

Workshop Report

Beyond the State's Reach: Casino Spaces as Enclaves of Development or Lawlessness?

Held under the Forum:

“Asian Spatialities 3 - Across Southeast Asian Borderlands”

Part of the Rethinking Asian Studies Research Network

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Event specifics:

Name of event: *Beyond the State's Reach: Casino Spaces as Enclaves of Development or Lawlessness?*

Date: 21-23 August 2015

Location: Center for Khmer Studies (CKS), Wat Damnak, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Conveners:

- Dr Danielle Tan (Institut d'Asie Orientale, IAO-ENS Lyon, France)
- Dr Brenda Yeoh (Asian Research Institute, National University of Singapore)
- Dr Tak-Wing Ngo (Macau University)
- Dr Philippe Peycam (IIAS, Leiden)
- Dr Krisna Uk (Center for Khmer Studies, Cambodia)

Organized by: The *Casino and Development in Asia Research Network*, gathering together the University of Macau, the National University of Singapore (ARI), Institut d'Asie Orientale (IAO-ENS Lyon, France); the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) & the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS), Siem Reap.

Financiers: IIAS, supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the University of Macau and the National University of Singapore sponsored travel and accommodation expenses for their team as well as the collective field trip to Poipet.

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Report

Context of event:

Beyond the State's Reach: Casino Spaces as Enclaves of Development or Lawlessness? is the second phase of the IIAS/Mellon Foundation Forum “Asian Spatialities 3: Across Southeast Asian Borderlands” which aimed at challenging the artificial boundaries dividing Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular. These divisions not only mask the varied commonalities that transcend such boundaries, they also reinforce the marginalization of people who live in the so-called border areas. Yet, a better appreciation of these “transitional zones” is critical to our understanding of processes of social and cultural changes in the states lying beyond them, a focus that remains peripheral to traditional “area” studies. This is particularly true of the so-

called region of Southeast Asia, squeezed between two predominant regions dominated by India and China, and which appears to have been the poor relative of Asian studies over the past decades. The contributions, framed in two workshops, studied Southeast Asia based on networks, processes, transitions, polyvalence, and fluidity, in opposition with the concepts of the “nation-state” or the “region”.

Objectives

While the first workshop, “Communities in Between: Redefining Social Spaces in Southeast Asian Borderlands,” held at the Institut d’Asie Orientale (IAO-ENS Lyon) on 3-4 November 2014, revisited state-society relations through the perspective of the borderlands as they can be seen as products of a social and political negotiation of space, this workshop sought to better understand the “transitional zones” that have emerged in the wake of the encounter between local communities, new migratory circulations and the global economy. The multiplication of mega casino resorts in Asia is emblematic of these new spaces created across local and global scales. Over the past few years, the belief has taken root that the gaming industry is a powerful tool for economic development. The gaming revenue generated in the two most lucrative gaming markets in the world, Macau and Singapore, has prompted neighboring countries to follow suit. A number of casinos have mushroomed along the borders of Southeast Asian countries. These casino projects have been incorporated into the national leisure economy as part of global city branding, or to attract foreign investments for local development and modernization.

The workshop aimed to bring together scholars from different fields and theoretical approaches to interrogates the immediate and long-term socio-political impacts of casino-oriented development in Singapore, Macau, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia, where migration, employment, economic aspiration and social cohesion have been issues of contention.

The *Casino and Development in Asia Research Network* and IIAS chose to organize the workshop at the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS) in Siem Reap because (1) Cambodia perfectly illustrates the on-going casino-boom, where nearly 57 casinos have spread throughout the country. (2) Siem Reap being close to Poipet, home to the largest concentration of border casinos in Cambodia, it gave us the possibility to organize a day-field trip there. (3) This workshop was an opportunity to re-activate a privileged partnership between IIAS and CKS, since Philippe Peycam worked as founding director of the CKS. It was also meaningful to set the discussions on reshaping Asian studies in a research institute like the CKS and in a country that went through such dramatic experiences in terms of destroying knowledge and intellectual life.

