

RESEARCH SEMINAR

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Indigenous Resilience to Environmental Change: A Political Ecological Perspective

30 Mar 2023 (Thurs)
4:30 – 6:00 pm (UTC+8)
ZOOM ID: 924 0168 0034
ZOOM Passcode: 891568

The way how Indigenous peoples all over the world cope with environmental and climate change is currently a surging topic in the adaptation literature. The concept of Indigenous resilience, through Indigenous Knowledge systems, sustainable natural resource management, and community participation, is increasing associated with the idea that Indigenous peoples are not only disproportionately vulnerable to global environmental change, but can actually cope with, adapt to, or even mitigate it. Though this concept is useful, there are also certain dangers we should avoid. Indigenous households and communities are now expected to 'adapt' to environmental and climate change, and in case they do not do this, they are held responsible for their 'maladaptation'. It is also automatically assumed that all Indigenous communities must have Indigenous knowledge systems which would make them resilient to environmental change, without considering the wider context and history of particular communities. Therefore, I argue in this talk that a political ecology perspective is needed when we approach Indigenous peoples' resilience to environmental and climate change. Presenting case studies from various Indigenous communities in Taiwan and Vietnam, I highlight why a political ecology perspective is necessary to full appreciate and analyse the concept of Indigenous resilience to environmental change.

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Dr Mucahid Mustafa Bayrak is an Associate Professor at the Department of Geography of National Taiwan Normal University and a proud alumnus of the Department of Geography, CUHK. For the past 10 years he has conducted research on development issues of Indigenous and local communities from a political ecology perspective in East and Southeast Asia. His research interests also include sustainable tourism management, climate resilience, and traditional ecological knowledge systems.



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