics, engineering, marketing, occupational therapy and political economy. Students work in multidisciplinary teams to study topics including agrarian change, food security, housing policy, transport policy and women's and disability rights.

Each year SSEAC hosts a number of events designed to stimulate public engagement.

Our Politics in Action forum draws on expertise from Australia and around the world to inform a broad audience about recent political developments in the region.

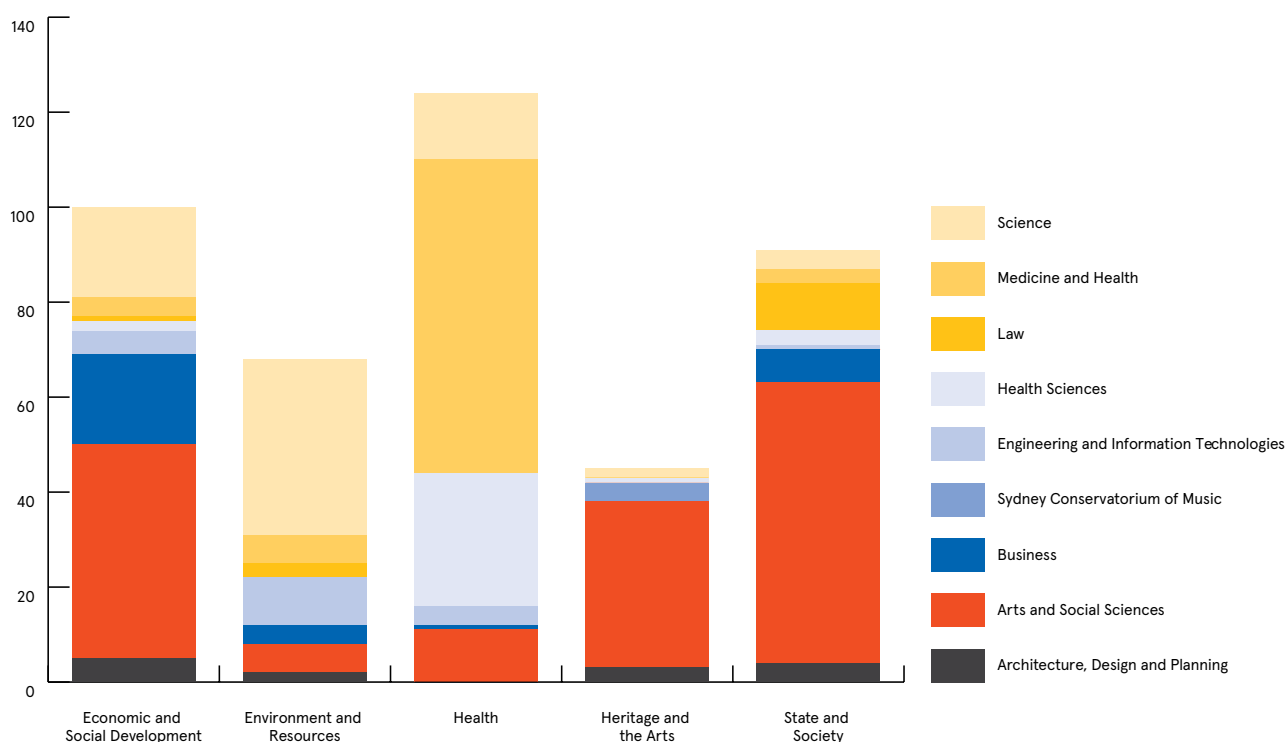
The ASEAN Forum – which targets policy makers, NGOs and academics – focuses on a different theme each year, from the role of China in ASEAN to gender relations in Southeast Asia.

We also work with PwC and regional business councils to host a Business in ASEAN forum, which brings together academics and members of the business community.

Sydney Southeast Asia Centre



## Disciplinary spread of SSEAC members



## Related initiatives

The University of Sydney is fostering a deeper and broader understanding of Southeast Asia through high-profile initiatives and research groups that work closely with regional and global partners. These include the following:

- The Angkor Research Program, a cross-disciplinary collaboration incorporating the Greater Angkor Project, which is creating new perspectives on urban society in the Angkor region.
- The Centre for Asian and Pacific Law, which has particular expertise in Indonesian, Malaysian and Vietnamese legal systems and laws.
- The Department of Indonesian Studies, one of the most respected in Australia, with a strong reputation for its research and policy work in Indonesia.
- The Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, which incorporates the West Papua Project and a concentration of researchers with an interest in Timor-Leste.
- The Học Mãi Foundation, which provides development assistance, public health programs and medical training in Vietnam.
- The Marie Bashir Institute for Infectious Diseases and Biosecurity, which brings together researchers, educators and professionals from across the biological and social sciences to increase understanding about and develop new methods to reduce infectious diseases.
- The Office for Global Health, which facilitates international health research and works with the University's health faculties to contribute to health and wellbeing in the Asia-Pacific.



# Governance

SSEAC Director Professor Michele Ford is assisted in her work by:

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

Governed by a Board of Management, this small team is supported by our country coordinators and Executive Committee as well as by our Postgraduate Coordinator Michael Leadbetter.

Staff work closely with professional service units across the University. These include the Office of Global

Engagement, International Services, Marketing and Communications, the Library, the Director for Government Relations, and Sydney Ideas.

The team also collaborates with other multidisciplinary research centres and Southeast Asia-related initiatives, as well as the faculties.