Outline/ Format

The three-day workshop was divided into three parts:

- 1. Presentations and discussions on casinos revolved around three panels:**
 - Panel 1: The “Asian Casino Space”: An Alternative Model for Development

- Panel 2: Governing the Gambling Industry in Southeast Asia, China, and Beyond
 - Panel 3: Blurring Boundaries: the Legal Grey Area of Casino-Oriented Development and its Ethical Implications
2. **A Roundtable on Reshaping Asian Studies led by Dr Thongchai Winichakul**
 3. **A day-field trip to Poipet**

Summary of presentations & discussion

- **Opening Remarks**

Tak-Wing Ngo opened the workshop with introductory remarks that help set the tone of the discussions. He began with quoting Susan Strange (1986) who likened the global financial system with casino gambling. Despite the financial crisis of 2007, the speculative and gambling aspects of world capitalism remained unchanged, if not aggravated. The global flow of speculative money has been augmented by a circulation of casino money originated from Asia, the total global revenue exceeding US\$440 billion in 2014. This observation led him to raise the following question: **What role does casinos play in the Asian regional economy in the age of global casino capitalism?** More specifically, is the surge of Asian casinos the manifestation of an emerging regional economy which corresponds to a specific phase of capitalist development and market reform in China?

Tak-Wing Ngo highlighted the “Janus-faced nature” of the gaming industry: on the one hand, modern casinos have become commercial resort combining multiple activities related to tourism, hotel, entertainment, catering, conferencing, and exhibitions that attract foreign direct investment and create jobs, thus contributing to developing local infrastructure and improving social welfare. On the other hand, casinos are also closely linked to the sex industry, money laundering, pawn brokerage, and certain underground activities. They constitute huge spatial enclaves which alter the urban landscape of the host city and can generate social and economic problems. Therefore, the objective of the workshop is to untangle the impacts of the casino sector on political, economic and social lives of different Asian societies. The study of casinos can offer rich and multifaceted analyses in the development of Asia.

According to Tak-Wing Ngo, six aspects deserve special attention and discussions during the workshop:

- Anthropological studies of casinos operators: as they form a complex web of connectivity;
- The geo-politics of border casinos: since they contribute to cross-border connectivity among Asian countries and flourish by manipulating places of exception with regard to rules, regulations, taxation, and citizenship;
- A political economy of exchange in Asian casinos should be proposed;
- Comparative studies on the global value chain should be done to gauge the economic impact of the casino sector
- The transformation of urban space and the impact of casinos on city life

- *The geo-historical conditions for the surge of Asian casinos*
- **DAY 1—Panel 1: The “Asian Casino Space”: An Alternative Model for Development**

James Warren set up the historical foundations of the origins of casinos in Southeast Asia. He described how the gambling houses were usually operated by Chinese entrepreneurs as tax farms. His main argument is that these gambling tax farms provided both independent and colonial states in the region with crucial revenue for state building, before being abolished in the early twentieth century. Focusing on Thailand, he highlighted how the gambling houses were an effective way of indirectly taxing and controlling the essential but transient Chinese labor force. The Thai government also saw them as a mechanism for encouraging the development of a cash economy. Then, drawing on a variety of sources including travelogues, newspapers and memoirs, he showed how members of the Thai elite and intelligentsia transformed the traditional gambling houses into “modern” casinos explicitly modeled on that in Monte Carlo. While some studies have highlighted the influence of the Las Vegas model upon some of these modern Asian casinos, he argued that the influence of the European model, with its emphasis on state regulation to ensure the fair distribution of benefits and the minimization of harm, should also be considered.

Lee Kah-Wee proposed to look at the emergence of casino-resorts in Singapore through a spatial and an architectural perspective. He identified and conceptualized three key mutations in the Singaporean context: 1. the dis-integration of the core; 2. the invisibilization of the casino; and 3. the urbanization of the building. Each of these mutations reveals the complex intersections between corporate interest and nationalist ideology at the scales of the building and the city. He argued that Marina Bay Sands should be seen as a contradictory site where the state – through its ideological commitments and institutional capacities – is able to engage in a very robust manner with global capital. By hiding the casino and blending the building into the aesthetic order of Marina Bay, Sands has become simultaneously a stage for the transmission of nationalist imagination and a lucrative node of the casino industry. He suggested that this “sanitized” model will facilitate the expansion of the casino industry into the metropolitan centers of Asia.

Sheyla Zandonai offered an anthropological account of the gambling liberalization in Macau. She analyzed the impact of casino spaces over non-casino spaces. She argues that the emergence of casino enclaves has colonized space in Macau, emptying parts of the city from their prior existent or intended social, commercial, and symbolic functions. To some extents, it has also generated gambling-led sprawls that weakened economic diversity and the livelihood of small and medium enterprises, thus affecting the sociality of place and the intimacy of city life. While enabling operations of gentrification and tourism densification, casino development has transformed the city space, disrupting the idea of development the political economy of gambling might have originally espoused.

