

## MONDAY, 20 JULY 2015

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|----------------------|--|
| <b>09:15 – 09:30</b> | <b>REGISTRATION</b>  |
| <b>09:30 – 09:45</b> | <b>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS</b>  |
|                      | <p><b>Brenda S.A. Yeoh</b>, Asia Research Institute, Department of Geography, &amp; Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore</p> <p><b>Malini Sur</b>, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore</p>  |
| <b>09:45 – 11:00</b> | <b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS I</b>   |
| 09:45                | <p>Chairperson   <b>Prasenjit Duara</b>, National University of Singapore</p> <p><b>When Victims Become Rulers</b><br/> <b>Partha Chatterjee</b>, Columbia University, USA</p>   |
| 10:30                | Questions & Answers  |
| <b>11:00 – 11:30</b> | <b>TEA BREAK</b>   |
| <b>11:30 – 12:55</b> | <b>PANEL 1   TIME</b>  |
| 11:30                | <p>Chairperson   <b>Maria Platt</b>, National University of Singapore</p> <p><b>Labour, Hunger, Action: ‘Force’ in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Political Imagination</b><br/> <b>Prathama Banerjee</b>, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, India</p>  |
| 11:50                | <p><b>Cattle, Guns, and Time at the India-Bangladesh Border</b><br/> <b>Malini Sur</b>, National University of Singapore</p>   |
| 12:10                | Discussant   <b>Bernard Bate</b> , Yale-NUS College, Singapore   |
| 12:25                | Questions & Answers  |
| <b>12:55 – 14:00</b> | <b>LUNCH</b>   |
| <b>14:00 – 15:25</b> | <b>PANEL 2   REFUGEES</b>  |
| 14:00                | <p>Chairperson   <b>Anju Mary Paul</b>, Yale-NUS College, Singapore</p> <p><b>The New Cosmopolitics and the Ontological Event of Natality:<br/>                 On a Form of Life Called al-Qireyne in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Tyre, Lebanon</b><br/> <b>Sylvain Perdigon</b>, American University of Beirut, Lebanon</p> |
| 14:20                | <p><b>Every Day Waiting and ‘Life Force’: Living with Precarity in the Time of War, Displacement, Migration and Sri Lankan Tamils</b><br/> <b>Sidharthan Maunaguru</b>, National University of Singapore</p>   |
| 14:40                | Discussant   <b>Daniel P.S. Goh</b> , National University of Singapore   |
| 14:55                | Questions & Answers  |
| <b>15:25 – 15:55</b> | <b>TEA BREAK</b>   |

## MONDAY, 20 JULY 2015

| 15:55 – 17:20 |  | PANEL 3   CITIES  |
|---------------|--|---|
|               |  | Chairperson   <b>Bernardo Brown</b> , National University of Singapore  |
| 15:55         |  | <b>Transnational Migration, Compounding Precarity, and Constraining Mobilities amongst Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Singapore's Construction Industry</b><br><b>Brenda S.A. Yeoh</b> , National University of Singapore |
| 16:15         |  | <b>When Machines for Living Force Themselves on Us: James Lee's <i>The Beautiful Washing Machine</i> and the Personhood of Things</b><br><b>Richard Baxstrom</b> , University of Edinburgh, UK                            |
| 16:35         |  | Discussant   <b>Eric C. Thompson</b> , National University of Singapore   |
| 16:50         |  | Questions & Answers   |
| 17:20 – 17:50 |  | RAPPORTEUR'S COMMENTS   <b>Itty Abraham</b> , University of Singapore   |
| 17:50         |  | END OF DAY ONE  |

## TUESDAY, 21 JULY 2015

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>09:30 – 10:45</b> | <b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS II</b>   |
|                      | Chairperson   <b>Chua Beng Huat</b> , National University of Singapore  |
| 09:30                | <b>The Ephemeral, the Durable and the Force of Life: Thinking with the Ordinary</b><br><b>Veena Das</b> , John Hopkins University, USA  |
| 10:15                | Questions & Answers   |
| <b>10:45 – 11:15</b> | <b>TEA BREAK</b>  |
| <b>11:15 – 12:40</b> | <b>PANEL 4   BODIES</b>   |
|                      | Chairperson   <b>R. Michael Feener</b> , National University of Singapore   |
| 11:15                | <b>Care and the Politics of Vulnerability in Japan</b><br><b>Jason Danelly</b> , Oxford Brookes University, UK  |
| 11:35                | <b>Displacement as Emplacement: Transgender Mobility and Sexual Production of Urban Space in Istanbul</b><br><b>Asli Zengin</b> , Brandeis University, USA                      |
| 11:55                | Discussant   <b>Prathama Banerjee</b> , Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, India   |
| 12:10                | Questions & Answers   |
| <b>12:40 – 13:40</b> | <b>LUNCH</b>  |
| <b>13:40 – 15:05</b> | <b>PANEL 5   COMMODITIES</b>  |
|                      | Chairperson   <b>Tyson Vaughan</b> , National University of Singapore   |
| 13:40                | <b>Golden Shoes, Tobacco Seats, and Shoeboxes: Scaling Sanctions and Transactions across the Iran/Turkey Border</b><br><b>Emrah Yildiz</b> , Harvard University, USA            |
| 14:00                | <b>Carbon Frontier, Trans-Urban Flows: Oil as a Force of Life</b><br><b>Nausheen H. Anwar</b> , Institute of Business Administration Karachi, Pakistan                          |
| 14:20                | Discussant   <b>James D. Sidaway</b> , National University of Singapore   |
| 14:35                | Questions & Answers   |
| <b>15:05 – 15:35</b> | <b>TEA BREAK</b>  |
| <b>15:35 – 16:25</b> | <b>PANEL 6   DISASTERS</b>  |
|                      | Chairperson   <b>Sallie Yea</b> , Nanyang Technological University, Singapore   |
| 15:35                | <b>Forces of Desire and Risking Self and Other: The Resettlement of War-altered Landscape in Northwest Cambodia</b><br><b>Lisa Arensen</b> , School for Field Studies, Cambodia |
| 15:55                | Discussant   <b>Eli Elinoff</b> , National University of Singapore  |
| 16:10                | Questions & Answers   |
| <b>16:25 – 16:55</b> | <b>RAPPORTEUR'S COMMENTS   Vineeta Sinha</b> , University of Singapore  |
| <b>16:55 – 17:30</b> | <b>CLOSING REMARKS   Sidharthan Maunaguru</b> , National University of Singapore  |
| <b>17:30</b>         | <b>END OF WORKSHOP</b>  |

