

## 1. Uneven Geographies, Ecologies, Technologies and Human Futures

### Your proposal

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### This thematic cluster

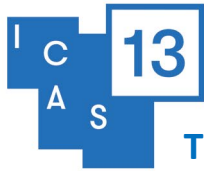
The uncontrolled transformation of the globe, the melting glaciers and receding coastlines, has accelerated with the impact of mining, marine and coastal engineering, single crop agriculture, infrastructure development such as dams, highways, urban mega-projects, nuclear testing, space exploration, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence (AI), and the like. The succession of catastrophic floods as well as cases of air and water pollution emergencies have now become the norm. Under this broad thematic cluster, we invite contributors to discuss questions associated with human-technology-nature interactions. Topics include ecological vulnerabilities and their impact on human futures – landslides and soil erosion, drought, excessive rainfalls, and other forms of ecological degradations. In addition, new and sophisticated technologies, including the Internet, have variously transformed the society and the environment we live in. This theme invites discussion of geopolitical issues arising from modes of global governance such as surveillance platforms, regulations and policies, and emergent international coalitions, new alignments and competitions.

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### The local context

Countless examples of Indonesian folklore and literature narrate how people adapt and cope with the region's 'natural elements'. In East Java, numerous ancient traditions depict the beauty of volcanoes like Bromo-Semeru and Ijen craters, but also their potential catastrophic consequences for humans. The sea is likewise both a source of life and sometimes the origin of disastrous tsunamis. Disasters, natural and human-made, are an everyday reality of the Indonesian life. However, in recent decades, the Indonesian government has been employing various sophisticated technologies to mitigate the

disasters' effects on society. In doing so, it has brought together the latest technology and ancient inherited wisdom in coping with the dangers of the natural environment.



Themes

28 July-1 August 2024

Surabaya, Indonesia

## 2. From Oceanic Crossroads: Empires, Networks and Histories

### Your proposal

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### This thematic cluster

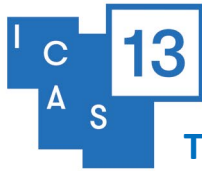
This thematic cluster embraces discussions of aquatic connections in global history, as well as water's connection to present day (geopolitical) power dynamics, such as the Nusantara archipelago, Africa-Asia, inter-pacific, Indian, Chinese, Buddhist, Arab, Islamic, European, Christian, North American, US-promoted global 'market-democratic' neoliberal order, PRC's pan-Asian economic systems, old and new Cold Wars and alliance systems. Beyond these examples of integrated, usually unequal, systems, often associated with slavery, colonialism and geo-political hegemonies, are questions connected to multiple, intersecting oppositions: between maritime and continental security and trade systems; between empires and networks; and between Northern dominance and Southern experiences. As well, it addresses diverse counter-hegemonic efforts, from anti-colonial movements and non-alignment to, more generally, the invention of a Global South consciousness inaugurated by the visionary Afro-Asia Bandung Conference in 1955. However, the rise of new nation-states in the postcolonial world also continues many colonial practices to some extent. Many voices, stories and even artefacts – whether located on land or underwater – are still waiting to be heard, excavated and narrated. By looking beyond colonial and/or national narratives in the past centuries, this theme invites proposals to stimulate new historiographies for our present time.

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### The local context

Nenek Moyangku orang Pelaut (My ancestors were sailors) is one of the most popular Indonesian children's songs. Created by an Indonesian nationalist woman in 1940, this song is a reminder of how important water bodies are for the people in the archipelago. The Indian Ocean, and, at its core, the Indonesian archipelago, have long been recognized as a crossroads of many of the world's cultures,

ideas, and a global commercial hub. Bugis, Madurese, Javanese, Malay, Indian, Arab, Chinese, European, Japanese, and American maritime trade networks converged and competed over the shallow waters of Indonesia, including Surabaya as one of its foremost port-cities. Major empires, from Sriwijaya to Majapahit along the coastal basins, emerged here resulting from intense exchange between the islands and the Eurasian and African landmasses. European colonialism and imperialism created significant changes and left many legacies until the present time, including the very existence of nation-states in these oceanic bodies. After the struggle for independence, national narratives frequently suppressed, silenced, and erased the histories that did not align with state interests and new nationalist projects. Such narratives often neglected the importance of water bodies as crucial connectors, framing them instead as barriers or borders between territories.