Kearrin Sims took on a political economy perspective to describe how low-income countries such as Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, have promoted gambling enclaves

within Special Economic Zones as a means to fast-track economic growth, willing to replicate the economic successes of casinos in Macau and Singapore. With a primary focus on two casino towns in northern Laos, his presentation sought to highlight the place-based specificities of Southeast Asia's casinos and the manner in which these sites of 'variegated sovereignty' have reconfigured the livelihoods and socio-cultural practices of local residents. He argued that Laos' northern casinos cannot be understood without appreciating both the manner in which the Government of Laos has used these investments to expand state power and the transnational vice economies in which these casinos are embedded. He questioned the viability of Laos' casino towns as a model for sustained economic growth and poverty alleviation.

The discussions led by **Pál Nyíri** dealt with the question of the temporal and spatial specificity of the casino model in Asia. Why are casinos thriving in Asia and not in Europe? Is there a different model in Asia? What is specific to this region and the timing? Where here and now? What is the current conjunction? We need to go the meso-level to answer more specifically than simply saying 'it is because of neoliberal capitalism'. **Pál** noted that many contributions referred to the notion of 'exception' in the context of neoliberal capitalism (Aihwa Ong; Giovanni Arrighi). However, nobody described the relationships between the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) where the casinos are located and the other SEZs specialized in manufacturing and trade. Does it matter that some SEZs produce socks while others 'vice'? If it does matter, how? It is particularly intriguing that some people are willing to take the risk to lose so much and that this behavior resonates more with a particular cultural repertoire. Casinos are obviously liminal spaces and contact zones. We need to find out more about the entanglement between money and desires. How aspirations, desires and lives have been changed by casinos? (on this matter, cf. Chris Lyttleton, *Intimate Economies of Development: Mobility, Sexuality and Health in Asia*, 2014). The final point, casinos are not some sorts of non-spaces. All the contributions show that the state is always present, in various versions. It is clear that the state is reaching these spaces rather than these spaces are trying to escape the state. The question of visibility/invisibility is then important: when does the state want to be disguised/camouflaged or in the place?

- **DAY 1—Panel 2: Governing the Gambling Industry in Southeast Asia, China, and Beyond**

The first two presentations looked into the newly opened integrated casino resorts in Singapore as exceptional sites of mobility and interconnectivity. They examined the complex linkages between transnational mobilities of laborers and consumers and the transforming regulatory regime that evolves with the emergence of a casino economy.

Using Aihwa Ong's (2008) 'biopolitical assemblages', **Kamalini Ramdas** approaches casino spaces and their associated economies as a constantly mutating 'experimental assemblage' that pivot on the logics of making exception. By invoking exceptions, the Singapore state hovers between neoliberal reasoning favoring economic growth and biopolitical control to safeguard its population. By studying the unintended mushrooming of money-lending and pawn broking shops in Singapore's residential

estates and the emerging spaces of non-governmental organizations who work with problem gamblers, she showed how state and non-state entities have become part of the assemblage that enables the space of the casinos in Singapore to continue functioning as exception.

Juan Zhang described how entertainment, culture, arts, shopping, services, and gaming in the casino resorts are packaged as a total “experience” of fun and consumption. Through a Foucauldian analysis, she discussed how fun is governed and experienced in and around Singapore’s casino space. She argued that fun is a key rationale that legitimizes the state’s project of reinventing Singapore as an exciting global city. Fun, as both attraction and discipline, is fundamental to the experiential capitalism.

The discussions turned around the conceptual framework of the papers drawing on Ong’s ‘exception’ and the foucauldian analysis explaining the experience of fun. Lee Kah-Wee suggested that Aihwa Ong’s interpretation of ‘exception’ closely linked to neoliberalism might limit the scope of this concept and prevent us from seeing the much more historical perspective. Thongchai was puzzled with this association too, and asked in which ways what the contributors described was neoliberal and exceptional? In the same direction, Philippe suggested that nation-building should be looked at more closely to understand Singapore’s casino strategy. He reminded us that Singapore was built in the context of the Cold War to counter Communism. Is Singapore still continuing this project through the casino project? Singapore has embraced neoliberal capitalism and become a major pillar in the global system. Singapore tries to protect the poor from gambling but in fact, we could also interpret that Singapore makes it explicit or implicit that lower-income people are not part of the global system. Indeed, Singapore protects, but at the same time carries out a kind of hygienic policy, which could be seen as a continuation of its nation-building project.

