

ARI news

Main Story

**INTERVIEW WITH
HO KONG CHONG**

Special Feature

INTERNET

Outreach Event

**MEETING MIGRANTS'
NEEDS: SHARING
KNOWLEDGE FROM
RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

LIFE & LORE

in southeast asia



PROFESSOR BRENDA YEOH

ACTING DIRECTOR

2019 marks a specific moment of transition for ARI. Professor Jonathan Rigg, who successfully helmed the Institute over the last three years, returned to the UK at the end of 2018 and we await the new Director, Professor Tim Bunnell, to come on board in July 2019.

As a 'home-grown' geographer who joined NUS in 1999 as postdoctoral fellow and whose academic career has been closely intertwined with the University's fast-changing trajectory over the past 20 years, Tim is surely someone that all of us in ARI can identify with, and learn from.

In the interim six months, I am honoured to have been given the job of holding the fort and ensuring that all's well, and remains well, till the change of leadership can be effected. This does not mean that the Institute will be hitting the pause button. Indeed, transitions—while not supposed to bring about tectonic transformations—are also productive times, when (i) the regular tempo can be modulated for small but meaningful improvements, (ii) key strengths in our core business can be consolidated and conserved so as to be poised for change, and (iii) the imaginative power of 'thinking out of the box' can be given freer rein precisely because the brakes have been temporarily engaged.

First, tempo. A glance at our calendar of events—workshops, forums, roundtables, seminars, public lectures, international engagements, academic visits and more—makes clear that the tempo of academic activities in the Institute and the thematic research clusters continues to pulsate with energetic vitality. Part of this vibrant tempo in the Institute's life is public facing, as seen in the Histories Series of public lectures in collaboration with the National Library, Department of History at NUS, and the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, highlighting research on historical and related matters in Singapore and Southeast Asia. With topics ranging from colonialism, climate change to histories-from-below, this successful, well-attended series reminds us of our place in time even as we mark Singapore's Bicentennial this year. We are also anticipating a second change, this time to our weekly Institute tempo, in the form of experimenting with a regular mid-week break-time when clusters will take turns to serve their favourite snacks and drinks (and do the washing up!). To be called 'recess time' in reminiscence of our favourite time of the day during school, I hope that this will provide the space-time coordinates for cross-cluster social interactions, encouraging camaraderie and friendships, and simply getting to know one another as unique individuals who have the 緣分 (yuan fen or providence) to come within reach of each other's orbits.

Second, core business. Even as everyday rhythms sustain us, it is also important to look beyond the seriality of activities to recognise ARI's core business of producing high quality and influential research in and on Asia. This requires giving attention to recruiting the best researchers in the relevant fields, nurturing the wide array of talent in our midst, as well as winning major research grants to help build up research resources and capacities. In relation to the last mentioned, ARI has done well in the past few years, and the step-change in grant activity has yielded innovative projects funded by the MOE Academic Research Fund Tier 2, the Social Science Research Council and other external bodies. Our grant successes now include an array of topics such as *Child Health and Migrant Parents in South-East Asia* (CHAMPSEA), the *Migrating out of Poverty* (MOOP) programme, *Transnational Relations, Ageing and Care Ethics* (TRACE), *Sustainable Governance of Transboundary Environmental Commons in Southeast Asia*, *Making Identity Count in Asia*, and most recently, *Heat in Urban Asia*. These major projects are integral to building the Institute's core strengths and need constant investment of collective effort to position the Institute well to take on creative, cutting-edge research on significant issues.

Third, thinking out of the box. Looking further afield to happenings beyond ARI, there are new developments in the humanities and social science landscape across the university. While ARI's work has always been inter-disciplinary, boundary-crossing has tended to remain within the fold of cognate disciplines that share a history of long association and cross-fertilisation. Today, given the rising significance of scholarship in digital humanities and computational social sciences, it would be important for the Institute to think imaginatively 'out of the box' and consider collaborating with less comfortable bedfellows including researchers in the fields of computing, information analytics and digital scholarship. In this light, NUS is also catalysing change that will grow and strengthen connective tissue between the range of Faculties/Schools and the Research Institutes that engage in humanities and social science research. In anticipation of these potential transformations in the humanities and social science landscape, it will be important for ARI to imagine its boundaries differently in order to seize the day in producing research of the highest quality and impact.