## Board of Management

| Name                             | Division                                |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Professor Stephen Garton (Chair) | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Provost)        |
| Professor Philippa Pattison      | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)      |
| Professor Duncan Ivison          | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)       |
| Professor Katherine Belov        | Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) |
| Professor Michele Ford           | Sydney Southeast Asia Centre            |

## Executive Committee

| Position                             | Name                             | Department/school           |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Community Outreach Advisor           | Dr Sandra Seno-Alday             | International Business      |
| Curriculum Advisor                   | Associate Professor Russell Bush | Veterinary Science          |
| Policy and Regional Outreach Advisor | Professor David Guest            | Agriculture and Environment |
| Policy and Regional Outreach Advisor | Professor Kirsty Foster          | Medicine                    |
| Research Advisor                     | Professor Simon Butt             | Law                         |
| Research Training Advisor            | Dr Damien Field                  | Agriculture and Environment |
| Research Training Advisor            | Dr Petr Matous                   | Civil Engineering           |

## Country coordinators

| Country             | Name                               | Department/school                      |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Cambodia            | Associate Professor Daniel Tan     | Life and Environmental Sciences        |
| Indonesia           | Dr Jeff Nielson                    | Life and Environmental Sciences        |
| Laos                | Professor Nick Enfield             | Linguistics                            |
| Malaysia and Brunei | Dr Fiona Lee                       | English                                |
| Myanmar             | Associate Professor Bill Pritchard | Life and Environmental Sciences        |
| The Philippines     | Dr Sandra Seno-Alday               | International Business                 |
| Singapore           | Dr Yeow-Tong Chia                  | Education and Social Work              |
| Thailand            | Dr Aim Sinpeng                     | Government and International Relations |
| Timor-Leste         | Dr Thushara Dibley                 | Asian Studies                          |
| Vietnam             | Dr Jane Gavan                      | Sydney College of the Arts             |



# Meet some of our people



## Minh Le

Minh joined SSEAC in November 2016 as its Administration Officer. She came to SSEAC from the Australian Graduate School of Management at the University of New South Wales, where she overhauled the manual career development systems and implemented an online platform to manage student data and streamline bookings.

Minh coordinates grant processes and supports a range of initiatives such as the honours bootcamp, postgraduate retreat and undergraduate field schools.

She also contributes to special initiatives including our flagship capacity-building program for civil society leaders from Indonesia. Minh has participated in two international exchange programs to Japan in 2011 and 2012 and completed a two-week intensive Indonesian language course in Yogyakarta in 2017.



## Dr Petr Matous

Petr joined us in 2015, when he came to Sydney. He became a member of SSEAC's Executive Board in 2017.

Petr became first engaged in Southeast Asia in 2002 when he undertook an evaluation of the water supply in Manila for Japan Bank of International Cooperation.

Petr's interest in social network analysis was ignited by his observation of how many of Manila's low-income inhabitants relied on complex webs of informal relationships just to get access to water. Since then, he has conducted numerous social network research projects in Indonesia, East Timor and Vietnam.

Petr enjoys the opportunities that SSEAC gives him to connect with experts and students from a variety of fields who work in Southeast Asia.



## Sally Sitou

Sally Sitou has been working with SSEAC since she became the international media adviser at the University in 2013.

She has helped to promote the work of the centre and its researchers and students within the University and throughout the wider community.

Sally has more than a decade of experience working in media, communications and policy across a range of fields including employment, ageing, international development assistance and higher education.

She is driven by the idea that diversity should be appreciated as an integral part of Australian society, and is a director at DAWN, an advocacy organisation working to ensure Australia's leadership reflects multicultural Australia.

# ASEAN Forum 2017

SSEAC's fifth annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Forum focused on the theme of Women in ASEAN. The event featured 10 women speakers from Australia and Southeast Asia.

Dr Kelly Gerard delivered the keynote address. She argued that since the ASEAN Economic Community is likely to increase gender inequalities in Southeast Asia, collective strategies are needed to reduce discrimination against women in the region. The forum also featured panels focusing on women in politics, work and development.

Associate Professor Maznah Mohamad, Dr Khin Mar Mar Kyi and Ms Nava Nuraniya participated in a panel on women in politics, chaired by Dr Aim Sinpeng, which focused on women's political participation across ASEAN as well as in Myanmar and Indonesia.

The panel on women and work was chaired by Trisha Gray from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It featured Dr Do Quynh Chi, Dr Mary Barby Badayos-Jover and Professor Michele Ford. The speakers discussed the challenges and opportunities associated with work for women in Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia.

The panel on women and development, hosted by Dr Jacqueline Thomas, featured Ms Ivonia Pinto Tsia, Ms Vichhra Mouyly and Ms Karen Mae Bantang and discussed women's empowerment in Southeast Asia.



Dr Kelly Gerard, ASEAN Forum keynote speaker

The night before, PwC hosted SSEAC's annual ASEAN Business Forum. Chaired by Ms Tamerlaine Beasley from Beasley Intercultural, the panel included Bernadette Ong and Jonathon Moss, both partners at PwC, Ms Dai Le, CEO and Founder of DAWN, an organisation focused on increasing diversity within Australia's major institutions and Ms Suri Susilo, founder and CEO of Somnium Labs. The discussion addressed how to best make use of Southeast Asia talent in the Australian corporate sector, how culture and communication can influence individual success, and the importance of diversity to corporate success.

## ASEAN Forum 2017 participants

### Speakers

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Dr Kelly Gerard                    | Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Western Australia            |
| Dr Khin Mar Mar Kyi                | Research Associate in Anthropology, University of Oxford  |
| Ms Nava Nuraniya                   | Analyst at the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict  |
| Associate Professor Maznah Mohamad | Department of Malay Studies and Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore |
| Dr Do Quynh Chi                    | Research Centre for Employment Relations, Vietnam   |
| Professor Mary Barby Badayos-Jover | Director of Gender and Development Program, University of Philippines Visayas                           |
| Professor Michele Ford             | Director of the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, the University of Sydney                                  |
| Ms Ivonia Pinto Tsia               | Centre of Studies for Peace and Development, Timor-Leste  |
| Ms Vichhra Mouyly                  | International Labour Organisation Cambodia, Better Factories Cambodia                                   |
| Ms Karen Mae Bantang               | Commission on Human Rights in the Philippines   |

### Panel chairs

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Dr Aim Sinpeng       | Department of Government and International Relations, the University of Sydney |
| Ms Trisha Gray       | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia                             |
| Dr Jacqueline Thomas | Humanitarian Engineering program, the University of Sydney                     |

# Politics in Action



## In May 2018, SSEAC hosted its third annual Politics in Action event.

Eight academics from Australia and around the world provided an analysis of the political situation in selected countries in Southeast Asia and discussed the broader implications of events in these countries for our region.