The two other presentations focused on the socio-economic impact of casino development in Cambodia. While most of Southeast Asian governments consider casinos to be revenue generators and economic development engines, **Thanyathip Sripana** argued that they should also be seen as a threat to social stability, since gambling’s social costs seem to exceed the economic benefits. Based on fieldwork in casinos along the Vietnam-Cambodia border, she described the negative impact on local livelihood among Khmer and Vietnamese gamblers and their families.

Erin Lin used quantitative methods to assess the socio-economic impact of casinos in rural Cambodia. Drawing from a spatiotemporal dataset, she identified the location and the opening dates of the country’s 57 casinos, and correlate them to the gambling behavior, income, and household member occupations of over 10,800 geo-referenced households, from the 2004, 2008, and 2012 waves of the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey (CSES). She found evidence that living near a large casino town has clear social and economic benefits while living near a small casino town does not. Specifically, villages near a large casino town are richer, more equal, and safer than villages near a small casino town. However, living near a casino town,

large or small, has no impact on local rates of gambling. Therefore, if state leaders continue to turn to casino-oriented development strategies, it would be in the border community's interest to develop major casino towns.

The discussions emphasized the ambiguous role of borderlands in the development of casinos. Thanya mentioned the 'secret strategy' of Hun Sen about implanting border casinos as a way to prevent the neighboring countries and especially Vietnam from taking control of the land. Border casinos have also an ambiguous attitude towards Cambodian customers. In the law, they are forbidden to enter casinos, but in reality, as long as they lose money, managers don't care about their nationality. Some concerns were raised about the reliability of the surveys. Moreover, Erin found out that whatever the size of casinos, they have no impact on the rate of gambling. However, Thanya noted from her field experience that people don't tell if they play and lose money in casinos. Finally, if it is true that major casinos are a better deal, they attract more migrants but the surveys don't take into account that group.

- **DAY 2—Panel 3: Blurring Boundaries: the Legal Grey Area of Casino-Oriented Development and its Ethical Implications**

The last four presentations investigated the blurring boundaries between legal and illegal practices as well as the moral dilemmas and ethical implications inherent in the development of a casino economy.

Tim Simpson explored the functional role the city-state of Macau plays in the post-socialist market reforms of the People's Republic of China, and therefore in China's emergence as a key factor in the global economy. He showed how Macau has become the world's most lucrative site of casino gaming due to profits emanating from a mutually-beneficial 'bargain' among the state, an oligarchy of casino concessionaires, (dis)organized labor, and Chinese organized crime. A key factor in this arrangement is a type of informal business network that functions within a 'tribute-trade' relationship which has existed in East Asia for a millennium. He argued that Macau today manifests a 'new medievalism' that is reminiscent of the operations of the 16th century Genoese-Iberian regime of capitalism during which the city was founded. He contended that today's emergent Sinocentric East Asian economy depends on such resurgent pre-modern forms of governance and finance.

Petcharat Lovichakorntikul proposed to analyze casinos expanding in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) as micro-para-statal areas, in which different versions of the rule of law apply than in normal parts of the country. In these micro-para-statal areas, Chinese capital has been used to create enclaves of cowboy capitalism, where the rule of law is enforced by the owners of capital, usually in collusion with representatives of the state, who benefit personally as a result. Workers are generally subject to exploitative conditions with little guarantee of receiving due reward for their labor and no rights to collective bargaining or freedom of association. She argued that connectivity with surrounding areas could be of considerable importance in determining the nature of conditions experienced by workers. This then has a direct impact on the willingness and ability of workers to

provide remittances and to obtain competencies and experiences that can subsequently contribute to local economic and social development.