INTERVIEW WITH ASSOC PROF HO KONG CHONG

DR MEGHAN DOWNES



In July 2018, Associate Professor Ho Kong Chong commenced a three-year joint appointment as Cluster Leader in ARI's Asian Urbanisms Cluster. Trained as an urban sociologist at the University of Chicago, Prof Ho has research interests in neighbourhood and community development, heritage and place-making, the political economy of cities as well as a more recent interest in higher education. Much of his published work is on East (Hong Kong, Seoul and Taipei) and Southeast Asian (Bangkok and Singapore) cities. A firm believer in evidence-based policies, he has been research consultant and advisor to the Singapore Housing and Development Board, Ministry of National Development, Ministry of Social and Family Development, National Youth Council, the National Arts Council and the National Heritage Board.

Dr Meghan Downes spoke with Prof Ho about his first semester at ARI and his visions for the Asian Urbanisms Cluster.

Thanks for talking with me today. You have just recently commenced your appointment as Cluster Leader of the Asian Urbanisms Cluster, but you have been at NUS for many years before this. Can you tell us a bit about your time at NUS before joining ARI?

Yes, I have been with NUS for quite a long time now. Prior to ARI there was a centre called the Centre for Advanced Studies, and when I joined that centre, Brenda Yeoh was the director and some of the administrative staff like Valerie Yeo were also there—they have been with ARI since the very beginning when the Institute was formed. My involvement in ARI's Asian Urbanisms Cluster actually also dates back quite a long time, because I was an associate with the cluster before I was leader. Beyond ARI, in the Faculty, I was involved in the Cities Cluster, which is now Global Urban Studies. So yes, it has been a long time. I've seen research institutes form and transform.

And what has it been like moving between institute and faculty positions? What are some of the main differences about working at ARI compared to working in the Sociology Department?

I think on the faculty side of things we do more long-term work with colleagues, whereas a place like ARI—with the two- and four-year contracts—is an organisation that is continually changing as new people come and others leave. I think there are good and bad things about this. The best thing is that there are constantly new ideas. It is amazing to see how the postdoctoral applicants we get each year come up with such interesting projects. I don't think it's

surprising though, because when you go for big association meetings, the people with exciting new ideas are always those who are working on their PhDs. So, it's nice to have an outfit like ARI to be a home to early career researchers with these kinds of ideas. One drawback is that it's difficult to work with people for an extended period of time. I guess in this regard I'm fortunate because in our cluster many former members are keen to maintain their connection with ARI. For example, our former postdoctoral fellow Creighton Connolly is continuing to work on collaborative projects with ARI from his new role at The University of Lincoln. Marie Gibert, another former postdoctoral fellow, is also thinking of a new collaboration with AUC. And that's good, I think we should be encouraging that. I think these kinds of continuations are very useful as they help build on the valuable relationships established during ARI's two-year research appointments.

Speaking of new people and new ideas, ARI will soon be welcoming a new cohort of research fellows. What kind of projects have incoming postdoctoral scholars proposed for the Asian Urbanisms Cluster?

Yes, we have several new scholars joining our cluster this year. Sana Jaffrey, who will be joining us in July, researches politics of the city in new democracies. She brings with her an exciting project that looks at social media and politics. Echo Wang Lei is also coming in July and she will work on social enterprises, philanthropy, civic cultures and the city, with the idea being that different types of cities, because of their biographies, have different approaches to donations

and to the ways these donations are used for different kinds of charity and social welfare related policies. Natalie Lang will be a joint postdoctoral fellow with the Asian Urbanisms and the Religion and Globalisation Cluster. She focuses on religion and the city, religious spaces and religious behaviours. Later in the year, Matthew Wade, who does real estate ethnography in Indonesia, will also join the cluster as a postdoctoral fellow.

That sounds like a fascinating range of different projects, all approaching 'the city' and 'the urban' from different angles. Related to this, I have quite a big question: you are leading the Asian Urbanisms Cluster and have a long history of engagement with issues around neighbourhood and community development, heritage and place-making, and the political economy of cities. What does the urban mean to you?

That is indeed a big question, because the urban is everything you just said and more. But in terms of my own work, I have always focused on the possibility of collective action at the local level, at the scale of the neighbourhood, and to see how those kinds of actions are being affected by broader movements. So, for Taiwan and Korea, you can see how the democracy movements have affected the city, but also right down to the scale of the neighbourhood. At the same time, it is important to see how these kinds of local level movements can also create more liveable cities, more progressive cities. I also have a strong interest in looking at state-local partnerships. This is a bit different from the rights literature, where very often the state is seen as antagonistic to rights. Actually at the level of cities you see all kinds of partnerships, so I want to also look at those kinds of partnerships and what it means for city building. That's the focus I bring to the Asian Urbanisms Cluster, looking at politics, political economy, and local action. But throughout my career at NUS, I've done many different things, so I'm always open and sympathetic to new and different projects and ideas.