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS I

## When Victims Become Rulers

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Victims of forced migration are, for obvious reasons, usually regarded as people who suffer dispossession, displacement, extreme hardship and even violence through no fault of their own. They are victims of natural, political or economic disasters. However, studies of forced migration have also shown a variety of strategies that refugees can adopt, from passive acceptance of fate or even suicide to active efforts to rebuild a life in the new environment. This paper will address the case of upper-caste Hindu refugees in West Bengal and Tripura who left East Pakistan after the partition of Bengal in 1947. Having lost most of their material possessions of landed property and wealth, they used their cultural capital and political influence to emerge as the dominant ruling group in West Bengal and Tripura states of India. The strategy involved a new political alliance based on class rather than caste.

**Partha CHATTERJEE** is a political theorist and historian. He studied at Presidency College in Calcutta, and received his PhD from the University of Rochester. He divides his time between Columbia University and the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, where he was the Director from 1997 to 2007. He is the author of more than twenty books, monographs and edited volumes and is a founding member of the Subaltern Studies Collective. He has recently completed two projects. The first, on global practices of empire since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, has resulted in the book *The Black Hole of Empire* (2012). The second, on popular politics in contemporary India led to the book *Lineages of Political Society* (2011). In addition, he was involved in two recent team projects. The first, a comparative study of democracy in India and the United States, resulted in the co-edited volume *Anxieties of Democracy* (2012), and the second, located in Calcutta on *New Cultural Histories of India*, from which a co-edited volume is to be published in early 2014. Prof Chatterjee has now begun work on two projects: one a philosophical-anthropological study of the concept of needs, and the second a field-based study of the curious absence of caste politics in contemporary Bengal. In addition, he has recently written extensive reflections on his association with *Subaltern Studies*.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS II

## The Ephemeral, the Durable and the Force of Life: Thinking with the Ordinary

**VEENA DAS**

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A pressing concern in social theory continues to be the question of how the social is made durable? As notions of vulnerability and precarity become mainstream in anthropology, the reliance on the solidity of categories through which social life is organized have yielded place to notions of in-between, flow, overlapping social scapes etc. In this presentation I want to see how the durable and the ephemeral are woven together to think of the idea of “life”. In brief, I wish to see what cognitive resources can I take from the notions of the momentary, the fleeting, the fugitive , as the conditions through which life is affirmed and reflect on the difference it makes when we put these notions next to those of the liminal, the transitory, or the in-between.

**Veena DAS** is Krieger-Eisenhower Professor of Anthropology at the Johns Hopkins University. Before joining Johns Hopkins University in 2000, she taught at the Delhi School of Economics for more than thirty years and also held a joint appointment at the New School for Social Research from 1997-2000. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the Academy of Scientists from Developing Countries. She was awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in 2009 and the Anders Retzius Award of the Swedish Society of Anthropology and Geography in 1995 and the Ghurye Award in 1977. She received an honorary doctorate from the University of Chicago in 2000 and from the University of Edinburgh in 2014. Most recently she was awarded the Nessim Habib Prize by the University of Geneva. Veena Das’s research covers a range of fields. She is passionately interested in the question of how ethnography generates concepts; how we might treat philosophical and literary traditions from India and other regions as generative of theoretical and practical understanding of the world; how to render the texture and contours of everyday life; and the way every day and the event are joined together in the making of the normal and the critical. Her work on collective violence and urban transformations has appeared in many anthologies. Her most recent books are *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (2007) *Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty* (2015) and three co-edited volumes, *The Ground Between: Anthropologists Engage Philosophy* (2014), *Living and Dying in the Contemporary World: A Compendium* (2015) and *Politics of the Urban Poor* (forthcoming). Her graduate students are working on a number of issues in different parts of the world and her work is deeply informed by her heady interactions with them.