The event began with a keynote address from Professor Garry Rodan from Murdoch University, who analysed some key trends in the region, including new legislative and administrative measures to contain political opposition and new attempts to harness and control the media.

This was followed by presentations on:

- Laos, by Dr Keith Barney, Australian National University
- Myanmar, by Dr Su Mon Thazin Aung, Institute of Strategy and Policy
- The Philippines, by Dr Jayeel Serano Cornelio, Ateneo de Manila University
- Indonesia, by Dr Charlotte Setijadi, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute
- Cambodia, by Dr Lee Morgenbesser, Griffith University
- Malaysia, by Associate Professor Bridget Welsh, John Cabot University

The country updates were followed by a superb wrap-up by Dr Melissa Crouch, from the University of New South Wales, whose concluding remarks compelled us to reconsider the grand myths of democracy and think about how the changing political contexts of Southeast Asian states reflect the problematic nature of democracy. There are 'big challenges' in the region, as undemocratic elites continue to dominate politics and stifle social movements. In many cases, institutional effectiveness remains elusive.

Capitalising on the expertise gathered for the public event, SSEAC hosted targeted events for postgraduates and early career researchers before and after the forum.

A postgraduate workshop on 'Joining the academic community' helped students to better understand the intricacies of an academic position. Sessions focused on issues such as balancing research, teaching and service.

At the event for early career researchers, junior academics explored similar topics, with a focus on academic service.

The Politics in Action events are an opportunity to connect postgraduates and academics from institutions across Australia with a shared interest in Southeast Asia.

Building meaningful links between the University of Sydney and Australian and international institutions is an integral aspect of SSEAC's work and we look forward to hosting this event again in 2019.



# ASEAN–Australia Dialogue 2018

In 2017, SSEAC joined a consortium of Australian academic institutions and members of the business community to convene a policy-oriented conference focused on the ASEAN–Australia relationship.

The conference, called the ASEAN–Australia Dialogue 2018, was hosted at PwC’s Barangaroo office in Sydney. Held during the week of the ASEAN–Australia Special Summit 2018, the event featured speakers from academia, business, media and the government from Australia and ASEAN countries. The overarching theme of the conference was ‘Partnering for Security and Prosperity’.

The keynote was delivered by His Royal Highness Sultan Muizzudin Shah, the Sultan of Perak Malaysia. Over lunch, a conversation between Professor the Hon. Gareth Evans, Chancellor of the Australian National University and Dr Mari Pangestu, Chair for the Indonesian Committee for the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, was hosted by Ali Moore, a senior Australian television anchor and Vice-Chancellor’s Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

The Hon. Julie Bishop, Australia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Indonesia’s former Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr Marty Natalegawa, spoke at the conference dinner.

Panels were also held on the themes of politics, economics, security and regional architecture, with a focus on how development in each sphere would influence the relationship between Australia and its Southeast Asian neighbours.

SSEAC organised the first panel of the day, which focused on political developments in the region. Reflecting our values of inclusion and the pursuit of excellence, the panel featured rising stars in Southeast Asian Studies from Australia and the region.

The conference was a collaborative effort involving several institutions, including:

- Asialink, University of Melbourne
- Asia Institute Tasmania, University of Tasmania
- Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific
- Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University
- La Trobe Asia, La Trobe University
- Perth USAsia Centre, University of Western Australia
- PwC Australia
- Southeast Asia Institute, Australian National University.

This conference was the first time that the partner institutions, all of whom share an interest in ASEAN affairs, worked together.

The success of the collaboration marks the beginning of a partnership that all parties intend to build on for future ASEAN events.



Speakers at the conference dinner, from left to right: Dr Mari Elka Pangestu; Her Excellency Julie Bishop MP; Mr Luke Sayers; Dr Marty Natalegawa; Mrs Sranya Bamrunghong; (front) Professor the Hon. Gareth Evans



Image courtesy of Nikki Edwards



## Other events

SSEAC hosts a wide variety of events each year, reflecting the diverse interests of our clusters and our membership.

Our calendar showcases our local and international expertise, our partnerships with institutions across the University and beyond and our capacity to deliver and promote events that speak to our academic and associate members.

### July – December 2017

In July the centre hosted the launch of *Digital Indonesia: Connectivity and Divergence*, edited by Dr Ross Tapsell and Dr Edwin Jurriëns. The publication, which included a contribution from SSEAC's Director Professor Michele Ford, emanated from the Indonesia Update 2016 Conference presented by the Indonesia Project at ANU.

In August, we hosted eminent historians of Southeast Asia, Professors Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Andaya from the University of Hawaii for a joint seminar about writing regional and national histories of Southeast Asia.

In addition, we teamed up with Sydney Ideas, the China Studies Centre, the Department of Anthropology and the School of Architecture, Design and Planning to host a public lecture on 'Space, Social Conflict and the Future of Urban Society' with Professor Michael Herzfeld from Harvard University.

Also in August, SSEAC welcomed a delegation of academics and officials from Thammasat University, Thailand. Along with Sydney Global Mobility, Research Development and Collaboration, and the Office of Global Engagement, SSEAC facilitated discussions around international university rankings, excellence in research, and student mobility with the Thai delegation.

With a grant from the Asian Studies Association of Australia, SSEAC held a workshop titled 'Digital Research in Southeast Asia' on 18 August 2017.

The workshop gave scholars and postgraduate students an overview of the digital media landscape in the region, and provided them with the ethical, practical and technical skills required to conduct research in this dynamic space.