And, how does the specific study of Asian urbanism in particular bring a unique perspective to urban studies?

Well, I mentioned earlier about the democracy movements. That's something we have to pay attention to. The whole legacy of the developmental state continues to be important as it informs different ways of doing things, from developmental projects that affect the city, from the building of high-rise residences, to the structure of the service economy, and also perhaps to the new forms of partnerships that are emerging. There are also very significant inter-Asia connections that we need to consider. I do quite a lot of work on higher education mobilities, and so you see a lot of inter-Asia movement, because the universities here collect between 60-90% of their



international students from the immediate region. That's actually a key part of my forthcoming book with Ravinder Sidhu and Brenda Yeoh [*Student Mobility and Regional Solidarity in East Asia*]*—*we talk quite a lot about the idea of a regional consciousness that comes from these kinds of involvements. I think the third way in which Asia becomes important for urban studies is through the kinds of investments that are taking place, again at the regional scale. China's one-belt-one-road initiative is one instance. Transnational real estate developments—Korean developers in Vietnam, Chinese developers in Malaysia, Singaporean developers moving into different parts of Indochina are another example. These new developments don't just raise economic questions but also cultural questions, because you have, at least for the Vietnamese case, enclave-style developments where infrastructural projects bring with them particular socio-cultural practices around real estate projects. In this case, and many others, we can see that the designing and building and marketing of residential enclaves really add a new element to the idea of Asian urbanisms.

The next thing I wanted to ask about was some of the innovative programmes and events the Asian Urbanisms Cluster has been running, such as the 'Activate!' series, which brought together scholars, artists and activists in conversations about emerging forms of civic practice in Asian cities. Can you tell us a little more about this?

So, the 'Activate!' series is particularly interesting, for its attempts to engage the wider public over issues of mutual concern. It has been so fascinating because the young minds in the cluster have so many great new ideas and the 'Activate!' series becomes a forum for them to test out these ideas. Some of our current fellows and associates—Minna Valjakka, Sonia Lam-Knott, Lee Kah Wee, Cho Im Sik—were instrumental in bringing together

different themes and involving different activists and stakeholders. So, in that sense, the success of the series was all down to having that particular group of people with different interests, creating a lively forum. That is what has made the series so dynamic and interesting. And very well attended!

Yes, it was such a great series! Now, zooming out to the bigger and longer-term picture, what are some of your broad visions for the cluster in coming years?

When I came in as cluster leader, one of the things that I felt we needed to consider was bringing a balance between research that is more conceptual, more critical—which we have always had—with research that is more policy-driven. I think this balance is important, because it helps us try to see how the work that we do has potential policy implications. I like to see that balance—not necessarily one dominating the other, but a balance. And, I think that this new focus actually means that our colleagues from architecture will have the opportunity to be more involved, because a lot of what they do is very policy-relevant. I would like to continue with these kinds of collaborations. Another important vision is related to growing the cluster with limited funds and figuring out ways and means of getting larger projects. This can be

difficult work, and setting up large project teams can take up time, but I think it is necessary and actually a really beneficial learning experience for postdoctoral fellows. They would still have time to do their own individual research, but can also learn new skills of working with colleagues from different disciplines, meeting tight project timelines, and managing research funding.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your first semester here at ARI? Any surprises or unexpected new impressions?

After my first semester, and now moving onto my second semester here, I can see that my relationship to ARI as an associate was very different from being a cluster leader. I think that ARI has a way of allowing people to do what they really want, and work on what they are passionate about. I think being at ARI and having a critical mass of postdoctoral fellows who are in similar fields—not exactly the same but similar—allows for a certain level of engagement, and that is really important. In the last six months I have really begun to see how special this place is. Everyone is working at break-neck speed, but it is something they really want to do because they are invested in their projects. So, I think it's quite a special place.

2 – 3 MAY 2019

**DOES 'INVISIBLE PRIVILEGE' TRAVEL?
LOOKING BEYOND THE GEOGRAPHIES OF
WHITE PRIVILEGE**

22 – 26 JULY 2019

**14TH SINGAPORE GRADUATE FORUM ON
SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES**

15 – 16 AUGUST 2019

**PLACING ISLANDS IN SUSTAINABLE URBAN
DEVELOPMENT: HERITAGE, HISTORIES,
TOURISM, AND IDENTITY**

20 – 21 AUGUST 2019

**MIGRATION-LED DIVERSIFICATION AND
DIFFERENTIAL INCLUSION IN ARRIVAL
CITIES ACROSS ASIA**

21 – 22 NOVEMBER 2019

FAMILY POLICIES IN ASIA

Details of events are available at: <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/Event>



Ms Valerie Yeo (20 years),
Mr Henry Kwan (15 years), and
Ms Sharon Ong (10 years), all
members of the ARI administration
team, received the NUS Long
Service Award in January 2019.