## Labour, Hunger, Action: 'Force' in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Political Imagination

**PRATHAMA BANERJEE**

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Drawing on early 20<sup>th</sup> century political thinking, I present here a set of historical reflections on force as concept.

My main interlocutors are Babasaheb Ambedkar, the leader of ex-untouchables and maker of the Indian Constitution, and John Dewey, the American philosopher of practice and Ambedkar's favourite teacher. I also draw upon Bengali communist writings and images of the time.

Located somewhere in-between energy (latent and undirected force) and violence (wasted and excessive force), the concept of force was debated in India — in proximity to but aside of the violence question — as necessary constituent of political action and as measure of its efficacy. In the debates that I explore here, force was sought to be thematised as analogous to the exertion of labour. Figured via labour and its bodily kinetics — rather than as the achievement of renunciatory self-fashioning as in earlier decades — force was now imagined as that which inhered in everyday, quotidian life rather than in exceptional subjects and exceptionalist contexts of war. Labour, I shall argue, (alongside hunger, as that which was labour's intimate opposite) thus helped produce — through the mobilization of force — a new thematisation of life itself as always already tending towards the political.

**Prathama BANERJEE** is a historian at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi. Her earlier book was on the politics of time in colonial Bengal, as it operated in diverse sites such as calendrical reform, history-writing, credit markets, labour migration and so on. She currently works on histories of the 'political' in Bengal and India, through a study of the multiple deployments of the category of the political between late 19<sup>th</sup> and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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## Cattle, Guns, and Time at the India-Bangladesh Border

**MALINI SUR**

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Every day, small-scale traders, transporters, and herders, who illegally guide local cattle from India to Bangladesh across village land and rivers, contribute to a business conservatively estimated at US\$500 million annually. India's prohibitions on cattle and beef export for religious reasons and Bangladesh's high demand for beef and leather that generate risky travels amidst large-scale shootings aimed at cattle traders, give meaning to time. Time is an arbitrator for death and life along South Asia's longest international boundary that is increasingly divided by India's new high security fence. This paper foregrounds time's interplay with border-space in fostering temporal interdependence and inequities in ways that depart from thinking about time as ritual and repetition and enable us to re-think time beyond national, agrarian and pastoral cycles. Protracted negotiations for verbal and cellular signals on the one hand, and trans-border shootings on the other, that gravitate bodies of transporters and animals towards and away from the border shapes the tapestry of time. Reading time in conjunction with force (defined as changing rhythms and ruptures) I show how cattle clocks oscillate between signal times (profits from passages) and armed times (high security and torture) to generate irregular contractions and expansions, risky speed and inertia, and prosperity and hunger. I connect conversations in the anthropology of time and violence, and foreground cattle and cattle transactions to re-think the textured relationship between the event and the everyday.

**Malini SUR** is a Research Fellow with the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore and member of the Asian Migration cluster since 2015. Her research interests connect three broad areas — borders, mobility, and citizenship — with a focus on South Asia. She has lectured at the University of Amsterdam and held a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Toronto. Malini has published in anthropology and interdisciplinary journals including *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (forthcoming), *HAU*, *Mobilities*, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* and the *Economic and Political Weekly*. She has co-edited a collection of ethnographic essays on migration entitled *Transnational Flows and Permissive Politics* (Amsterdam University Press, 2012). At the Asia Research Institute, Malini is revising her doctoral dissertation on a century of land politics and political violence in South Asia's northeastern borderlands into a book manuscript. Since 2014, she has been conducting new fieldwork in northeast India and eastern India on internal migration exploring the intersections of labour, religion and gender. She is currently completing a documentary film on these themes. Her fieldwork photographs have been exhibited in Amsterdam, Berlin, Bonn, Chiang Mai, Heidelberg, Kathmandu and Munich.

# The New Cosmopolitics and the Ontological Event of Natality: On a Form of Life Called al-Qireyne in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Tyre, Lebanon

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This paper builds on, while seeking to call into question, Arendt's insight that the refugee's "loss of polity" entails not just a legal and often physical spacing, but also an ontological and ethical enclosing. The "calamity" of the refugee, Arendt writes in her seminal text on the stateless and the crisis of human rights in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), is "the deprivation of *a place in the world* which makes opinion significant and actions effective." In such a condition, Arendt pursues, all that one is "left" with is "that which is mysteriously given us by birth [...] those qualities which usually can become articulate only in the sphere of private life," but cannot be moved into a more expansive realm of realization and significance through public life and citizenship. Arendt's analysis seems to be vindicated by the claim of many Palestinian men and women I know in the long-term refugee camps of Tyre, Lebanon, that being a refugee entails a unique way of dwelling within the folds of *al-rahim* — a Quranic concept that translates literally as "the womb" and that my Palestinian interlocutors use to name the social ties endowed for them with the most momentous import. I will describe in the paper how the thisness of *al-rahim* as a mode of transpersonal being is formed through habituated or improvised acts of interpretation folded in the deep recesses of everyday camp life. In such interpretative acts, I will argue, the name of "the womb" serves as a metasemiotic operator which coordinates, *via* specific fragments from the Quran and the hadith, an aspiration to be less "*blind*" and "*deaf*" to the world with ordinary moments of impact in which one suddenly finds oneself in a state of obligation towards one's close kin. If the life in language of *al-rahim* thus substantiates Arendt's philosophical diagnosis of the stateless as caught in an ontological predicament, it also reveals how this diagnosis remains wedded to an ethical and social imaginary that equates the good life with sovereign self-making. For *al-rahim* does not constitute, for my Palestinian interlocutors, an enclosure in which a flourishing life will not be found, let alone an index of being reduced to "bare life", but a figuration of the life worth living which associates a fuller disclosure of the world with the intensification of — rather than one's emancipation from — kinship or the "mutuality of being" (M. Sahlins). The commitment of Palestinian men and women to such a figuration attests to the endurance in refugee camps of *power of life* radically at odds with the biopolitical reason on which humanitarian governance is predicated, yet paradoxically enabled by their abandonment by the life infrastructure of the state with the principles of personhood and categories of being it projects.