In September SSEAC partnered with the Sydney Asia Pacific Migration Centre to host a seminar on Indonesia's new politics of Chinese foreign labour, with Associate Professor Nobuhiro Aizawa from Kyushu University, Japan. Professor Aizawa discussed the new style of governance and politics under the Jokowi presidency in dealing with the pressing issue of foreign workers from China – a global phenomenon.

Also in September, SSEAC screened *The Staging Post* with co-hosts the Comparative and International Education Research Network and the Scholarships Office. The film follows two Afghan Hazara refugees who were stuck in limbo in Indonesia after Australia stopped the boats. The pair built the Cisarua Refugee Learning Centre (CRLC) and inspired a refugee education revolution. The screening was followed by a Q&A with the film's director and producer, Jolyon Hoff and Muzafar Ali, the film's subject and CRLC founder.

In October, SSEAC teamed up with Sydney Ideas and the Centre for Asian and Pacific Law to co-host a public forum titled 'Fighting Corruption in Indonesia'. This forum brought together Professor Todung Mulya Lubis, one of Indonesia's leading lawyers and anti-corruption advocates; Dr Laode Syarif, Commissioner for the Indonesia Anti-Corruption Commission (KPK) and Professor Simon Butt, who specialises in Indonesian law and its corruption courts to examine the future of corruption eradication efforts in Indonesia.

Later in October, we hosted two Malaysia-focused events: a seminar by Associate Professor Gaik Cheng



Khoo on 'Korean Education Migrants in Malaysia', co-hosted with the Social Inclusion Network and the Sydney Asia Pacific Migration Centre (SAPMiC); and a roundtable forum on 'Islamist Politics and Political Survival in Malaysia', with Professor Clive Kessler and Professor Norani Othman, co-hosted with Global Bersih.

Finally, Balinese rock band Navicula joined us for a live acoustic performance of their environmentally charged music. Following the performance, band members were joined by Ewa Wojkowska, co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of social change-focused non-profit-organisation, Kopernik, for a discussion around the transformational power of music and technology in addressing social and environmental issues in Indonesia.

#### January – June 2018

Our first event of the year was linked to our heritage and arts cluster, with the presentation of an illustrated history of the Dutch East India Company and related art by author Mr Ian Burnet.

In early February, the University was the venue for a workshop on ethnomusicology and contemporary approaches to Indonesian music. This visit, part of the Making Connections: the Bundengan of Wonosoba project, was made possible with the assistance of an SSEAC mobility grant and the Department of Theatre Studies.

In March, Mr Benny Prawira, Director of Into the Light Indonesia, a youth suicide and mental health advocacy group, joined us from Atma Jaya Catholic University Indonesia for a seminar on the work of young people in eradicating suicide stigma in Indonesia.

On the eve of the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in early March, the Australian Institute of International Affairs NSW hosted a public lecture with Dr Marty Natalegawa, former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Indonesia. Introduced by Dr Michael Spence AC, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney, Dr Natalegawa spoke about the challenges and opportunities facing the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations in an era of rapid geopolitical change.

Later in the month, SSEAC hosted the Sydney launch of the archive Bali 1928 Repatriation Project during



The Bundengan of Wonosoba workshop with Making Connections

a seminar and film screening with Professor Edward Herbst, titled 'Gender, Cross-dressing and Androgyny in Balinese Dance'. Professor Herbst also held a masterclass with SSEAC postgraduates on fieldwork in Southeast Asia.

In April, Her Excellency Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh, Vice-President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, visited the University of Sydney to discuss strengthening long-standing relationships between Vietnamese institutions and the University. Members of the University community, including Professor Bruce Robinson, Chairman of the Học Mãi Foundation, and Professor the Hon. Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO, Patron of the Học Mãi Foundation, shared their program with the Vietnamese delegation.

In conjunction with the annual Politics in Action event in May, SSEAC hosted a roundtable on politics in Singapore. Chaired by SSEAC Singapore country coordinator Dr Yeow-Tong Chia, Associate Professor Lily Rahim, Associate Professor Bridget Welsh and Dr Nicholas Harrigan discussed the shrinking political space, the Lee Legacy, and political uncertainty in Singapore since the 2015 General Election.

# Fostering high-impact research

Over the years Southeast Asia-focused researchers at the University of Sydney have performed very well in the national competitive grant schemes run by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

In the last 12 months the following SSEAC members have been awarded new ARC and NHMRC grants on Southeast Asia-related topics:

- Professor Michele Ford – Myanmar garment workers (see page opposite)
- Professor Philip Hirsch – nature-society transformations in mainland Southeast Asia (see page 16)
- Dr Gregory Fox – prevention and management of chronic lung disease.

A number of members have also been recognised in internal grant schemes. Examples include Dr Holly High, who was awarded a Brown Equity Fellowship for her project on the anthropology of power in Laos and Dr Sonja Van Wichelen who was awarded a Sydney Research Accelerator Fellowship to investigate the socio-legal governance of new gene technologies (see page 17).

Dr Rosemary Grey will also be joining the Sydney Law School as a 2018 University of Sydney Postdoctoral Fellow to conduct the first comprehensive gender assessment of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

She joins Dr Emma Calgario, of the School of Geosciences in the Faculty of Science, who began her fellowship in July last year. Dr Calgario is working on a project on disasters and disability.

In addition to providing support for applicants through workshops and mentoring programs, SSEAC has established a new postdoctoral position, an initiative designed to provide a stepping stone for PhD graduates who wish to pursue a research-focused path.

The first of our SSEAC postdoctoral research associate positions has been awarded to Dr Jessica Melvin, who is investigating the military's instrumentalisation of political Islam in Indonesia.



Disaster and Disability  
in Cambodia, image by  
Dr Emma Calgario



# Myanmar: Garment workers

SSEAC Director Professor Michele Ford and her research team have been awarded an ARC Discovery Project grant that will allow them to study garment worker responses to Myanmar's increasing integration into the global production networks of leisurewear and fast fashion brands like Adidas, H&M and Zara.