Themes

28 July-1 August 2024

Surabaya, Indonesia

### 3. Prosperity, the Pains of Growth and its Governance

#### Your proposal

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#### This thematic cluster

The unwavering pursuit for material prosperity, and the social and ecological price at which it comes, forms the basis of this effort to bring together scholarship on political economy. Both on a micro and macro scale, this interdisciplinary cluster invites explorations of the parameters, indices, policies and ideologies undergirding economic growth, from productivity, labor, capital, markets to financial regulations, governance mechanisms and their costs (the 'pains'). We take the topic of economic prosperity and its growing pains in Asia as our central point of inquiry open to all disciplines of study. Through multi-disciplinary approaches and experiences, we want to critically assess this desire for material growth and the new tensions it reveals across societies, from everyday politics to the philosophical limits of the quest itself.

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#### The local context

Today, people in East Java province are on average at least 5.5 times more productive and richer than they were 40 years ago, as a stroll through Surabaya's business district will confirm. Nationwide, the average Indonesian has become at least 3.5 times richer within the same time span. More people managed to escape from poverty and the country increasingly moved away from a predominantly rural to an urban economy. In 2022, 55 per cent of East Java's population and 57 per cent of Indonesia's population lives in urban areas. Matching a typical 'southern' (as in the Global South) Asian pattern, this significant improvement of material welfare took place in a relatively short period of time, making a number of social excesses and tensions – which can be seen as growing pains – inevitable. Surabaya, for example, is on its way to becoming a large agglomerated metropolitan centre. As a result, it experiences rapid suburban development and has its shares of acute transportation and infrastructure

problems, phenomena of gentrification, slums, and environmental degradation. Such processes of economic development through 'creative destruction' make traditional and artisanal industries and their practitioners fade away. Meanwhile rent-seeking distorts the effective reallocation of limited resources amongst many of the city's inhabitants.

## 4. Seeing from the Neighbourhood: States, Communities and Human Mobility

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### This thematic cluster

This thematic cluster will critically explore the complicated interaction of community, society and state in Asia and beyond. The cities of this extremely diversified region continue to occupy multifaceted profiles due to differences in the processes of nation-state construction and the varying levels of economic and institutional development. The presence of a major transnational corporate complex that possesses the financial strength and authority to shape these cities, frequently in conjunction with local authorities, complicates large-scale urban transitions. These transformations are often carried out with the complicity of local authorities. Contributions that look at how local communities address issues as diverse yet connected as neighbourhood(s), land-based, water-based and amphibious settlements, rural-urban-peri-urban migration, urban infrastructures (both built and digital), state-led gentrification projects, formal and informal urban publics and questions of living close to borders, be it forests, coastlines, rivers, mountains and the like, are also welcome in this thematic cluster.

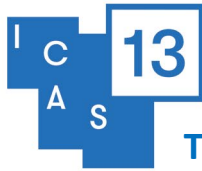
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### The local context

As early as the 14th century, Surabaya emerged as a major urban settlement that developed into Indonesia's second-biggest city. The rapid urbanization and industrialization during the colonial period created complex legacies which affected but were not limited to the position of the traditional neighbourhood (kampung). The term kampung in Surabaya and elsewhere in Indonesia has obtained a more derogatory meaning in modern days as a place where the authorities wanted to exert their power or even demolish it in the name of development. They see the kampung as backward in terms of its infrastructure and therefore unsuitable for the urban environment. At the same time, distinct urban landscapes that mix elements of rurality (the so-called "village-community") flourished in many

parts of Asia, especially in Southeast Asia. Even in the Khmer language, *kampung* is used to denote a port or haven, indicating the dynamic mobilities between people in many cities at the dawn of the region's Age of Commerce. With this in mind, a *kampung* is not only a site but also a communal way to see the world and to be in the world. Attempts at moulding collective human settlements into functional, class-based, ethnic compartmentalisations imposed by state and corporate norms – that have elsewhere succeeded in fragmenting societies – have so far failed to fully obliterate this truly Indonesian but also Southeast Asian way of living in society. The *kampung* spirit has something to teach the world!