**Sylvain PERDIGON** is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the American University of Beirut. He was born and grew up in the southern half of France, studied Greek and Latin at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, and received his PhD in Anthropology from Johns Hopkins University in 2011. His research concerns questions of power and the disclosure of selves and worlds in the contemporary Middle East. The project he is currently completing explores how the contradictory historical processes set in motion by the politics of empire, nationhood and sovereignty in the Eastern Mediterranean are critically refracted through emergent modes of obligation and affiliation to a range of human (relatives) and nonhuman (texts, dream-images, and angels) entities in a Palestinian refugee community in Tyre, South Lebanon. Before moving back to Lebanon, he was Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the American University in Cairo between September 2011 and December 2012.



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## Every Day Waiting and 'Life Force': Living with Precarity in the Time of War, Displacement, Migration and Sri Lankan Tamils

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As the result of past prolonged war and violence in Sri Lanka, many Tamil families were dispersed across borders. While some family members left to Toronto, others left to Paris or London or forced to stay back in Sri Lanka. Desire and anxiety to reunite with family members and condition of possibility for movement and immobility between family members across spaces, internal/external borders, and return to "home" became part of everyday life. Waiting for the refugees' claims to be heard, waiting for the visas to be approved for the spouses after marriages so they could be united in host countries, waiting to leave the site of violence, waiting to return from the refugees' camps in India back to Sri Lanka or elsewhere, waiting for the disappeared and prisoned sons and daughters to return home became part of life among the Sri Lankan Tamils. The constant mobility, immobility, dispersion and living with uncertainty became a *new sociality* within which the notion of *waiting* was expanded, prolonged and became ordinary.

Such waiting in uncertainty in the time of dispersion, mobility and immobility does not freeze or paralyze the temporality and life of Tamils but draws forces from the life itself and its mobility to live through everyday life. This paper deals with three ethnographic settings: a man who has constantly tried to leave the county due to the war but failed and was jailed many times; the ex-militant who has left Sri Lanka and lives in another country as a refugee and cannot return to Sri Lanka even after war; and a Tamil woman who has been waiting for a long time for the visa to be granted for her husband to join her from Sri Lanka. What connects all these stories and places is the notion of waiting and living with uncertainty. How do people inhabit the *zone of waiting* in the time of mobility and violence? How do people live with waiting that is occupied with precarity? How does the waiting become living in time rather than suspending time? I argue for 'notion of waiting' as force of life and a way of life to think through the living with precarity that resulted from displacement, mobility and violence in Sri Lanka. 'Waiting', I argue, is not a zone of limbo space or temporary time that you escape from but learn to live with the present, in the time of violence and mobility. Waiting is not a transition zone or threshold but a zone and time itself that becomes everyday life of people to inhabit and learn to live in such sociality.

**Sidharthan MAUNAGURU** is an Assistant Professor at South Asian Studies Programme at National University of Singapore. He received his PhD in Anthropology from Johns Hopkins University in 2011. He was awarded a Newton International Fellowship by the Royal Society and British Academy and hosted by University of Edinburgh. He is finishing his manuscript titled 'Brokering Tamil Transnational Marriages' which is based on his past/current research in which he studies how people, in a time of political violence and displacement, use certain traditional institutions (such as marriage) to repair relationships and reconnect with their dispersed communities across borders. His current project sets to understand the connections and disconnections between Hindu religion and politics. Maunaguru has research interests in the areas of kinship, marriage, violence, law, religion, state, and diaspora. He has taught at the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and at Johns Hopkins University, USA.