The team will compare conditions in strategic suppliers to leading global garment brands with factories that produce primarily for regional buyer networks in order to analyse the influence of international organisations and corporate-led initiatives, changes in the structures of the local labour movement, and the local labour movement's interactions with its international allies.

This analysis will allow the team to assess the implications of integration for garment workers; workers' capacity to act collectively to influence the processes and outcomes of integration; and the impact of integration on the structure and capacity of the local labour movement.

The team will use these findings to better theorise how labour agency influences the operation of these global production networks.

One of the defining features of the team is its multidisciplinary nature, which allows it to take a holistic approach to this question.

Professor Ford is a labour sociologist who has worked on local labour movements and their relationships with the international labour movement in several Southeast Asian countries. Dr Michael Gillan (University of Western Australia) trained as a political economist and is a specialist in the industrial relations of India. Dr Dennis Arnold (University of Amsterdam) is a geographer who has worked on labour issues in Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam. Dr Htwe Htwe Thein (Curtin University) is an international business academic whose earlier work looked at multinationals' responses to sanctions on Myanmar. The first major study of its kind, the project builds



Image by Aye Min Soe

on the previous academic and consultancy work of Professor Ford and her collaborators, including a joint ARC Discovery Project grant held by Professor Ford and Dr Gillan on the role of the Global Union Federations in India and Indonesia and joint preliminary work conducted in Myanmar from 2012.

The team is confident that the project's findings will not only contribute to the theorisation of labour voice and representation in global production networks, but also provide a strong evidence base for decision-making by local and international stakeholders.



# Mainland Southeast Asia: Nature–society transformations



Image by Marina and Enrique via Flickr

Emeritus Professor Philip Hirsch from the School of Geosciences is part of a research team that has been awarded an ARC Discovery Project grant to develop a theorised understanding of nature–society transformations in mainland Southeast Asia.

As the former leader of the Mekong Research Group at the University of Sydney, Professor Hirsch has long been concerned with the impacts of infrastructure development on the livelihoods and environments upon which the rural poor of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam depend.

Building on the previous work of the Mekong Research Group, this new project will employ the concept of ‘rupture’ and take a multi-scalar approach to exploring connections between specific impacts, local and wider networked responses, and modes of governance at national and regional levels that have emerged as a mix of accommodations and counter-responses by the region’s largely – and increasingly – authoritarian regimes.

The research team, which includes Associate Professor Sango Mahanty, Dr Sarah Milne, Dr Keith Barney and Dr To Xuan Phuc from the Australian National University, seeks to understand rupture as a set of processes that operate across scale, linking the localised impacts of infrastructure development to the tensions, responses and counter-responses that help define emergent forms of governance in mainland Southeast Asia.

To do this, the research team will address three sets of questions in order to examine different areas of the research project.

First, they will study the localised ruptures – the dramatic structural reconfiguration of nature and society – in the ways in which people derive livelihoods from land and natural resources, including the adaptations made at local and wider levels.

Second, the team will examine the responses to multiple impacts from large dams and other infrastructure projects from the region’s increasingly networked civil society.

Finally, the research team will address the responses of the governments and intergovernmental agencies of the region, in a context in which civil society faces severe challenges by an increasing tide of authoritarianism.

The project has significant implications for our understanding of state–society relations, as well as providing a platform for strategic interaction with civil society groups working toward a more equitable and sustainable path of development.

# The changing legalities of new gene technologies

Dr Sonja Van Wichelen from the Department of Sociology and Social Policy has been awarded a two-year Sydney Research Accelerator (SOAR) Fellowship to investigate the socio-legal governance of new gene technologies in Southeast Asia.

Dr Van Wichelen's research engages with the body, law, and science in the age of globalisation and the effects that changes in these areas have on our understanding of citizenship.

Genetics first piqued Dr Van Wichelen's interest when she was researching politics and religion in Indonesia and came into contact with international adoptees searching for their birth mothers. This led her to further investigate the legalities surrounding transnational adoption, reproduction technologies, and how genetics is implicated in stories about adoption.

In her new project Dr Van Wichelen plans to carry out pilot studies in Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. During the project she will interview lawyers, bioethicists and judges about the social and legal impact of new gene technologies. From there she will determine whether this largely theoretical project can develop into empirical research.

As a sociologist Dr Van Wichelen is interested in how biotechnology affects society. Asian countries are becoming major players in the world of bioscience, yet the legalities surrounding emerging gene technologies are yet to be explored.

In her previous research, Dr Van Wichelen found that the impact of new biotechnology on the law had fragmented the notion of legal personhood. Indeed, she has found that biotechnological advances are fragmenting many of society's so-called 'set' institutions.

"What people think of as a set institution – family, parenthood, or personhood – is fragmenting and the potential implications are vast," Dr Van Wichelen says.

These possible implications are particularly fascinating in Southeast Asia where cultural ideas about family, parenthood and personhood differ greatly from the equivalent Euro-American legal definitions. Dr Van Wichelen aims to identify these differences and see if they are being articulated in legal contexts.



Image by Dickson Phuo via Flickr



# How we support research excellence

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

The centre supports 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.

Grants are provided to seed projects in the centre's five areas of research strength, to support the development of academic publications from applied research work, and to encourage academic

collaboration with researchers in the region and further afield.