Themes

Surabaya, Indonesia

28 July-1 August 2024

## 5. Transmitting Knowledges: Institutions, Objects and Practices

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### This thematic cluster

This cluster provides an inspiring environment for participants to critically approach different modes of knowledge production, transmission and circulation in a post-colonial, multi-centred, neoliberal – tending towards authoritarianism – age. Discussions may include the role of university in society, the 'commodified' university versus its original civic role, as an important agent of social cohesion and change. It also encompasses alternative channels of knowledge creation and circulation, curriculum (co-)creation, 'embodied' knowledge(s), pedagogical models. Beyond schools and universities, there are other educational knowledge structures, some 'formal', some 'informal' like museums, libraries, pesantrens, and archives and their changing roles. In addition, there are vernacular, inter-generational and non-formal sites of learning and knowledge production. Critical appreciations of different forms of media like radio, television, mobile phone and others as knowledge creators and disseminators are also welcome. The role of digital research, educational and informational formats and that of the future of the book along with other formats of knowledge dissemination, including sensorial, that of the arts, their civic and contestation role, and their commodification, should also be explored.

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### The local context

Surabaya is recognized as having several of the oldest and most respected pesantren, a type of Islamic learning institution, that still exist today. Historically, pesantren functioned as centres of knowledge production prior to modern institutions such as schools, universities and colleges partly replacing them during the colonial period. In the earlier time, when East Java was known as the centre of Javanese civilization during the Majapahit kingdom, important achievements were captured in various media, ranging from material objects to written texts (epigraphy and manuscripts) and oral tradition. These days, Surabaya and East Java feature an intellectual landscape in which ‘traditional’ or ‘alternative’ modes of knowledge creation, transmission, and circulation – such as pesantrens – coexist with established, institutionalized knowledge embodied by Western-inspired universities, museums, libraries, and NGOs. Amidst this multiplicity of types of knowledge and systems of knowledge production, the circulation of knowledge depends on various mediators, including artist collectives that employ alternative approaches to co-production and sharing, professional and amateur social media users, and independent media. In an age where democratic recession is felt in most countries, the roles of such mediators are increasingly important to counter instances of hegemonic state rule and abuse of power. Throughout Southeast Asia, independent news outlets are emerging in response to democratic decline and despair, and calls for human rights and freedom of expression. Examples include Rappler (Philippines), Prachatai (Thailand), and Project Multatuli (Indonesia).

## 6. Using the Arts, Media and Culture: Contestations and Collaborations

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### This thematic cluster

Contestations of cultural ownership are certainly not limited to Indonesia and its neighbours in Southeast Asia. In recent years, we have seen many claims and disputes regarding cultural heritage among nations. In recent years, the question of restitution of cultural artifacts challenges traditional legal perspectives, governance policies and museum practices around the world. Discussions of stolen or improperly traded objects are also re-emerging. Restitution processes redraw the interplay of forces between Northern and Southern institutions as well as the underlying mechanisms of cultural transmission and art circulation. The term ‘culture wars’ has now established itself everywhere in the world, mainly, but not exclusively, related to identity-based politics and its consequences. Despite the optimistic notion of collaboration, there are increasing complications on many levels that need to be addressed, such as the complex authorship between each contributor. While the phenomenon of commodification of any form of creative human knowledge continues, we are also witnessing the artist collectives’ role in social movements. In addition to proposals that critically assess the above topics, such as the question of ‘whose heritage’ and the role of state and non-state institutions in the use of the arts, we also welcome contributions that explore the expansive realm of the arts, media and (popular) culture in their diverse modes and forms of expression. We encourage contributions from different disciplines and professions, including artists, architects, designers and curators to share stories, experiences and cases from across Asia. Contributions can be in written, visual or other forms.

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### **The local context**

The restitution of colonial collections has been demanded by many different circles in Indonesia, from humble villagers of Trinil in East Java to the family of Sultan Banjar at Kalimantan/Borneo. As the overarching notion of *cagar budaya* (cultural objects) or *warisan budaya* (cultural heritage) is imposed on various items related to material, historical, ideological and moral values, more and more actors, from the national government to local communities, are mobilizing Indonesia's cultural heritage for their own uses and deployments. Meanwhile, Indonesia's decentralization policy since the end of the Suharto regime means that every region and every locality in the country has at heart the promotion of local heritage, even if such contested subjects often lead to forms of political appropriation and elite capture. At the level of the nation-state, there are several cases in which Indonesia competes and/or collaborates with other countries to nominate a specific cultural heritage to internationally recognized agencies such as UNESCO.