The discussions engaged with the conception of state borders and the changing nature of capitalism. Peppino Ortoleva provided an interesting description of classical definitions of the state (the 'onion-peeling' shape). Danielle Tan contested the notion of para-state suggested by Petcharat to talk about the Chinese presence in northern Laos. She suggested instead to look at more closely to the traditional forms of governing in Southeast Asia (the galactic polity as well as the tax-farming system as a form of discharge, in the Weberian definition) to better understand the contemporary politics of governing as well as the strategy of 'weak states'. Drawing on Braudel and Tilly, she reminded the fundamental role of outlaws and pirates in the process of European state-formation and capitalist expansion from the sixteenth century onwards. Similarly, Southeast Asian borderlands can be seen as a site of fervent state activity that is aimed at co-opting 'illicit practices' within the state's broader agenda of consolidating lowland rule over the peripheral uplands. However, Thongchai and Pál raised the concern about the temptation to go back to pre-modern patterns, or to historicize traditional models (such as the tribute system) to explain contemporary situations. Philippe added that we tend to forget the maritime aspect of Southeast Asia and the role of diasporic networks (especially the overseas Chinese) in the process of state-formation. Finally, Tak-Wing questioned why do casinos have to be located in ambiguous spaces or fuzzy places, such as the borderlands, to thrive.

Based on ethnographic research on card-dealers and labor brokering agencies, **Melody Chia-Wen Lu** explored the process of labor brokering from China and Taiwan to Singapore to illustrate that a grey zone in the transnational casino space is necessary in resolving conflicting logics in the constellation of overlapping regulatory regimes and inherent moral dilemmas. This grey zone of the labor brokering differs from clandestine migration and border-crossing in two aspects: 1) it appeals to the logics of leisure, gaming and cosmopolitan glamour, echoing the rhetoric of the integrated resorts; 2) it is circumscribed by the states' desire to regulate in maintaining a "clean" and ethical casino space.

Teri Shaffer Yamada looked at the development of the NagaWorld Casino in Phnom Penh. She showed how this project incorporates many aspects of the tragic shadow side of Cambodia's rapid development. The Naga's public history includes suspicion of covert deals and political favoritism to money laundering. Its development plans share a common goal with many other monumental projects throughout Cambodia: the displacement of impoverished people from their land in order to expand. Teri also explored the irony of the Naga's exploitation of Cambodian traditional culture as a type of "tourist orientalism" as well as the Naga's connection to the Chinese junket market and its benefit from the recent tourism agreement in 2015 between Cambodia and China.

Peppino noted that casinos activities are always related to 'grey areas'. That's why gambling needs legitimation. The legitimation strategy built by the state relies on the discourse of development, the rule of law, or has recourse to the social responsibility

motto in order to protect the gamblers and their families. Despite these efforts, the grey nature of gambling can't be totally changed, because gamblers also need a magical circle to play and the grey areas of casino activities manage to preserve their bubble and their magical circle. He also asked why this tendency of building huge casinos? Philippe suggested that it might have to do with power legitimacy. Danielle agreed with this observation, suggesting that, while in the past, monumental temples were the symbol of power, mega-casinos have become the new symbol of Asian modernity, and have been erected as the new model of tourism promoted and publicized by the ASEAN itself. However, Melody pointed out that we shouldn't focus on the state's goal, because the private sector is also driven by its own logic. Tak-Wing added that the economics of scale is an important factor. The grandiose scale of casino-resorts is also designed to attract wealth, since casino operators make a lot of money on other activities besides gambling.

- **A Roundtable on Reshaping Asian Studies led by Dr Thongchai Winichakul**

After two days of intensive discussions on casinos, it was difficult for the participants to shift to another format and exercise and to look at the bigger picture. I have to say that Thongchai's presentation didn't get the attention it deserved. He reflected on the changing landscape of Asian studies. First, he reminded us how Asian studies are still shaped by the Euro-American academia: first by the European "Oriental studies" during the colonial period, and later on by the American "area studies" during the Cold War. Each period entails certain definitions of "Asia", certain emphases on subjects, sub-fields, disciplines, and politics of knowledge. However, he wanted to convey the idea that the conditions of Asian studies in the Euro-American traditions have fundamentally gone. In the context of the rise of the "Asian century", the "Orient" is the new producer of Asian studies. We can observe for example that Asian studies scholars in Euro-American academies have increasingly/ steadily been Asians or from Asia in the past 20 years.

