Culture & Infrastructure: 
Comparative Discussion of Indonesian Ethnographic Studies

Conference & Workshop
14-15 April 2016, HRC & RSAP (CHL)

Theme
Infrastructures are essential not just to the everyday workings of contemporary societies in Asia and the Pacific and their articulation with globalizing forces, but also to the very experience of contemporary human life in the region. In this respect alone, the study of infrastructures should address issues of enduring interest to the humanities. It is surprising, then, that scholars have seldom brought “culture” and “infrastructure” into a single frame of description and analysis. “Infrastructure” typically receives analytic treatment as a technological phenomenon without cultural dimension; and studies of “culture” seldom set their sights on the techno-political operations of built infrastructural networks. These analytic and theoretical dispositions need to be questioned and reframed so as to reveal the aesthetic, political, religious, and experiential dimensions of infrastructural systems. Humanities-oriented ethnographic research into infrastructure has enormous potential to deepen Australia’s practical understanding of, and policy-orientation toward, built systems and networks in Asia and the Pacific.

This conference and workshop will bring together leading senior and ECR anthropologists working on infrastructures in Indonesia, and place their innovative projects in a comparative frame, not just with each other, but also with new projects being launched elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia.

Participants and format
The conference will include four keynote speakers and specialists on Indonesia, HRC-RSAP Distinguished Visitor and Professor Joel C. Kuipers (George Washington U.); 2015-16 Fulbright Scholars, Dr. James Hoesterey (Emory) and Assoc. Professor Marina Welker (Cornell); and Assoc. Professor Joshua Barker (U. Toronto). Each will speak on a project having to do with the ethnography of infrastructure. Two colleagues from CAP will respond to each keynote; representatives from DFAT and the Indonesian Embassy will attend as well and may offer comment. The first day will close with HDR discussion of the keynote addresses.

The morning session of Day 2 will feature four presentations by CHL/CAP colleagues about ethnographic projects on culture and infrastructure elsewhere in Asia. These presentations will contribute ethnographic materials for the afternoon’s workshop-roundtable dedicated to comparative discussion about new directions in the study of infrastructures. The roundtable will include the four keynote speakers, CAP-CASS colleagues, and ANU HDR students.

Output
The keynote addresses and comparative case studies will be published in a special issue of TAPJA, The Asia-Pacific Journal of Anthropology, to be guest edited by Ken George.
Proposed Programme
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Day 1: Conference

9am – 9.30am: Welcome & Overview of the Project

9.30-10.45am: Keynote 1: Diplomacy

James Hoesterey, *Islam and the Infrastructures of Indonesian Diplomacy*
Response from two CAP colleagues & discussion

Morning Tea

11.15am-12.30pm Keynote 2: Education

Joel C. Kuipers, *Arabic and the Educated Workforce in Indonesia*
Response from two CAP colleagues & discussion

Lunch

1.15pm-2.30pm Keynote 3: Corporate Social Responsibility

Marina Welker, *Infrastructures for Corporate Social Responsibility*
Response from two CAP colleagues & discussion

3pm-4.15pm Keynote 4: Satellite and Communication Technology

Joshua Barker, *Technology and Citizenship in Bandung*
Response from two CAP colleagues & discussion

Afternoon Tea

4.45pm-5.30pm Reflections from ANU Colleagues & Ph.D. Students

Conference Dinner

Day 2: Comparative Discussions & HDR Workshop

9.30-10.45am: Session 1: Case Studies from India (2)

Morning Tea

11.16am-12.30pm Session 2: Case Studies from Vietnam, Thailand, & Myanmar (2)

Lunch

1.16pm-4:15 pm Workshop Roundtable: New Directions for Research on Infrastructure

ANU Ph.D. Students & Keynote Speakers