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CENTRE FOR COMPARATIVE AND PUBLIC LAW
AT THE FACULTY OF LAW, THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

HKU CCPL TALK

The Monarchy-led Urban Development: Lessons from Bangkok's Planning Regime

22 April 2024 (Monday) 12:30 – 1:30 PM
Room 723, 7/F Cheng Yu Tung Tower, HKU

Although royal absolutism was abolished on 24 June 1932, much infrastructure, including many roads and public facilities in the capital, Bangkok, is said to be the products of royal initiatives of his majesty the king. Ostensibly, the construction of such infrastructure was delivered, especially from the 1970s onwards, by a constitutional rather than an executive monarch and even against the presence of democratisation and the Western-style urban planning regime. Such construction was put into operation by either the royal institution, a state organ, or individual royalist elites in honour of the king. As a result, these structures become visible symbols of public loyalty to the sacred throne as well as the king's graciousness and altruism towards the people. I call this royal-initiated form of urban development 'the monarchy-led urban development' (MUD). I argue that to implement the MUD in democratizing Thailand, the monarchy must move away from operating blatantly outside the law and instead seek recourse to it. Written constitutions, planning law instruments, and non-planning law instruments are integral for turning the abstract constitutional ideology of royal nationalism into concrete reality, while also lending a veneer of legality to royal prerogative in urban planning.

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SPEAKER:



Rawin Leelapatana received a competitive scholarship from the Office of Higher Education Commission, Thailand in 2014 to pursue his PhD in law at the University of Bristol, the United Kingdom. In November 2018, he received the Anglo-Thai Educational Awards for Academic Excellence. Since his completion of a PhD degree on 23 January 2019, he has worked as a lecturer in public law and jurisprudence at the Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. He has published a number of works on the development of the rule of law and constitutionalism in Thailand and Indonesia with international publishers, including Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Hart, and Routledge. Currently, he is working on a monograph on the rule of law in Thailand due to be published with Hart in 2026.

CHAIR:



Sida Liu

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