Nevertheless, Asian studies are facing new challenges. First, their conceptualization should be rethought, allowing new spatial redefinitions to enrich their approach to knowledge (especially the language-and-culture-based approach to knowledge – or the "Area-based Knowledge"). Second, we have to be careful that criticisms on Area Studies should NOT be a false reason for abandoning the "Area/language-based knowledge". Third, in terms of methodology, he re-asserted that there are DIFFERENT KINDS of knowledge production, irreplaceable by one another. We shouldn't oppose "science with quantifiable data + deductive method" against "language-based with interpretative method".

As a matter of fact, the production of Asian studies is shifting and becoming more diverse. The shift to Asia is particularly visible: the rise of SEA studies programs within Southeast Asian countries; networks of scholars across countries, continents, and academies, especially the intra-Asian networks; some are trying to find their respective "niches" and novel ideas to produce a particular kind of SEA studies, e.g. Singapore. Moreover, the spatial definition of Asia and Asian regions have been rearticulated, becoming multiple: Nation-state remains an important subject of studies, but it is decreasing, therefore de-centering the land and Lowlands and turning to maritime and Uplands; more focus on post-national spaces, such as the

borderland studies.

So, how to engage with the changes in Asian studies? There is an urgent need to understand the different conditions or “environments” of the academia that produce Asian studies, especially among Asian countries. It is also important to acknowledge the significance of language and academic translations, as they are necessary for the engagement across multiple Asian studies, networking, intellectual synergy and flows and would prevent from an “intellectual protectionism” (the enclave of vernacular scholarship). In a nutshell, **we need to reflect on flexible methodological spaces: meaning, the ability to think and define space flexibly according to subjects/issues.**

In the end, it is what we did during this workshop on casinos.

Outcomes (conclusion of discussion, plans/ideas for the future)

- **The wrap-up session on casinos:**

The wrap-up session began with a roundtable in which all participants were invited to tell the main ideas they thought important. To summarize:

- We are doing research on a very recent and specific phenomenon but this field enables to better understand the global trends, more specifically, the transformation of the state and the changing nature of capitalism.
- This specific topic raises the question about methodology, since it is very difficult to approach the grey areas, to decipher the invisible or the camouflage, and to go beyond the discourse and the rumors. How can we verify the facts? How can we trace the money and follow the people, including the VIP customers, the regular gamblers, or the migrant workers? If we manage to do that, it would be a large contribution to understanding global capitalism and transnational migration.
- We need more anthropological studies to explore how the lives of people have changed because of the casino industry. We need to further explore the cultural dimension in the production of ‘consumer-citizens’ mediated by the gambling industry.
- We also need more urban studies to analyze the monumentality of casinos, in terms of image and physical and urban landscape transformations.
- About the geo-historical conditions for the surge of casinos in Asia: regional historical patterns are important but we have to be careful about not over-stating a historical revival.
- More comparative work: we need to describe and analyze the varieties and specificities of casinos within Asia. The Call for Papers identified more than 27 abstracts on casino development throughout Asia (Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, China). The abstracts shared the same research questions. We need to know more about casinos development in maritime Southeast Asia, and in different religious contexts (Muslim societies for example).
- The political economy of Asian casinos: we need to show how modern Asian casinos are different from the traditional ones, but also from elsewhere. For example, they are different because of the ways they are operated and the ways labor is organized, but more specifically, how is this sector distinctive from the others? Why do casinos thrive in spaces of exception? Because of ethical issues, moral, political,

economic, operation issues? What kind of exceptions is that? We haven't been able to answer these questions. Finally, we also need to better understand the wide range of strategies conducted by the states and their rationale.

Afterwards, the discussion moved on concrete outcomes, mainly in terms of publications. Publishing in the IIAS Newsletter, academic journals (such as *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Pacific Affairs*), and in the form of an edited volume was evoked. Melody Lu emphasized that given the time constraint of all participants as well as the pressure put on young scholars to publish in high-ranking journals the publication of an edited volume would not be a priority. Since Danielle Tan is uncertain about her academic future, the Macau/Singapore team is willing to take the lead on the publication. After the workshop, Tak-wing Ngo met the chief editor of *Pacific Affairs* (PA). PA agrees to consider a special issue and will release the published articles for an edited book after 1-year embargo. So if everything works well, we will be working towards 1 journal special issue and 1 edited book at the same time. However, the Macau/Singapore team as well as Danielle Tan decided not to pursue the IIAS Newsletter, as it would take too much work for 2 articles in the February issue.

