

Preface

We both began to work with Rüdiger in 2005/6 starting as early career-researchers at the Chair of Southeast Asian Studies in Passau, where Rüdiger had been a full professor since 2004. During the following years, our lives were strongly affected and inspired by both – Southeast Asia and Rüdiger Korff, our PhD-supervisor and mentor, whose network of friends and colleagues spread all over Germany, Southeast Asia, and beyond. Within this edited volume, we tried to bring together many of the scholars who worked together with Rüdiger over the past decades. Accordingly, this volume comprises contributions from Rüdiger's friends and colleagues from Germany, Southeast Asia and India; from the early beginnings of Rüdiger's own academic career to the most recent collaborations, displaying the whole range of his interests and research topics.

Throughout his academic life, Rüdiger has actively shaped and advanced the discipline of Southeast Asian Studies. A rather marginal field in Germany, and thence occupying a marginal position in German academia, area studies in general, and Southeast Asian Studies in particular, have often been criticised for appropriating and constructing certain areas, which are not perceived as such by those living in these regions. Rüdiger Korff contributed to overcoming such container-like thinking by propagating an emic approach to Southeast Asia. Combining critical theory (from the Global North) with emic reconstructions of meaning, while closely cooperating with academics from Southeast Asia and beyond, Rüdiger Korff succeeded in establishing the field of contemporary Southeast Asian Studies as theoretically informed and empirically based discipline. Being a sociologist of development and urban sociologist with a focus on Thailand, Rüdiger has always shown great interest in the interface of urbanism and globalisation, analysing local encounters with global developments.

This collection of essays in honour of Rüdiger Korff reflects his multiple fields of expertise. The first two introductory chapters outline the book's theme of rural and urban transformations in particular (Padmanabhan), while discussing the development, merits and shortcomings of the academic field of the sociology of development in general (Neubert).

A great body of Rüdiger's publications deals with questions of the urban, focusing on social creativity and locality (chapter by Kurfürst), public spheres (chapter by Saturn), and people's self-organization (chapter by Vogel and Rothfuß). Always taking in-

to account that the rural and the urban are deeply interconnected, his academic vita also comprises explorations into the highlands of Mainland Southeast Asia (MMSEA-Region). In the BMBF LILAC project, Rüdiger combined his research focus on ethnicity with studies in agricultural development and biodiversity (chapter by Wehner). Later, he extended his interest in urbanism to include small and medium-sized towns (chapters by Le and Warnk), a field still constituting a research gap in urban studies. His long-term experience in field work in Thailand has deepened Rüdiger's knowledge of Thai development and politics (chapters by Sasiwonsaroj, Husa, Wohlschlägl and Nelson). In recent years, he developed an interest in media and communication (chapter by Hahn and Munkler), particularly inspired by the work of Manuel Castells. Having been a visiting professor to the National University Malaysia (UKM), Rüdiger collaborated closely with colleagues from UKM on questions of ethnicity and nation-building in Malaysia (chapter by Shamsul). Extending his research area well beyond Southeast Asia, Rüdiger established collaborations with scholars from India within the scope of the Urban Self Project (chapters by Sumathi and Pandiaraj). While his research has always been concerned with contemporary developments, Rüdiger invariably added a historical dimension to his analyses. The last section of the edited volume therefore assembles chapters on the history of Southeast Asia with a focus on Myanmar and Cambodia (chapters by Hellmann, Thant, and Kolnberger).

We would like to express our thanks for his guidance, his always keeping his office doors wide open and his support whenever we struggled. As he once put it, you cannot accomplish a PhD without some sort of suffering. Luckily, we found an inspiring and motivating environment at the Chair of Southeast Asian Studies, enabling us to overcome any obstacles in the process of acquiring a PhD. Always up for new ideas, Rüdiger supported us greatly in shaping our scientific and analytic minds as well as learning to ask adequate questions, while advising us to continuously query the recent state of affairs.

Together with the Chair's soul, secretary Christa Gottinger, he succeeded in creating an environment of friendly exchange and collaboration within an international and gender diverse team. For his retirement, we wish him happiness, good readings and good rhythms – as Rüdiger is also an admirer of good music. Thank you, Rüdiger, for your kindness, support, and academic inspiration!