

Editorial: Sustainability, Socio-Political Activism, and International and Interregional Relations

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This October issue of ASEAS presents a thematically open collection of articles, marking the second issue under our new publication scheme. The contributions span three overarching themes: (1) (Sustainable) Tourism and Material Culture Studies; (2) Social and Political Activism; and (3) International and Interregional Political and Economic Intersections (Historical and Contemporary). Geographically, the articles cover a range of countries including Vietnam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. China, while not part of Southeast Asia, is also discussed in the context of its expanding political and economic influence in the region through the New Belt and Road Initiative, launched in 2013.

Related to the first theme, four articles deal with the topics of sustainable tourism and material culture from different perspectives. While the articles by Nguyen et al. (2024) and Rostami et al. (2024) explore guest-host interactions through the lenses of ethnicity and gender, with case studies from Vietnam and Malaysia respectively, Cornell et al. (2024) focus on the supply side of so-called 'ghost kitchens' in the Philippines. All three articles address challenges and opportunities in complex guest-host interactions: Nguyen et al. (2024) illustrate how attracting certain tourist groups can promote sustainability in ethnic tourism in northern Vietnam; Cornell et al. (2024) show the potential long-term prospects that 'ghost kitchens' create for young Filipinas; and Rostami et al. (2024) highlight the social and emotional challenges faced by solo female travelers in Malaysia. Singdee's (2024) article offers an examination of how uniforms of US soldiers during the Second Indochina War or the Vietnam War in the 1960s became coveted collector's items in Thailand, contributing to a kind of personalized culture of remembrance. This theme extends the focus of a previous special issue of ASEAS on tourism and the sustainable development goals in Southeast Asia (Trupp & Dolezal, 2020), contributing to the exploration of the intersections between tourism, sustainability, and cultural expressions.

The second category, 'Social and Political Activism', shifts the focus towards Indonesia. In their article, Duile and Ricardo (2024) provide an in-depth analysis of Indonesian atheists' practical and legal problems when speaking out in public. On the one hand, religious nationalism has been part of the Indonesian

state philosophy since the country's independence from the Netherlands in 1949, and conservative tendencies permeate social institutions since the 2000s, also due to the growing influence of Salafi and Wahabi interpretations of Islam. On the other hand, public expressions of atheism seem to be becoming a more socially and politically acceptable counterpoint and are seen less as a threat to society. The second article by Lengauer (2024) is an interview with researcher, activist, and photographer Frans Ari Prasetyo, presenting a personal, informed account of the latest (student) protests in Indonesia against the revision of the regional election law, accompanied by visual material from Prasetyo himself. These articles stand in line with previous ASEAS publications on political resistance and state power (e.g., Einzenberger & Schaffer, 2018).

The third and final category, 'International and Interregional Political and Economic Intersections (Historical and Current)', features an article, in which Zara (2024) explores the historic relations between the Philippines and Indonesia during their respective independence movements in the mid-1940s. The focus here is how Indonesian politicians, intellectuals, and feminists used Philippine independence as a blueprint for shaping an independent Indonesian nation.

Together, these articles offer important insights into the political and economic entanglements that have shaped Southeast Asia, both in historical contexts and contemporary geopolitics.



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DISCLOSURE

The author declares no conflict of interest.