## 7. Multiple Ontologies: Religiosities, Philosophies, Languages and Society

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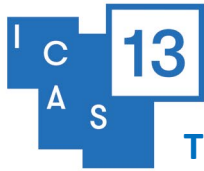
Under this theme, we welcome contributions that deal with the multifaceted aspects of religion, religious practices, religious communities and/or its entanglements with society and language, including Sanskrit, Latin, Arabic and others. In most cases, the social aspect of religions, beliefs, or doctrines cannot be separated from their political-economic contexts. In the name of the Divine Power, many actors, including states, exercise their control over others, as is conspicuously seen everywhere in Asia and other parts of the world. Beyond religion, many states also exercise their power to impose a national language that affects many indigenous languages, spoken by people whose religious practices might also be under threat. In other words, the notion of citizenship also should be addressed. On the one hand, many negative impacts and abuses have been perpetrated in the name of religion; on the other hand, religiosity can be a source of hope, resiliency, and transcendency, especially in a time of despair, misery and crisis. Under this section, we would welcome contributions that address these issues and additional questions associated with the role of religions, religiosity, beliefs, languages, and philosophies in society, both at the individual and collective level.

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### The local context

Home to the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia nevertheless has a long history of interacting with various religions, beliefs, and philosophies from many parts of the world. Indeed, the archipelago-state can be considered as a crossroad involving different parts of Asia and in fact different continents. Surabaya, notably, offers a unique environment where many communities hailing from different religious and linguistic backgrounds settled, grew, and interacted with each other. Some physical reminders of this diverse legacy still exist until the present, but for others, one can only see

architectural remnants. For instance, in the former European quarter of Surabaya, a mosque, church, and local temple are located next to each other. However, by recognizing only six official religions, Islam, Protestantism, Catholics, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, the Indonesian state presently excludes various alternative ways of being in this world. In the domain of language, Indonesia is among the world's most diverse countries. While the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, is almost universally understood, many regional languages are currently under threat. As a result, the multiple ways of seeing the world – religiously, philosophically, and linguistically – constitutes one of Indonesia's great riches, which, like its natural environment, calls for appreciation and protection.



## 8. Negotiating Margins: Representations, Resistances, Agencies

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### This thematic cluster

This reality is not limited to Indonesia. As Anna Tsing reminds us, margins force us to think about 'creative living at the edge', helping us to grapple with differences and tensions that play out on a regional, national, as well as global level. Different Asian countries and societies have seen their share of discrimination, marginalization and engineered oblivion, from the Muslims and Christians in BJP-led India, to Korean descendants in Japan, from civil rights activists in Hong Kong, Thailand and Cambodia, to migrant workers in Singapore or Dubai, from women in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan to protesters against the Zero-Covid Policy in China. In addition, there are continuous cases of repression and violations based on race, caste, gender, age and ethnicity, such as child marriage, female feticide, forced circumcision, and so forth. This thematic cluster constitutes a space for participants wishing to share their experiences and knowledge on what marginality, modes of inclusion, and exclusion mean in twenty-first-century Asia and what new forms of relegation these may take in the continent's fast-transforming societies.

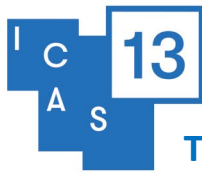
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### The local context

Surabaya is an old cosmopolitan city-port that embodies Indonesia's national motto of Unity in Diversity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika) in every regard. The city offers a wide variety of religious, linguistic, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity. The notion of SARA, an Indonesian abbreviation for ethnicity, religion, race, and other social divisions, resonates among the people and can be invoked to prevent clashes between different communities, simultaneously reminding them of the multiple diversities that constitute the Indonesian society. This offers a way for those belonging to the mainstream to exist alongside those in the margins – in both easy and sometimes uneasy co-presences. These margins, like

the rest of Indonesia, are diverse. The problematic access to education and work in several marginal groups, especially women and children, is often palpable. They are also vulnerable in various relationships, including within the marriage and family. In a wider political context increasingly coloured by a narrowing of possibilities for gender and sexual expression, Indonesia's oldest gay rights organisation, GAYa Nusantara, continues to survive in Surabaya, reminding us all that Indonesia's unity thrives by virtue of its diversity, not despite it.





