

Call for Papers

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Climate Change: Causes, Consequences, Countermovement

In Southeast Asia and around the world, awareness for the consequences of climate change is growing. Most recently, millions of demonstrators worldwide took to the streets during the global climate strike in September 2019, including in Manila and Jakarta. They protested the inertia of political and economic actors. Today, there is widespread scientific consensus that the massively increased, man-made emissions of greenhouse gases since the beginning of industrialisation are the main cause for global warming. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change emphasises that global carbon emissions would have to be reduced to net null in order to mitigate the consequences of climate change. In spite of this, the dominant capitalist logic of growth and consumption continues to boost carbon emissions by promoting ever more new energy-intensive technologies. An increasing mobility of a growing world population, especially through air traffic, is playing its part.

Many modern developments are seen as great accomplishments. Aside from the facilitation of mobility, technological innovations are sought-after commodities and signs of growing wealth in Southeast Asia. Countries like Indonesia boast impressive levels of economic growth. However, this positive balance is based on climate damaging economic sectors.

Coal mining and cement production among other things accelerate the release of substances with a negative impact on our climate. Forests and peatlands, the most important sites of natural carbon storage, have been damaged since decades for palm oil plantations and other extractive industries. Local and international actors foster these industries for different reasons. Often, foreign companies that cater to the demands of Western markets and/or strive for establishing similar consumer behaviour in Southeast Asia are involved. Illegal fire clearance regularly escalates into large-scale uncontrollable forest fires. Such fires cover entire regions with smog, have devastating health effects, and additionally fuel climate change.

Looking at the annual per capita carbon emissions in Southeast Asia, the picture is very mixed: from Brunei with 22.2 tonnes per capita as the negative frontrunner to 'frugal' Laos with just 0.3 tonnes (World Bank 2014, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC>). But it is precisely in Southeast Asia where – as a result of colonial and neo-colonial resource exploitation – many of the 'trouble spots' of global climate change can be found. Indonesia, for instance, is the biggest climate sinner in Southeast Asia because of its emissions from deforestation and the burning of peat bogs.

At the same time, Southeast Asian countries are suffering particularly badly from the consequences of climate change, such as floods caused by tropical storms and sea-level rise. People's living conditions are already directly affected today. The megacity Jakarta, for

instance, is at risk of perishing into the sea; in the medium-term there will be more and more extreme weather phenomena as well as water and food shortages; biodiversity in the sea and on land is also threatened by rising temperatures.

In many Southeast Asian countries political measures against climate change are taken. However, corruption and the interests of economic elites, who foster closely links with politics, often stand in the way of these measures. Furthermore, transnational economic cooperation is also often based on an interest in natural resources. Then again, Western companies in particular are under pressure from an increasingly critical public and announce the implementation of sustainability standards in their supply chains and the minimisation of their activities' ecological impact. Nevertheless, they continue to operate on the basis of a capitalist logic of growth. Such initiatives are therefore often seen as mere 'greenwashing' by activists in Southeast Asia.

Approaches that fundamentally challenge an economic model based on endless growth therefore often stem from civil society. Their actors go beyond an individualizing critique of consumption by fundamentally questioning the uninhibited exploitation of natural resources. Furthermore, they discuss and implement ideas for alternative economic organisation – for example in form of cooperatives. In the field of development cooperation, too, there are forward-looking projects that make use of local knowledge, supported by civil society groups or individual activists. In the agricultural sector, for instance, this includes countermeasures to combat climate change and initiatives to adapt to changing climatic conditions.

Even though the poorest population groups are often worst affected by its consequences, in Southeast Asia the issue of climate change is often seen as an elite discourse. Moreover, there are a plethora of implicit accusations of 'backwardness' inherent in approaches to development cooperation, which may be answered by reference to the 'elite'. But it is worth investigating even more precisely where other causes of this discrepancy lie. For example, in the unequal access to high-quality education and thus to knowledge about man-made climate change and the ability to critically question its causes.

We will engage with these questions among others:

- Where are the effects of man-made climate change visible most drastically in Southeast Asia?
- How do different actors in Southeast Asia view the tension between the economic significance and the negative impact on the climate of relevant industries (e.g. coal, cement)?
- Which impact do agriculture, livestock breeding, and the cultivation of fodder as well as palm oil have on climate change? What role do local smallholders and agricultural corporations play in this?
- To what extent are Southeast Asian countries addressing the global phenomenon of climate change politically, including on a transnational level?

- What role does (access to) education play in Southeast Asian countries in relation to climate change?
- Which arguments and forms of action are used by local initiatives to address the issue of climate change? Where does transnational or global networking take place?
- To what extent does criticism of capitalism play a role in the discourses of the Southeast Asian climate movement?
- What are examples for local adaptation processes to changing climatic conditions? How can they be shaped effectively?
- Which impulses, for example towards 'climate-smart' agriculture or renewable energies, take place on the part of development cooperation and how are such interventions seen by local actors?
- What role does mobility – especially the rapidly growing aviation sector – play in the climate debate in Southeast Asia and which ideas and concepts are emerging for the transformation of the transport sector?
- Which concrete concepts and experiences are there with renaturation (e.g. of peat lands) and what role do local knowledge and the international exchange of experience play (scientific cooperation, UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration)?

We would like to address these questions in as many different ways as possible: reports, background analyses, data analyses, (biographical) portraits, interviews, photo essays, and reviews of films/books/music on the topic are possible forms. We are looking forward to your ideas!

Deadline for articles (maximum 10,000 characters) is January 6, 2020 (in individual cases and after consultation with the editors a later deadline may be possible). Please submit a short abstract (max 1,000 characters) to the editors in advance by November 20, 2019 at the latest.

Please send us suitable, good quality photos for the article (at least 1000 px width, at least 300 dpi). Copyright questions should be clarified in advance.

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