## Transnational Migration, Compounding Precarity, and Constraining Mobilities amongst Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Singapore's Construction Industry

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Within the growing body of work on precarity, scholars have argued how experiences of precariousness are inextricably linked to broader patterns of intensifying neoliberalism, labour market deregulation, and increased mobility in post-industrialist societies (McDowell, Batnitzky and Dyer 2009; Waite 2009; Wills *et al.* 2009). Low-waged migrants, particularly those on temporary work visas, are increasingly recognised as individuals centrally implicated in precarious employment conditions at the bottom ends of labour markets. Along this vein, geographers have proposed concepts such as notions of *hyper-precarity* to emphasise the multiple layering of insecurities that migrants face as a result of their marginal socio-legal status and labour market position, whilst undertaking jobs that are typically low paid, insecure, and irregular (Lewis *et al.* 2014). Seeing that migrants often undertake a substantial degree of risk and investment to gain access to overseas job opportunities, the consequences of these compounding precarities are far-reaching, especially when migrant aspirations and livelihoods are folded into these trajectories. Taking the case study of Bangladeshi construction workers in Singapore, we examine migrants' conditions of pre-departure training and recruitment at source, as well as their employment experiences at destination to understand how precarity is embedded and reproduced at particular sites and junctures of the migration process. By adopting an approach that views migration as an intensively mediated process, we emphasise the place-based nature of migrant-specific vulnerabilities, and how different forms of risk and vulnerabilities accumulate, intersect, and converge to render migrants more susceptible to workplace exploitation.

**Grace BAEY** is an Independent Researcher with a keen interest in documentary photography. During her time at the Asia Research Institute, she was Co-Investigator of the research project entitled "Migration and Precarious Work: Negotiating Debt, Employment and Livelihood Strategies amongst Bangladeshi Migrant Men working in Singapore's Construction Industry", funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) under the Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium. Her research interests include transnational labour migration in Southeast Asia, recruitment practices, gender and migration, identity politics, and international political economy. She holds an MA in Geography from Queen's University, Kingston ON.

**Brenda S.A. YEOH** is Professor (Provost's Chair), Department of Geography, and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore. She is also the Research Leader of the Asian Migration Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, NUS, and coordinates the Asian MetaCentre for Population and Sustainable Development Analysis. Her research interests include the politics of space in colonial and postcolonial cities, and she has considerable experience working on a wide range of migration research in Asia, including key themes such as cosmopolitanism and highly skilled talent migration; gender, social reproduction and care migration; migration, national identity and citizenship issues; globalising universities and international student mobilities; and cultural politics, family dynamics and international marriage migrants. She has published widely in these fields. Her latest book titles include *The Cultural Politics of Talent Migration in East Asia* (Routledge, 2012, with Shirlena Huang); and *Migration and Diversity in Asian Contexts* (ISEAS Press, 2012, with Lai Ah Eng and Francis Collins); *Return: Nationalizing Transnational Mobility in Asia* (Duke University Press, 2013, with Xiang Biao and Mika Toyota); as well as a paperback reprint of her book *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment* (originally published in 1996 by Oxford University Press; reprinted by NUS Press in 2003 and 2013).

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## When Machines for Living Force Themselves on Us: James Lee's *The Beautiful Washing Machine* and the Personhood of Things

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The star of James Lee's film *The Beautiful Washing Machine* is, as the title clearly states, a washing machine. This 'machine' (if we have the right to speak this way) is endowed in the film with a vital, animist force of life, dispersing this force to objects normally seen to be the *result* of human social life but not *essential* to it. Yet the life force of contemporary Kuala Lumpur, the images insist, is located more in its objects and machines than in its actual people. This fact produces a deeply ambivalent frame of ethical judgement and living for the humans who find themselves confronted by such sentient machines. Through the close reading of Lee's 2004 film, this paper will therefore explore questions pertaining to ethical forms of urban living and concepts of the human in relation to city life in Kuala Lumpur. By closely considering the *ideas* of this film and *concepts* drawn from academic and popular sources, this paper seeks to demonstrate how *The Beautiful Washing Machine* operates to denaturalize urban space and displace a privileged human subjectivity and everyday life in a manner that suggests new and complex linkages between bodies, behaviours, objects, and the physical environment of the city. In short, the goal is to illustrate the links between a specific artistic and technological form (cinema), James Lee's precise deployment of this form in *The Beautiful Washing Machine*, and the mutating forms of life (directly observed in ethnographic work conducted at the time the film was made) one finds in a city such as Kuala Lumpur.

**Richard BAXSTROM** is Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh and co-editor of the journal *Visual Culture in Britain*. He is the author of *Houses in Motion: The Experience of Place and the Problem of Belief in Urban Malaysia* (Stanford University Press, 2008) and (with Todd Meyers) *Realizing the Witch: Science, Cinema, and the Mastery of the Invisible* (Fordham University Press, 2015).

## Care and the Politics of Vulnerability in Japan

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This paper considers how states of vulnerability generated by what Stevenson (2014, 44) calls the “psychic life of biopolitics” reveal the force of life in Japan’s aging society. This paper focused on fieldwork conducted with a range of formal (paid) carers of older adults in Kyoto, Japan.