## 9. Emerging Foodscapes: Cultivation, Livelihoods, Gastronomy

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### This thematic cluster

Foodscapes traverse a broad canvass including land-use, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, weather disruptions, biodiverse environments, water management and the livelihoods it generates across a wide range of sectors including gastronomy, agriculture and global agrobusiness, fisheries and fish industries. The focus of this thematic pans all the discussions around organic food production,, food resilience, security and sustainability, natural versus industrial farming, subsistence versus commercial agriculture, genetically modified versus indigenous seeds and crops, expansion of staples, especially rice and wheat and the valorisation of millets by the UN, food processing, packaging, retailing industries, beliefs associated with food, food and tourism, food vendors and fairs which are thriving in many parts of Asia. We also invite participants to address shifting food habits in urban contexts facilitated by the emergence of food-delivery applications that were intensified during the pandemic, and are part of an increasing push of fast food chains the world over, together with counter movements like slow-food, vegetarianism, ethnic food restaurants, reality food TV shows and the like.

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### The local context

Indonesia is the perfect place to study food. Gado-gado, a well-known dish of vegetables dressed in peanut sauce, originates from the cosmopolitan world of seventeenth-century Jakarta yet epitomises the country's relationship with the world. Herbs and spices from the Indonesian archipelago found in the local pasar (market) have played a significant role in shaping international maritime trade, linking different corners of Eurasia, Oceania, Africa and the Americas over the centuries. Due to its rich mineral resources, fertile soils, cultures of farming and distinctive tropical climate, Indonesia has been one of the largest producers of not only spices but also cash crops like coffee, cocoa, sugar cane, tea

and indigo, among others. The availability of so many flavours have made Indonesian cuisines a treat to the senses. In downtown Surabaya, one can enjoy Javanese, Madurese, Arab, Chinese and Western food in the same street. However, the food industry is not without negative impacts, especially such crops as palm oil which significantly affects the foodscape in Indonesia. Another influential development is the fast-growing tourism in Indonesia and the emergence of a global gastronomic culture where food is extracted from its familial context to be represented as an aspect of a local culture and national heritage to be packaged and savoured as an experience of a place and its people. These phenomena and their impact are not limited to Indonesia but also to many Asian countries in general.

## 10. Healing Bodies: Medicine, Well-being, Sport

### Your proposal

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### This thematic cluster

This cluster focuses upon matters of infections, diseases, nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, confinement, cultures of care, reproduction, healing, birth, death, euthanasia, pain, trauma emotions as well as notions of the mind and body not only within diverse systems of health but also in public health governance, both at the local as well as national and global levels. Contributions addressing how the state and communities negotiate preventive and in- and out-patient healthcare through digital platforms of bio-surveillance, for instance, or through participatory platforms involving non-governmental organisations and village-based public health centres and practitioners, are welcome. We are also inviting contributions on professional sport in the global neo-liberal context, including women and the sports industry and the history/sociology of popular sports among populations in Asia such as football, badminton, hockey and cricket. The relationship between well-being and the global growth of wellness technologies and industries around notions of masculinity, for example, is another area invited for exploration at the intersection between the sciences, the humanities and the arts.

These topics can be explored through various formats of engagement, including papers, panels, roundtables, posters, audio-visuals and other media, to ensure a broad forum of academic and civic exchanges. We also welcome you to share other formats and ideas; to propose activities, workshops and exhibitions to enrich the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

### The local context

In 2021, Universitas Airlangga (UNAIR) developed one of the first vaccines against COVID-19 originating from the Global South. Indonesia witnessed a re-evaluation of a number of homegrown medicinal plants, and their testing, for their potential in helping to fight the virus. This reaffirmation of Indonesia's local herbal medicine tradition (jamu) was coupled with a stronger focus upon lifestyle-based health, such as cycling, calisthenics and everyday sports. Beyond the context of COVID-19, there is a renewed dialogue on knowledge on medicine, bodily well-being, sport, and public health, linking together different scientific approaches, and cultural, philosophical and spiritual traditions. UNAIR's

Faculties of Medicine and Public Health are amongst the best in the country, working at the forefront of a number of systemic health concerns. Even though progress has been achieved in lowering infant and child mortality and increasing life expectancy, Indonesia still has significant difficulties with nutrition concerns and stunting among children. In addition, there are still continuing high incidences of tuberculosis, malaria and other tropical diseases, that continue to affect vulnerable populations not only in Indonesia but also many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin-America with a comparable health landscape.