

Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20015]

Proposed title of the session

Foreign capital and colonial Southeast Asia: Profits, economic growth and indigenous society

Abstract

There is a highly polarized international discourse about the impact of foreign direct investment on colonial economies and societies. Sheer exploitation of natural resources under the protective umbrella of colonial rule or lasting contributions towards economic growth and the development of local society in the colony? Colonial drain or foundations for future progress? Fundamental questions of this kind touch upon the long-term legacy of colonial rule and tend to stir up emotions even long after the host countries have become independent. Such questions need to be addressed in a systematic fashion within a comparative economic-historical framework. This is precisely what the proposed panel at the International Economic History Congress in Kyoto seeks to achieve.

The panel will explore avenues of research to construct a balance sheet, however global and tentative, of costs and benefits of the investment by private foreign firms in the colonial setting, in particular in colonial Indonesia and British Malaya. Special attention is given to private firms with shareholders in the colonial mother-country. The time frame of exploration extends from the surge of fresh private foreign investment in Southeast Asia during the 1910s up to the 1950s, when Dutch private firms were still operating in newly independent Indonesia and Malaysia was yet to gain independence as a sovereign nation. The panel draws on the synergy of a group of researchers who between them cover a wide range of expertise and analytical approaches. Participants are invited from Southeast Asia and the two metropolitan mother-countries involved as well as from third countries.

The panel is preceded by a pre-conference meeting scheduled to be held at Leiden University in the Netherlands on 16-17 December 2014 where draft versions of papers will be discussed in a workshop setting. Revised versions will be presented at the panel in Kyoto. A joint publication in the form of a collective volume is envisaged.

Announced paper titles include:

Thomas Lindblad, 'Profitability and business strategies of foreign firms at decolonization in Indonesia and Malaysia'

Anne Booth, 'Sources of investment funds and economic growth in Asian colonies 1870-1940'

Pierre van der Eng, '"Extractive institutions" and long-term underdevelopment in Indonesia'

Farabi Fakhri, 'Changing institutional environment in post-colonial Indonesia: Political strategies of corruption by foreign companies'

Ewout Frankema and Frans Buelens, 'Beyond the Cultivation System: How profitable were Dutch corporate investments in Indonesia?'

Bambang Purwanto, 'Social response of the Indonesian society to re-entering foreign capital in the late 1950s and early 1960s'

Frank Ochsendorf and Mark van de Water, 'Drain or development? Foreign investment and its macro- and socio-economic impact in late-colonial and early post-independence Indonesia'

Nicholas White, 'Going down the drain? The pros and cons of British investment in late-colonial and post-colonial Malaya/Malaysia'

Paper titles are forthcoming from Ulbe Bosma and Roger Knight.

I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Dr. Thomas J. Lindblad (Leiden University [Netherlands])

II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
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III. Expected Participant(s)

1. Thomas J. Lindblad (Leiden University [Netherlands])
2. Anne Booth (London University [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
3. Pierre Van der Eng (Australian National University [Australia])
4. Ulbe T. Bosma (Free University of Amsterdam [Netherlands])
5. Farabi Fakhri (Gadjah Mada University [Indonesia])
6. Frankema Ewout (University of Utrecht Co-author: Frans Buelens (Antwerp) [Netherlands])
7. Roger G. Knight (University of Adelaide [Australia])
8. Bambang Purwanto (Gadjah Mada University [Indonesia])
9. Frank Ochsendorf (Leiden University Co-author: Mark van de Water (Leiden) [Netherlands])
10. Nicholas J. White (Liverpool John Moores University [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])