Japan’s surplus in frail aging bodies have become a commodity circulating through an increasingly complex care economy. The proliferation of care provisioning apparatuses and administrative technologies aimed at organising the flow of bodies has resulted in a withering of the moral and affective force of care as a guiding principle of social life. Care staff shortages and precarious forms of employment generate a logic of everyday, small acts of neglect or abuse (leaving a client in a soiled diaper all day, to excessive use of sedating medication, e.g.), that furthers the opacity of the old body, foreclosing on a carer’s capacity to pay attention to the suffering of the other. At the same time, the carer’s job demanding a careful accounting of bodies and their needs for life support. Carer subjectivities, however, cannot be reduced to the biopolitical policies and structures that they contend with any more than the lives of the cared-for can be fully accounted for by the mechanisms of their care. Like many unpaid carers, care professionals are often highly conscious of, even haunted by the emotional demands on this work, using idioms like “solitary confinement,” “kidnapping,” and “hostage,” which implicate their own moral failings in delivering care. They also stake out other kinds of moral claims based on feelings of intimacy with the cared for when many families appear unwilling or unable to care. In this way, the uncertain livelihoods of both carer and the cared-for in contemporary Japan become are in a tense embrace of mutual vulnerability, holding them in a state of suspense. I am interested here in the way this vulnerability expands the imagination in ways that reveal the psychic life of biopolitics, sometimes in violence and other times tenderness, both suggesting a life apart from the one suggested by the care economy. As nearly all of Asia experiences rapid and unprecedented population aging, care workers and institutions will continue to be in high demand, and the case of Japan might stand as an indication of the challenges ahead.

**Jason DANELY** is Senior Lecturer of Anthropology at Oxford Brookes University and an affiliate of the Centre for Medical Humanities. He has been conducting fieldwork-based ethnographic research looking at aging, caring, grief, and ritual in Japan since 2005. His book, *Aging and Loss: Mourning and Maturity in Contemporary Japan* was published in 2014 by Rutgers University Press. He is also editor of *Transitions and Transformations: Cultural Perspectives on Aging and the Life Course* (Berghahn 2013). Since 2011, he has served as Editor-in-Chief of *Anthropology & Aging*, the only international scholarly journal dedicated to anthropological perspectives on global aging. He has received awards from the Fulbright Foundation, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, the Center on Age & Community, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, and the University of California Pacific Rim Research Program. His current research is a cross-cultural comparison of the lived experiences of family caregivers of older adults in Japan and the UK. He received his PhD in Anthropology from the University of California, San Diego.

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## Displacement as Emplacement: Transgender Mobility and Sexual Production of Urban Space in Istanbul

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Being a trans person in Turkey means a life shaped by several forms of stigmatization, marginalization, abandonment, injury, and death. To name a few, spatial displacement, familial abandonment and disowning, state-regulated sex reassignment process, and targeted killings significantly shape transgender lives, rendering them precarious at many levels. Yet there is always a creative and constructive tension between these violent acts and processes, and trans people's incessant negotiations and contestations with them. Violence forms and shapes how trans people engage with the world, as well as how they relate to one another through their creative work of living. Thus, echoing Veena Das (2005), the very violent conditions of their lives are, at the same time, the conditions of their empowerment, resistance, resilience, and struggle to build their quotidian.

In this paper, I focus on one particular dimension of these lives shaped by violence, that is, transgender women's creative and productive labor of living in the face of everyday spatial discrimination, marginalization and displacement of transgender women by a range of institutional (i.e. the police) and non-institutional (i.e. capital owners, landlords, neighbors, etc.) actors. Based on transgender women's narratives of spatial violence, I discuss how their constant displacement and forced mobility can also be understood as a form of emplacement, trans homemaking, which constitute new modes of sociality and subcultures of sexuality. I argue that a forced, ongoing mobility itself can be an important component of nonconforming and marginalized sexual identities, and construction of autonomy and forms of agency. In other words, I analyze the constant displacement also as a "ground of sociality, a new way of inhabiting the world" (Thiranagama 2011:5), in terms, that is, of establishing a spatial belonging, as *emplacement*.

**Asli ZENGİN** is currently a Visiting Research Fellow in Sexuality Studies at the Center for Feminist Research at York University. She completed her PhD in the Department of Anthropology and the collaborative program in Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto in May 2104. Her dissertation, *Sex Under Intimate Siege: Transgender Lives, Law, and State Violence in Contemporary Turkey*, focuses on the transformation of transgender lives into the microphysical domain of state power for the symbolic and material production of sexual and gender difference in Turkey. She also analyzes how transgender people respond to this process in their everyday negotiations with state medical and legal authorities and police officers. Zengin has widely published in peer-review journals and edited volumes. Her most recent article, "Sex for Law, Sex for Psychiatry: Pre-Sex Reassignment Surgical Psychotherapy in Istanbul," was released in the *Anthropologica* May 2014 issue. Prior to her doctoral studies, she did her master's research on female sex workers and their relations with the Turkish state. This work was published as a book in Turkish with the title *Iktidarın Mahremiyeti: İstanbul'da Hayat Kadınları, Seks İsciligi ve Sıddet [Intimacy of Power: Women Prostitutes, Sex Work and Violence in Istanbul]*. Her research interests include the body, gender, sexuality, queer theory, anthropology of law, medical anthropology, the state, violence, and contemporary issue in the Middle East with a special focus on Turkey.