In the 2017-18 year, 32 grants were made to 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 2017–18

| Cluster                         | Topic  | Recipient                          | Faculty                  |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Economic and social development | Smart city policy and practice in Jakarta, Indonesia   | Dr Sophie Webber                   | Science                  |
| Environment and resources       | Applying foraging ecology to reduce human–elephant conflict in Sumatra                             | Associate Professor Clare McArthur | Science                  |
| Health                          | The impact of leadership on sustainable health, wellbeing and collective energy in workplace teams | Dr Helena Nguyen                   | Business                 |
| Health                          | Improving breast cancer detection in Vietnam through educational test sets                         | Professor Patrick Brennan          | Health Sciences          |
| State and society               | The social and cultural context of crystal methamphetamine use among youth in northern Thailand    | Dr Anjalee Cohen                   | Arts and Social Sciences |

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

### Workshop grants awarded in 2017–18

| Workshop  | Recipient                        | Faculty                        |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Climate adaption in disaster-prone environments of Southeast Asia | Dr Eleanor Bruce                 | Science                        |
| Trauma: Southeast Asian perspectives                              | Associate Professor Hans Pols    | Science                        |
| Researching professional music practice                           | Professor Anna Reid              | Sydney Conservatorium of Music |
| 2018 gill health symposium for marine fish                        | Association Professor Joy Becker | Science                        |
| The anthropology of language in mainland Southeast Asia           | Professor Nick Enfield           | Arts and Social Sciences       |

### Other grants awarded in 2017–18

| Category   | No. awarded | Countries   |
|--|-------------|---|
| Collaborative research                             | 2           | Indonesia, Thailand                                       |
| Conference (academic) for papers on Southeast Asia | 1           | Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam |
| Conference (PhD) for papers on Southeast Asia      | 2           | Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand                       |
| Mobility   | 9           | Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam           |
| Research capacity building                         | 1           | Indonesia   |
| Sabbatical visitor                                 | 2           | Indonesia, Timor-Leste                                    |







# Expanding collaboration in the region

A key function of SSEAC is to showcase the University of Sydney's wide-ranging expertise on Southeast Asia.

SSEAC also works closely with the University's Office of Global Engagement and Office for Global Health (part of Sydney Medical School), as well as many individual academics, to foster closer ties with Southeast Asia. In 2017–18, SSEAC has had a particular focus on developing relationships with other academic institutions.

Centre Director Professor Michele Ford met with Southeast Asia specialists from the Global Asia Research Center at the National Taiwan University, the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Leiden in the Netherlands to discuss potential synergies.

Deputy Director Dr Elisabeth Kramer visited the Centre for Southeast Asia Research at the University of British Columbia, Canada, and progressed partnership discussions with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, Japan.

As part of our commitment to supporting cross-institutional collaborations, SSEAC was heavily involved in the organisation of the 2017 Research for Development Impact Conference, which brought together researchers, policymakers and NGO activists from the Asia Pacific.

SSEAC received several high-ranking officials, often in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. In May 2017 we hosted an education roundtable for representatives to ASEAN, including Australia's ambassador to ASEAN, Her Excellency Ms Jane Duke. The roundtable was followed by a well-attended public seminar discussing the progress of ASEAN over the last 50 years.

SSEAC also received delegations from Southeast Asian universities, including a group representing higher education institutions in Vietnam, representatives from Kyoto University, Japan and Thammasat University from Chiang Mai, Thailand.

## SSEAC 2017 distinguished visitors

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Ms Angela Corcoran  | Australian Ambassador to Cambodia   |
| Her Excellency Ms Jane Duke   | Australian Ambassador to ASEAN  |
| Mr Richard Matthews   | Australian Consul-General to Makassar   |
| His Excellency Mr Chirachai Punkrasin                               | Ambassador of Thailand to Australia   |
| Mr Mohd Khalil Zaiyany Sumiran                                      | Consul/Director, Consulate of Malaysia Sydney   |
| Ms Kartini Tajul Urus   | Vice Consul/Education Attaché, Consulate of Malaysia Sydney   |
| Her Excellency Ms Elizabeth Buensuceso                              | Permanent Representative of Philippines to ASEAN  |
| His Excellency Mr Latsamy Keomany                                   | Permanent Representative of Lao PDR to ASEAN  |
| His Excellency Mr Nguyen Hoanh Nam                                  | Permanent Representative of Vietnam to ASEAN  |
| Her Excellency Ms Pengiran Hajah Faezah, Pengiran Haji Abdul Rahman | Permanent Representative of Brunei Darussalam to ASEAN  |
| Mr Andri Djufri Said  | Permanent representative of Indonesia to ASEAN  |
| Her Excellency Ms Min Lwin  | Permanent Representative of Myanmar to ASEAN  |
| His Excellency Dato' Shariffah Norhana Bt Syed Mustafa              | Permanent Representative of Malaysia to ASEAN   |
| His Excellency Mr Nong Sakal  | Permanent Representative of Cambodia to ASEAN   |
| His Excellency Mr Tan Hung Seng                                     | Permanent Representative of Singapore to ASEAN  |
| Mr Kittisak Klomchit  | Chargé D'Affaires Permanent Mission to Thailand to ASEAN  |
| Ms Nilar Aung   | Minister Counsellor/Deputy Permanent Representative of Myanmar to ASEAN   |
| Ms Tarika Wongsinsirikul  | Assistant Director, Head of Political Cooperation Division 1, Political and Security Directorate, ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) |



# Academics awarded \$1.2 million for Southeast Asia work

Academics at the University of Sydney have been awarded five grants relating to Southeast Asia and totalling \$1,188,894, as part of the federal government's 17th round of Australia Awards Fellowships.

The grants cover 71 fellows working across health, governance, education and disability and development for the next 12 months.

Three of the grants were awarded to researchers at Sydney Medical School, with the two remaining grants awarded to fellows in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Associate Professor Kirsty Foster from Sydney Medical School has received \$296,405 in funding to focus on student-centred medical education in Myanmar. This program will focus on providing guidance and training on best practice for educating medical students to 15 fellows in both Sydney and Myanmar.

Professor Mu Li from the School of Public Health will work alongside UNICEF Indonesia in improving adolescent health and nutrition. This program will help develop a sustainable national network of organisations committed to addressing adolescent health and nutrition issues in Indonesia, encourage collaboration between government agencies and university researchers in evaluating health policies, and foster bilateral collaboration between Indonesia and Australia.

