



European Association of Development
Research and Training Institutes

Global Asia Working Group

2018 Workshop: Challenges to democratic processes in Asia

Location: University of Rome 'La Sapienza'

Date: 3 September 2018

Convenors: Elisabetta Basile (Sapienza University of Rome), Elin Bjarnegård (Uppsala University), Christine Lutringer (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva), Diego Maiorano (NUS Singapore)

Submit your abstract (300-400 words) by 15 June 2018 to: globalasia.eadi@gmail.com

Notification of the abstract selection : 1 July 2018

Deadline for full papers: 20 August 2018.

Outcome: We will submit a proposal for a special issue of an international peer-reviewed journal for publishing the papers presented at the workshop.

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Description of workshop topic

Since the beginning of the 21st century there is an expansion of the repertoire of democracy but also of the repertoire of authoritarianism. To understand current paths and future trajectories of democracies, it is as important to study processes that are engrained in the institutional workings of the states as the responses that they elicit among societies. This workshop will examine how these processes unfold in contemporary Asia. It aims to explore the changing narratives and representations around democratic institutions and, more generally, around the project of liberal democracy. While some countries, such as Japan, South Korea and India, have adopted and consolidated democratic political systems, others, such as Pakistan, Thailand or Bangladesh have failed to ensure stable and sustainable democratic institutions and practices and can at best be seen as 'hybrid regimes'. Still other countries, such as the Philippines, the Maldives or Sri Lanka, while formally democratic, present increasing signs of authoritarianism in the functioning of their democratic institutions and in the nature of the relationship between the state and the citizens. Even very stable democracies like India are increasingly seen as shifting towards new forms of 'authoritarian democracy'.

In other words, recent challenges to democracy clearly show that democratisation and the sustainment of democracy are not linear processes. How can we reconcile processes of deepening democratisation and increasing accountability of state institutions on the one hand with the reversals or deterioration of democratic rule unfolding in Asia on the other? And how are global processes – democracy seems to be under threat also in consolidated western democracies – shaping democratic processes in Asia (and vice versa)? By analysing non-Western models we will also explore the plurality of democratic experiences. For example, it is generally admitted that democracies have to be 'secular'. How important is the concept in contemporary Asia and what are the practices of 'secularism'? Are Asian 'ethnic democracies' fully democratic states – and how different are they from white-dominated western democracies? How important are political leaders in the functioning of democracy in Asia?

The workshop will navigate the spaces between socio-cultural, political and economic processes. We welcome theoretical, empirical, qualitative and quantitative studies, from a variety of disciplines such as history, political science, sociology, anthropology, geography, law, economics, and media and cultural studies. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Inequality, political violence and representation
- Challenges of new parties and populism
- Challenges of citizen engagement
- Civil society and the media
- Public sphere and opinion building
- Political agency and expressions of dissent
- Capitalism and democratic deliberations
- Transnational diffusion of ideas, practices, and political cultures
- Ethnic identities, majoritarianism and democracy
- Institution building and erosion
- Political leadership and democratic rule