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## Golden Shoes, Tobacco Seats, and Shoeboxes: Scaling Sanctions and Transactions across the Iran/Turkey Border

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This paper explores the relationship between everyday economic transactions and prolonged international sanctions that produced new speculative commercial relations and their concomitant entourage of social actors across the Iran-Turkey border. While the international sanctions have led Iran's national economy into a self-perpetuating cycle of exponential inflation, increasing unemployment as well as arrested chains of production and consumption, they have also produced precarious configurations of exchange and *circulation* to bridge these very gaps and reroute arrested mobilities — with attendant *exchangers* and *circulators*. This paper tracks the traffic in gold between Iran and Turkey as a way into how lives of those circulators across the Iran-Turkey border geographies are, as the organizers put it, “reconfigured, recovered through new imaginaries and actions in violent spaces and times” (whereby international sanctions themselves are better approached as a so-called “low-intensity” force of warfare, rather than a non-violent method of international governance).

It does so by following the biographical and conjunctural entailments of two sets of Iranian citizens in Turkey, who in both cases uneasily carry the labels ‘merchant’ and ‘tourist’ in their particular transnational circuits. Riza Sarraf, or before he naturalized as a Turkish citizen, Reza Zarrab, has gained notoriety as an Iranian businessman serving as the *sarraf* between state functionaries in Iran and bank officials in Turkey in a massive traffic in converting Iranian assets into gold. Second circulator is Mohsen a middle-class clerical worker from Tabriz, Iran — who, while traveling between Tabriz and Antalya, trades cartons of cigarettes and gold from Iran to “buy dollars” in Turkey. The itineraries of these two sets of merchant-tourists and their differential embeddings in the traffic at variegated scales in gold, I argue, reveal significant features of the broader cartography of the Iranian economy under sanctions and the choreography these sanctions set into motion in concrete marketplaces. Such a methodological orientation cognizant of the politics of scale might offer a generative way to “shed light on capital, value and bodily conversions, and depart from seeing political and social instabilities as momentary, celebrated or exceptional,” as the conference organizers have put it.

**Emrah YILDIZ** is a Joint PhD Candidate in Social Anthropology and Middle Eastern Studies, and a Graduate Associate of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University. His research and teaching interests include historiography and ethnography of borderlands, anthropology of Islam and pilgrimage, political economy and contraband as well as studies of gender and sexuality in the Middle East. His areas of inquiry include the triangulation of the borderland zones among Iran, Turkey and Syria. His dissertation research — which combines micro-historical and ethnographic approaches to studies of transnational mobility and chronicles the cultural biography and social life of a confluent pilgrimage and contraband route between Iran and Syria via Turkey — has been funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Die Zeit Stiftung Bucerius Fellowship in Migration Studies as well as Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies and Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. He is co-editor of Tadween's *JadMag* edited volume on the Kurdish Peace Process and the Gezi Protests, *Dissident Visions of Turkey*. His forthcoming and recently printed academic publications include articles on sexuality, political solidarity and the Gezi protests with *Palgrave*, cross-border contraband and labor practices in Gaziantep, Turkey with *Toplum & Bilim* (in Turkish) as well as informality, market integrity, and state sovereignty across the Turkey-Syria border with nai010's *Informal Market Worlds — An Atlas*. Emrah is also co-editor of *Jadaliyya Turkey*.

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## Carbon Frontier, Trans-Urban Flows: Oil as a Force of Life

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From Bandar Abbas to Karachi via Gwadar and filtering through the towns of Mirjaveh, Taftan, Maskhel and Quetta, Irani oil quietly flows across borders through a complex grid of human and non-human infrastructures that respond to state policies regarding the lucrative, albeit 'illicit' commodity. These highly speculative infrastructures of mobility animate the imaginations, aspirations and daily lives of local actors (border guards, highway patrol, customs officials, small time financiers, petrol station owners, truck drivers, young Baluch men and women) who control the storage, transportation, circulation and exchange of oil across aquatic and overland routes, and into markets in various cities and towns in Pakistan, Afghanistan and wider supra-regional economic networks in Central Asia. In this paper, I consider oil as a force of life in terms of three dynamics: disruption, excess and mediation. These dynamics hinder and facilitate the movement of bodies across precarious spaces and times that are set against the broader context of a war economy in which the USA, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan are deeply entangled. As a force of life, oil mediates between risk and uncertainty; as excess it augments the potentiality for limitless individual and urban-national economic growth; and as disruption it sets limits on a notion of progress tied to a fossilized and decaying future. I engage these ideas through ongoing ethnography in the border towns of Iran and Pakistan to consider how contested, cross-border and trans-urban flows of oil are molded into the everyday and around the intersections of markets, state and ethnicity. Notably, these transformations that link up certain city regions across South-Central Asia through historical, contemporary and differentiated political spaces have come together in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century to form a postcolonial-postindustrial *frontier zone* of a speculative 'carbonized urbanity'.