The Australia Award Fellowships awarded to the University of Sydney for Southeast Asia-focused projects are as follows.

| Lead academic  | Country                          | Counterpart organisation  | Program name   |
|--|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Kirsty Foster, Sydney Medical School   | Myanmar                          | University of Medicine 2 Yangon   | Making a difference: student-centred medical education in Myanmar  |
| Shailendra Sawleshwarkar, Sydney Medical School  | Indonesia, Cambodia, Timor-Leste | Ministries of Health, NGOs, Universities  | Building institutional capacity to strengthen sexual reproductive health services in the Southeast Asia region |
| Mu Li, Sydney Medical School   | Indonesia                        | UNICEF Indonesia, SEAMEO RECFON, UGM, UNHAS   | Evidence-based policy and program development for improved adolescent health and nutrition (Indonesia)         |
| David Evans, Education and Social Work   | Indonesia                        | PPPPTK; Gadjah Mada University; Yogyakarta State University, Sanata Dharma University   | Achieving education for all through Indonesian-Australian collaborations                                       |
| George Odhiambo, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (Leanne Howie, Graduate School of Government) | Cambodia                         | Royal School of Administration (RSA) and Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) | Building capacity in the education system to implement decentralisation reform                                 |

# Building stronger ties with Cambodia

## Australia Awards Fellowship

In February 2018 the University of Sydney welcomed representatives from the Royal Government of Cambodia as part of an Australia Awards Fellowship program.

The program is focused on building capacity in the implementation of decentralisation in the country's education sector. As part of its National Program for Administrative Reform the government aims to build the capacity of 10,000 Cambodian school principals before introducing a system of school-level administrative autonomy. This ambitious process, which commenced in February 2017, is to be completed over five years.

The program was designed by Ms Leanne Howie from the Graduate School of Government with colleagues from the Cambodian government while Ms Howie was undertaking an Endeavour Executive Award with the Royal School of Administration (RSA) in 2016.

The University has had an MOU with the RSA since 2007. Academic expertise was provided by Emeritus Professor Geoff Gallop and Dr Stephen Mills from the Graduate School of Government; and Dr George Odhiambo and Dr Rachel Wilson from the School of Education and Social Work. The program included an introductory two-week program in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, a five-week short course at the University of Sydney and concluded with a post-course workshop delivered in Phnom Penh in May 2018.

The 15 participants were drawn from the RSA and the Ministries of Economy and Finance and Education, Youth and Sport. The program included modules on public leadership and administration, school improvement, program evaluation, practical skills development and knowledge transfer. Each module was tailored to the Cambodian context to give participants relevant and practical skills for their day-to-day work.

Ms Howie organised the post-course workshop in Phnom Penh in May and was encouraged not only to see the participants continuing with their research at home, but planning for the future by the Cambodian government.

"What's very exciting is the development by the Cambodian government of a strategic plan, including allocating an associated budget, for the next stage program: capacity building the 10,000 Cambodian school principals to implement decentralisation," Ms Howie says.

Short courses such as these provide an excellent opportunity to make practical use of academic expertise, as well as building people-to-people links with Southeast Asia. SSEAC looks forward to supporting future AAF programs focused on areas of critical need in the region.



Australia Awards Fellow Channy Lim in discussion with Emeritus Professor Geoff Gallop from the Graduate School of Government





Image by Simone Young



# Interdisciplinary field schools



Lauren Groenendijk  
observing pigs in  
Chiang Mai during the  
ThaiLAND field school

## Women's empowerment in Indonesia

In July 2017 16 students travelled to Indonesia to investigate government and NGO approaches to women's empowerment. Their participation was funded by the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan.

This is the second year that SSEAC has organised this field school, which was conducted in collaboration with the Australia–Indonesia Partnership for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment program and our leadership training programs for partnership participants.

The program brought together students from Indonesian studies, work and organisational studies, political economy and geography.

In addition to meeting with stakeholders and undertaking field visits, students worked in interdisciplinary teams to conduct independent research projects.

## Disability and social inclusion in Indonesia

In December 2017, 13 students from humanitarian engineering, psychology, and the history and philosophy of science participated in our first Disability and Social Inclusion in Indonesia field school.

In Jakarta, the students shared first-hand experiences of navigating a busy metropolis as a person with a disability and met with suicide prevention and social inclusion advocates. In Yogyakarta, they visited local organisations focused on supporting people with disabilities. These field visits were organised with assistance from the Australia–Indonesia Justice Program.

Through their independent interdisciplinary research projects, the students then explored other topics, including political representation for people with disabilities, cultural conceptualisations of 'disability' and inclusive education.

## ThaiLAND

Our first-ever field school to Thailand took 17 students from medicine, anthropology and Asian studies to the Northern Thai city of Chiang Mai. The field school focused on issues around land ownership and use.

Students participated in an 18-day program based at the Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development at Chiang Mai University.

As part of the ThaiLAND field school, the students spent three nights in local villages outside of Chiang Mai to better understand how changing land policies have affected ethnic minorities and agricultural practices.

The school also gave students an opportunity to develop fieldwork-based research skills as they worked in their interdisciplinary groups to collect data for their independent projects.

# Next generation of research excellence



Participants at the postgraduate retreat taking part in an ice-breaker

## Postgraduate retreat

The fifth SSEAC postgraduate retreat, held in 2017, focused on leadership in academia. The three-day program, co-hosted by Ms Tamerlaine Beasley from Beasley Intercultural, aimed to develop the professional skills required to operate successfully in an academic environment.

Participants met with academics from across the University of Sydney, who discussed leadership skills in academia, juggling competing priorities and responding strategically to opportunities.

Drawing on these insights, participants used a number of frameworks for assessing their personal strengths and weaknesses, and strategies for prioritising their time to reflect on how to better achieve their academic and personal goals. As one student reported, the retreat offered a way to “step back from [my] hard work to gain a better perspective of life after I complete my PhD”.

