This symposium, co-organized by the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA), sought to investigate the relationship between rivers and cities from a multi-disciplinary perspective in the humanities and social sciences. A three-day follow-up symposium will take place in Shanghai in December 2018. In this issue of the Newsletter, we provide an overview of the topics explored during the Surabaya conference.

**Category 1: Rivers and cities in historical perspective**

**Water world to inundation: river cities in Southeast Asia from old to new millennium**

Howard Dick, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Melbourne, Australia; Faculty of Business and Law, University of Newcastle (NSW), Australia

Accelerating climate change is now giving rise to a new challenge of sustainability. This paper explores this problematization in the case of Surabaya, and considers how it applies more broadly to other river cities in Indonesia, notably in Sumatra and Kalimantan, and elsewhere in mainland Southeast Asia. The emphasis will be on how the urban system has adapted, failed to adapt or mal-adapted to the exigencies of a monocausal climate.

**Through the passages and across the worlds: the bridge-and-temple complex and the popular procession in a “rurban” town in Jiangnan region**

Xiaomei ZHAO, Department of Cultural Heritage and Museology, Fudan University, China

This paper was hosted by the Faculty of Humanities of Airlangga University in Surabaya and jointly organized by IAS (through UKNA) and Airlangga University. The symposium conveners were Rta Padawangi (Singapore University of Social Sciences), Adrian Perkasa (Airlangga University), and Paul Rabé (Coordinator of UKNA at IAS).

The symposium sought to investigate the relationship between rivers and cities from a multi-disciplinary perspective in the humanities and the social sciences. It aimed to contribute innovative ways of thinking about how to better integrate rivers, creeks and canals, and with them, their environmental, historical, social, political, cultural and economic dimensions, into the fabric of contemporary cities in South, East and Southeast Asia. Following a competitive call for papers, seventeen scholars, ranging from PhD students to established academics, presented their papers in Surabaya. Together, they addressed four main categories of investigation (featured below). In this issue of the Newsletter, we provide an overview of the seventeen papers presented, which will be part of an edited volume to be published in the IIAS Asian Cities series of Amsterdam University Press.

A follow-up symposium on the topic of water in urban Asia, entitled ‘Water Heritage in Asian Cities’, will take place in Shanghai from 29 November through 1 December 2018. It will be hosted by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (SASS), and jointly organized by UKNA, SASS, New York University, Shanghai (China), Fudan University (China) and IAS.

**Category 2: Neighborhoods and social life of riverine communities**

**Sacred river, syncretic city: reflections on the dialectics of co-living and contestation in Varanasi**

Pratyay Konangi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India; International Institute for Asian Studies (IAS) and Leiden University, the Netherlands

This paper explores the life of migrant communities in floating houses (rumah lanting) along the urban riverfront areas of Sintang, the capital city of Sintang District in the interior of West Kalimantan Province, Indonesia, which is located at the intersection of two large rivers, Sungai Kapauus and Sungai Malowi. Growing from the river’s edge, the present Sintang still maintains its riverine culture in the form of floating houses as its legacy of the past, when river played an important role as main transportation routes for political and economic activities. The dendritic network of rivers and tributaries around Sintang plays an important role in linking Sintang city with villages in the interior, from where most migrants hail. Historically, the river network has always shaped power relations between indigenous communities in the interior with the authorities on the main rivers who controlled river-based transportation and trade, and this relationship persists until today.
This paper focuses on the genealogy of its components replaced remains experiment raising the question whether of the locals, the paper addresses human-historical data and collective memories starting in May 2006. Using secondary nature has its own natural process and environmental change and modification than a one-way process: on the one hand, environmental change and modification should be perceived as a consequence of the reciprocity; and, on the other, nature has its own natural process and environmental modification affects human society.

What transnational planning visions have done in Red River, Hanoi in Vietnam” Ms. Suje (Suzy) Jung, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University (USA)

Since 2005, Hanoi City has hosted numerous transnational collaborators and riverfront planning experts to upgrade the Red River. This ambitious project was initiated to facilitate Hanoi City’s rapid urbanization and industrialization by developing and connecting both sides of the Red River’s banks. By taking a dialectical perspective, the historical review examines three aspects of this initiative: first, the future-oriented global visions to make a world-class Red River in Hanoi; second, contrasting local realities as a challenge against the previous proposal; and third, local planning authorities’ efforts to reconcile the gap between the first two.

The Buckingham Canal, this paper examines the edges of urban waterfronts as a specific kind of intra-urban ‘parijahan’ offering a crucial geography from which to theorize urban form and sustainability. The Buckingham Canal has undergone shifting valuations in the city’s history from the 1970s to current processes of urban transition and environmental change and governance. This paper focuses on the multiple city-river relationships of the historical review examines three aspects of this initiative: first, the future-oriented global visions to make a world-class Red River in Hanoi; second, contrasting local realities as a challenge against the previous proposal; and third, local planning authorities’ efforts to reconcile the gap between the first two.

Hybrid riverscapes: governing river cities lies beyond land and water dichotomies – the Yamuna in Delhi, India’ Alexander Fellmann, Institute of Geography and the Global South Studies Center, University of Cologne, Germany

The inherent complexity of environment-mental change along urban rivers requires a change of perspective going beyond binary conceptualizations of water/land, river/city and nature/culture. By linking a discourse analytical approach with theoretical concepts from governance research and urban political ecology, the conceptual paper develops the framework of hybrid and outlines an innovative conceptual framework to study environmental change and governance in river cities. Using the case study of Delhi’s riverscapes along the Yamuna, the paper focuses on the multiple city-river relationships from the 1970s to current processes of urban environmental change.