At the end of the day, this workshop was a good opportunity to consolidate and enrich the *Casino and Development in Asia Research Network* with new academic prospects. The day-field trip in Poipet gave a unique chance for scholars who are not familiar with Southeast Asia's terrains—and especially with its borderlands—to get a good picture of Southeast Asian casinos' peculiarity compared to Singapore and Macau. Danielle Tan secured the field trip before the workshop and her preliminary exploration of Poipet offered a contextual and comparative background. Finally, Peppino Ortoleva's participation provided rich comparative analyses with Western casinos. He is currently working on organizing a workshop that would deal with the impulses that move gamblers, trying to go beyond the prohibitionist and/or the medicalizing position, and exploring potential policies to reduce the personal and social costs of gambling. His workshop might open further collaborations with *the Casino and Development in Asian Network*.

- **The lessons learnt from the two roundtables on reshaping Asian studies (Lyon+Siem Reap)**

The two workshops in Lyon and Siem Reap showed how such topics as borderlands or casinos could help think differently about Asia, because these angles oblige us to jointly think about space, scales, and time, in flexible ways and through an interdisciplinary approach.

Borderlands as well as casinos have been fertile ground for questioning state-centric / dynastic historical and political science theories of the state in Asia, not only with reference to Willem van Schendel's and James Scott's notions of *Zomia* but also with reference to *Mandala* models of the state (cf. Wolters, Tambiah) as well as with the importance of vernacular (Asian) trade in larger Asia (cf. Reid, Wade, Lombard) and of religious missionary networks (e.g. Engseng Ho) that operate partly *beyond* the state and largely shape(d) states.

We may take globalization as point of departure rather than as an a threat to cultural and/or geographic specificity, for example by looking at the locally specific inflections of global processes like the “agrarian transition”, enclosures of commons (beyond land and natural resources), or the political economy of Asian casinos.

Within the two workshops we managed to ask a number of pertinent theoretical questions which we did not answer but which may serve as the starting point for new theorizations. In the first workshop, borderlands have usually been depicted as spaces of *despair* (compulsion); when and how did such spaces become spaces of *hope* (opportunity), and how do *hope* and *despair* articulate? What are the effects of “centering the margins” on the (state-market-knowledge) centers themselves? What are the roles of intermediary ethnic and religious categories in bridging borders, classes? The second workshop highlighted how casinos, as a new research topic, can also enrich the discussions about space, borderlands, connectivity, state-formation processes, center/peripheries power relations, new notions of sovereignty and regimes of governance, but also the entanglement between money, desires and aspirations.

In some ways, the two workshops led to the same—and not controversial—conclusion that the history of Southeast Asia has been, so far, the history of the lowlands (in reference to *the Art of not being Governed* by James Scott). To complete this history and to connect it to the global perspective, we need to further explore and incorporate peripheral spaces (such as the uplands and the borderlands), the maritime connections, as well as new liminal spaces such as the casinos.

During the first workshop, Oscar Salamink emphasized that if we want Asian studies to thrive, solid research on the above issues requires theoretical (disciplinary) sophistication based on the observation that (1) European models are *not* universal and that (2) Asian patterns and processes are not simply *local* (with reference to Eurocentric versions of universality) but *global* as well. At the same time, such research can *only* be based on a combination of in-depth linguistic and cultural knowledge of local life worlds and of (inter)disciplinary sophistication and theorization. Participants in both workshops raised the concern of dichotomous education programs and hence the future of area studies at a time when area (Asia) studies seems to be under threat, and in context that pulls area studies and disciplines apart.

Indeed, within Europe (more than in North America) undergraduate students have to often choose between *either* area studies (language and culture) *or* disciplines (like history, political science, anthropology), leading to (1) an unhealthy competition between area studies and disciplines in terms of personnel, and to (2) a situation where it often becomes difficult for students to study both language/culture and a discipline. As far as Southeast Asia is concerned, Brenda Yeoh emphasized the difficulty at the National University of Singapore to encourage students to study Southeast Asian languages, a crucial element to foster cross-cultural Southeast Asian studies. Therefore, concerted effort within Europe, the US, and Asia should be done

to think about education curriculum in terms of conciliating area studies (language and culture) and social sciences. It should be seen as a priority to form future researchers in Asian studies.

Appendix

- I. List of participants, program, list of abstract and poster, cf. Program booklet.
- II. Map of Casinos in South-East and East Asia, 2015.
- III. Thongchai Winichakul's PowerPoint