## Honours bootcamp

SSEAC holds an annual three-day bootcamp for honours students from around Australia, who meet to hone their presentation skills, learn about publishing from their thesis and discuss career pathways.

The 2017 bootcamp attracted students researching topics as diverse as animism – the belief that plants and other inanimate objects have living souls – and breast cancer in Malaysia to water governance in the Philippines.

In addition to students from the University of Sydney, participants hailed from Monash University, Murdoch University, the University of Melbourne, the University of Newcastle and the University of Queensland.

Lisa Butson, from the University of Newcastle, described the bootcamp as “a wonderful experience. It’s great to meet other students studying the region and share knowledge and experiences of our research.”

## Three Minute Thesis

Higher degree research students had the opportunity to participate in SSEAC’s third Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition.

Held at our annual ASEAN Forum, the competition showcases the breadth and depth of research being undertaken in and on Southeast Asia at the University of Sydney. The outcome of the 3MT competition is determined by popular vote.

This year’s winner was Ms Pradytia Pertiwi, who presented her work about the role of people with disabilities in responding to disasters in Indonesia.

Ms Pertiwi explained that being part of the competition helped her to “reflect on the most important message from my research... and taught me how to communicate it in a more accessible, compelling and engaging way”.

# Back to the future – past meets present

A postgraduate student research group is delving into Southeast Asia's history to shed new light on current issues.

The four founding members of Perspectives on the Past (PoP) met at SSEAC's 2015 postgraduate retreat and come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Nien Yuan Cheng is a performance studies specialist, Michael Leadbetter an archaeologist, Natali Pearson a museum and heritage studies scholar and Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan, a textual historian. However, all share a passion for Southeast Asian pasts.

"We immediately gravitated towards one another because we all shared an interest in Southeast Asian history and heritage, but we have very different disciplinary perspectives. These differences have led to some of our most productive discussions," Mr Sastrawan says.

These perspectives came together in a SSEAC-supported double panel on ritual in Southeast Asia at the European Association for Southeast Asia Studies (EuroSEAS) conference at University of Oxford in August 2017.

In the panel PoP members presented papers on performance art in Singapore, underwater cultural heritage sites, dynastic power in ancient Java and the social and environmental costs of ritual.

They were joined by four international scholars, who presented on the theatre state in Bali, economic pedagogy as a governance tactic in Timor-Leste, devotional practices in Manila and trance mediumship in Hanoi's theatres.

Embodying SSEAC's core values of innovation, collaboration and real-world contribution, PoP advances a critical research agenda that positions Southeast Asia's past as a gateway to its future. The strong interest in the EuroSEAS panel was a reminder of how historical insights shed new light on current problems.

"New perspectives on the past are not just a 'nice to have' – they are, in an increasingly complex world, an essential consideration," Ms Pearson says.

Back in Sydney PoP maintains an active profile, editing their blog, Perspectives on the Past, and a section of the same name on the popular Southeast Asia-focused website, New Mandala.

The group has worked with SSEAC and other groups within the University to bring leading scholars to Sydney. In the last year, these have included Malaysian historian Ooi Keat Gin, Indonesian historian Bambang Purwanto and archaeologist John Miksic, the inaugural winner of the Singapore History Prize.



From left to right, Mr Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan, Ms Nien Yuan Cheng, Ms Natali Pearson, Mr Michael Leadbetter



# Reaching out to schools

Last year, SSEAC offered small grants to primary and high schools across Australia to develop programs that introduce students to Southeast Asia.

These grants are designed to encourage students to forge closer connections with the region through exploring Southeast Asian cultures, language and practices. In 2017 SSEAC awarded schools grants to the NSW School of Languages, Coffs Harbour Christian Community Junior School, Scotts Head Public School and Yass High School to develop programs that introduce students to Southeast Asian studies and culture.

The NSW School of Languages visited Tumbarumba High School in rural NSW to run a simulation of an Indonesian market. In the simulation 34 students from Year 7 served as vendors and buyers, learning to bargain and handle Indonesian currency. In the afternoon, the Year 9 elective food technology class joined the teachers for a cooking demonstration. The menu consisted of prawn chips (krupuk), fried rice (nasi goreng) and fried banana (pisang goreng).

Elsewhere, Coffs Harbour Christian Community Junior School hosted an Indonesian Independence Day Mini Market, which included a gamelan performance by its Year 4 students. Students thoroughly enjoyed the activity, the school reported.

“The Mini Market was a great day and a day to remember. 4R played the gamelan amazingly. Each student got a delicious serve of nasi goreng, and everyone was happy with the food.”

**From student evaluation**



Indonesian performance artist Jumaadi visited Scotts Head Public School to present a workshop on modern shadow puppet creation.

Students learnt of Jumaadi's childhood in Java through shadow puppetry. They then collaborated to create individual shadow puppet characters and stories, which they performed as a group.

Yass High School's project was called 'Bringing Indonesia to Yass'. Sisca Poeradiredja, the artistic director of Srikandi Indonesia Dance School, led the Year 7 students through dance and music activities, which helped them to develop a deep understanding of the rich traditions of Balinese culture and daily life.

“Many of the children in our rural community have never had the opportunity to participate in an event like this ... it was truly unique,” says Yass High School teacher, Ms Catherine Vale. “Meeting and interacting with someone from Indonesia, and being able to ask questions about culture and life in Indonesia makes their language learning at school take on a different, more ‘real’ dimension.”


**Ms Catherine Vale, Yass High School teacher**



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.

**Follow us online:**

 [facebook.com/  
sydneysoutheastasiacentre](https://facebook.com/sydneysoutheastasiacentre)  
 [twitter.com/seacsydney](https://twitter.com/seacsydney)

[sydney.edu.au/sseac](https://sydney.edu.au/sseac)  
+61 2 9114 0953  
[sseac@sydney.edu.au](mailto:sseac@sydney.edu.au)