



Water Policy Seminar

Emergency Declared, Crisis Averted': Managing Water Shortages in Colonial Hong Kong between 1963 and 1964

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Date: 19 December 2022, Monday
Time: 4:30pm - 5:30pm HKT
Hybrid seminar : LI 5405, Li Dak Sum Yip Yio Chin
Academic Building & Zoom

Registration link: <https://forms.gle/LLfqCj8BF6ZfyNZZ8>

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QR Code
Registration



Abstract

This paper argues that there was a positive relationship between drought mitigation and state-society relations in colonial Hong Kong. Using strategies of persuasion and coercion—and aided by everyday collaboration by ordinary people—a colonial administration depoliticized a severe and prolonged water crisis. During this Water Emergency, the colonial government reinforced a notion that this was a natural crisis—one which persists to the present day. In reality, water shortages were due to a long-term mismatch between the demand for and supply of clean piped water. The paper contributes to Hong Kong's political history by explaining how—united by the urgent need to conserve water—civil society organizations and agencies of the colonial state forged collaborative relationships. The paper also provides a lens on how inequalities in Hong Kong arose from patterns of settlement—as well as from prevailing maldistributions of income in a capitalist economy.

Biography

Dr. Florence Mok is a historian of colonial Hong Kong and modern China, with an interest in environmental history, the Cold War and state-society relations. She received her BA and MA in History from Durham University. She completed her PhD in History at the University of York in 2019. Her doctoral research examined governance and political culture in the 1970s Hong Kong. Her postdoctoral project explored Chinese Communist cultural activities in colonial Hong Kong during the Cold War. She is currently studying the history of natural disasters and crisis management. The study explores how the colonial government and the Chinese society in Hong Kong mitigated environmental crises (water shortage and seasonal epidemics) from 1945 to 1980.