Narmada water on Sabarmati river: a ship of Thessae? Parthasarathy Rengarajan, Gujarat Institute of Development Research, India

Ahmedabad has had a long and complex relationship with the River Sabarmati. Whereas the city once depended on the Sabarmati river’s water for domestic and other uses, it later started ignoring the river and the slums on its banks and let sewage and industrial effluents flow downstream. In a more recent development, city administrators have built a riverfront to cash in on high land values abutting the river. The river is now a pond with gats on either sides and is filled with water from the Narmada River. This paper analyses a Thessae’s paradox, which is essentially a thought experiment raising the question whether the river as an object that has had all of its components replaced remains fundamentally the same object.

‘Sociocultural and spatial factors in river-edge relationships: a comparative case study of rivers in Indonesian cities’ Michaela Prescott, Monash University, Australia

This paper describes a comparative analysis of qualitative aspects of river improvement in Indonesia in order to understand the amelioration potential of river cities. The research employed fieldwork to collect material evidence of the spatial reconfiguration of river edges along four urbanized rivers, namely: the Cipali, the Kuningan, the Ciliwung and the Mangkang. This paper examines the edges of urban waterfronts as a specific kind of intra-urban ‘parijahan’ offering a crucial geography from which to theorize urban form and sustainability. The Buckingham Canal has undergone shifting valuations in the city’s history from the 1970s to current processes of urban transition and environmental change and governance. This paper focuses on the multiple city-river relationships of the historical review examines three aspects of this initiative: first, the future-oriented global visions to make a world-class Red River in Hanoi; second, contrasting local realities as a challenge against the previous proposal; and third, local planning authorities’ efforts to reconcile the gap between the first two.

‘Recovering the stream: contestation about new access as a catalyst for eco-city development in Suwon City, South Korea’ Youngsoo Choak, In-EAST School of Advanced Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

In Suwon, an industrial city of 1.2m inhabitants located not far from South Korea’s capital Seoul, a small river, the Suwoncheon stream, had been covered with concrete in the context of rapid economic development during the 1980s and 1990s – a decision taken in order to provide for additional road construction and car parking facilities. While local businesses initially welcomed the idea, a popular movement formed soon after the construction, objecting to the project on both ecological and cultural grounds. This paper charts the contestation process and the effects of political mobilization around the issue of environmental protection, demonstrating the important implications that contestation over river access can have in an industrial city in Asia.

‘Division and marginalization in the lower Brantas Basin: a long durée approach’ Anton Nouvanento, Department of Sociology at the Brawijaya University, Indonesia

This paper focuses on the genealogy of the Porong River in East Java, to which human has made various modifications and alterations despite the fact that it is man-made. Public and academic attention to the river has been increasing following the unnatural, ongoing Lempo mudflow starting in May 2006. Using secondary historical data and collective memories of the locals, the paper addresses human-nature relation as a two-way, rather than one-way process; on the one hand, environmental change and modification should be perceived as a consequence of the reciprocity; and, on the other, nature has its own natural process and environmental modification affects human society.

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‘Colonial-global Tianjin: the politics of design centered on the Hai River between past and present’ Maurizio Marinelli, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

During the last two decades, the port-city of Tianjin has undergone a massive urban revitalization program conducted under the aegis of “beautification”, which has radically re-formatted the cityscape. The hyper-colonial phase of Tianjin, when the treaty-port city constituted an unparalleled microcosm of the world with up to nine foreign concessions (1860-1945), has been actively re-interpreted as marking the beginning of the Tianjin’s project. This paper explores the importance of Tianjin’s urban revitalization from the perspective of a ‘river city’. Particular attention is given to the contribution played by the Hai River to the production of space in colonial-global Tianjin, through the analysis both of its historical role and the narratives constructed in the colonial past vis-à-vis the Tianjin Municipal Government-led “beautification” strategy in the present.

‘The canal and the city: water’s edge urbanisms in Chennai’ Karen Coelho, Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), India

Through the case of Chennai’s Buckingham Canal, this paper examines the edges of urban waterfronts as a specific kind of intra-urban ‘parijahan’ offering a crucial geography from which to theorize urban form and sustainability. The Buckingham Canal has undergone shifting valuations in the city’s history from the 1970s to current processes of urban transition and environmental change and governance. This paper focuses on the multiple city-river relationships of the historical review examines three aspects of this initiative: first, the future-oriented global visions to make a world-class Red River in Hanoi; second, contrasting local realities as a challenge against the previous proposal; and third, local planning authorities’ efforts to reconcile the gap between the first two.

‘Community initiatives in the riverine area of Kali Pepe, Surakarta, Indonesia’ Eng Kusumaningdyah N.H., ST., MT, Urban-Rural Design and Conservation Laboratory (URDC Labo), Sebelas Maret University of Surakarta, Indonesia

The environmental degradation of the Kali (River) Pepe in Surabaya, Indonesia, has many physical, social and economic implications for residents of the city, especially the downstream communities that interact with the river the most. This research identifies community initiatives in the riverine area of Kali Pepe, through in-depth interviews with local leaders and community representatives, to understand how local communities interact with the river. The objective is to obtain a new perspective about how communities experience the river and how community initiatives are attempting to contribute to the sustainability of the river itself.

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