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## Forces of Desire and Risking Self and Other: The Resettlement of a War-Altered Landscape in Northwest Cambodia

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When Cambodia's long civil war ended in the late 1990s, land on the former frontlines in the northwestern provinces was allotted to those willing to risk occupancy. These areas were often heavily littered with the explosive remnants of war. Both food security and the prospect of acquiring land rights required settlers' physical engagement with the dangerous materialities of a war-altered landscape. The resettlement endeavor was fraught with physical risk, pitting human agency and will against an active and agentive landscape. Landmines and ordnance wounded and killed many post-war settlers (Davies 1994). Nevertheless, envisioned futures and immediate needs drove human actions in the dangerous, ever fluctuating terrain. Individuals' motivations for resettlement were comprised of complex assemblages of need and desire. My paper elucidates these forces of desire for two villagers, a female tenant farmer and a male former soldier turned wealthy landowner. Both experienced heavy human losses in the region, largely from landmine accidents. However, for both Mome and Heng, the landscape posed not merely peril and threat but also promise and the potential of a better future. Their lives provide strong ethnographic examples of what Biel and Locke termed "the passion for the possible that life holds" even in difficult and uncertain circumstances (2010: 319). However, in describing such accounts, I note a tendency in myself to valorize such desires and to paint these determined actors as heroic. In contemplating the forces of life that drive our interlocutors to make their way forward in violent and precarious contexts, care must be taken to avoid romanticizing them, a tendency that often characterizes resistance studies (cf. Ortner 1995 and Abu-Lughod 1990). To complicate my account, my paper turns to one more set of actors, Mome's former employers, a couple who made their fortune at the expense of others' lives. They defended their actions by way of a common area refrain, that the poor "must risk themselves," and my paper closes with a discussion of the ethical ramifications of this post-war discourse for forms of village sociality.

**Lisa ARENSEN** is currently a Resident Lecturer for The School for Field Studies' Center for Mekong Studies in Siem Reap, Cambodia. She completed her PhD in social anthropology at the University of Edinburgh in June of 2012. Her PhD fieldwork consisted of an ethnographic study of three villages situated on the former front lines in a heavily mined district in northwest Cambodia. Dr Arensen has explored residents' post-war migration and resettlement strategies, the clearing of minefields for agriculture, engagements with forested landscapes, and efforts at social reintegration in communities with divided affiliations and violent histories. Prior to her graduate work, her research interests centered upon gendered experiences of vulnerability, exploitation and resilience in Cambodia. She hopes to conduct further research upon Cambodians' complex and shifting relationships with forested landscapes. She is also interested in the intergenerational relationships between young and elderly Cambodians. From an oral history perspective, the knowledge and experiences of the elderly generation of Cambodians is vast and largely undocumented, and she seeks to contribute to the conservation of traditional knowledge and the transmission of memory.



## ABOUT THE RAPORTEURS

**Itty ABRAHAM** is Associate Professor at the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore (NUS), and an associate of the Science, Technology and Society Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, NUS. His interests include Asian science and technology, especially nuclear politics, theories of the postcolonial, and international relations. His new book, *How India Became Territorial: Foreign Policy, Diaspora, Geopolitics*, was published by Stanford University Press in August 2014.

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## ABOUT THE DISCUSSANTS

**Bernard BATE** is a linguistic and sociocultural anthropologist whose work involves the theory, ethnography, and history of political oratory and rhetoric with a regional focus in the Tamil worlds of South Asia. He is the author of *Tamil Oratory and the Dravidian Aesthetic*, (Columbia, 2009/Oxford India, 2011) as well as articles in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *Language and Communication*, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, and *The Economic and Political Weekly*. A member of the inaugural faculty of Yale-NUS College, in 2015-16 he will join the Stanford Humanities Center as an External Faculty Fellow to complete a book on the genealogy of Tamil political oratory.

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**James D. SIDAWAY** has served as a Professor of Political Geography at National University of Singapore since January 2012. Previously he was Professor of Political and Cultural Geography at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands and prior to that a Professor in Human Geography at Plymouth University, UK. Much of his research is about the relations of states, cities and geopolitics. Prof Sidaway has explored their interactions through fieldwork in Southern Africa, Western Europe, parts of Southeast Asia and latterly the Persian Gulf and Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The historical geography and current economic and political geographies of development have also been a long-term interest. These and other works are influenced by a wide range of postcolonial writing and theory. In 2014, he was one of the guest editors for a theme issue of *The Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* on 'advancing postcolonial geographies'. Since 2005, Prof Sidaway has served as an Associate Editor for *Political Geography*: <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/political-geography/>

## ABOUT THE CHAIRPERSONS

**Anju Mary PAUL** is an international migration scholar with a research focus on migration to, from, and within Asia. She is especially interested in how gender, labour, race and ethnicity, as well as class intersect at the moment of migration and the post-migration experience. Dr Paul graduated from the University of Michigan in 2012 with a joint PhD in Sociology and Public Policy. For her doctoral dissertation, Dr Paul conducted interviews in five countries — the United States, Canada, the Philippines, Hong Kong and Singapore — to explore emergent migration patterns and strategies being adopted by Filipino migrant domestic workers. While Dr Paul continues to study migrant domestic work, some of her current projects look at migration decision-making among migrant nurses and Asian-born bio-scientists. She has published sole-authored articles in the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, and *Ethnic and Racial Studies*.

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**Maria PLATT** is currently a Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. Prior to this she completed her PhD in anthropology at La Trobe University. In 2007-2008, as an Endeavour Research Fellow, she undertook field work on gender relations and marriage on the Indonesian island of Lombok. Her PhD thesis explored women's capacity to exercise agency within marriages where Islam and local custom rather than the state are the key institutions which govern marriage. Her research interests include gender, migration and marriage, which includes the regulation of intimacy, within Indonesia and the Southeast Asian context.

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