Professor Chua Beng Huat's monograph, *Liberalism Disavowed: Communitarianism and State Capitalism in Singapore* (NUS Press and Cornell University Press), has been listed as one of the Best Books of 2018 by the journal, *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/lists/2018-12-14/best-books-2018>.

Assoc Prof Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho was appointed Journal Editor of *Social and Cultural Geography* in January 2019.

Professor Ted Hopf's article 'Change in International Practices', *European Journal of International Relations* 24(3) (2018), 687-711, was awarded the Best Article Prize 2017 by the European International Studies Association.

His co-authored article 'The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order: China's Hegemonic Prospects' (with B. B. Allan & S. Vucetic), *International Organization* 72(4), 839-869, was featured in The Washington Post article 'The Best Work on Political Economy in 2018', 31 December 2018, as one of the 10 Albie winners for the year 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2018/12/31/best-work-political-economy/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.0e074544322d.

Professor Brenda Yeoh gave an invited speech on 'Transnational Care Migration and Gender Relations in Southeast Asia', *International Workshop on Frontiers in Migration Research*, Xi'an Jiaotong University, China, 16 September 2018, and a keynote speech on 'Diaspora's Child: Migration-led Diversity and the Cultural Politics of National Belonging in Singapore', *Chinese Cinemas Days/International Symposium on Migrance and Memory in Chinese Language Films*, Confucius Institute, University of French Polynesia, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme du Pacifique, Association culturelle Wen Fa, Tahiti, 5-8 November 2018. She also gave 2 invited speeches:

'Care Migration and Gender Dynamics in Southeast Asia', *International Metropolis Conference 2018: Panel on the Dynamics Shifts of Migration and Mobility in Asia*; and 'Left Behind Children Matters: Coping with the "Ruptures of Migration" in Southeast Asia' (with T. Lam), *International Metropolis Conference 2018: Panel on the Visible and Powerful – Migrant Voices in a Connected World*, International Convention Centre Sydney, Australia, 29 October-2 November 2018.

In 2019, she also won the Solidarity Award as a Past Editor of *Gender, Place and Culture*, awarded by AAG Socialist and Critical Geography Specialty Group, was appointed Member of Council of the United Nations University, 2019-2025, and Member of the URA Architectural Heritage Awards (AHA) Assessment Committee, Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2019-2020.

Professor Jean Yeung gave 2 keynote speeches: 'Youth Transition to Adulthood: Regional Variations and Contexts', Expert Group Meeting on *The Role of Families and Family Policy in Supporting Youth Transitions*, organised by Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), International Federation for Family Development (IFFD), and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Doha, Qatar, 11-12 December 2018; and 'Demography and Population Ageing in Singapore', *South-south Conference on Demography and Population Ageing (SSCDPA2018)*, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 4-5 December 2018.

She was also appointed Council Member of the International Sociological Association, Research Committee for Family Studies (ISA-RC06), 2018-2021, and Council Member, Asian Population Association, 2018-2021.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR SMALL MEDIUM SIZE ENTERPRISES IN THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ERA

DR SONG DONG HYUN

With ARI's support via the field research grant scheme, I conducted field research in Korea under the project 'Artificial Intelligence for Small Medium Size Enterprises in the Fourth Industrial Revolution Era'.

The specific aim of the field research was to understand Korean stakeholders' perceptions of the emerging artificial intelligence (AI) society, which has instilled both opportunism and fear in Korean society. In the course of the last two months in South Korea—from November 2018 to January 2019—I travelled to various cities, met stakeholders, from politicians to civil group society members, and gathered internal sources relating to AI and the fourth industrial revolution. Hearing their voices was a fruitful research experience without which the reality of AI culture cannot be captured.

South Korean AI cultures have developed under the political norms of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which has become a world buzzword since Schwab's manifesto at the World Economic Forum in 2016. Among stakeholders, there are pessimistic views on AI technologies and the ways it is being adopted. Some policy makers have raised concerns about the current low level of AI technology in Korea due to the lack of basic science to realise the vision of AI mechanisms, while further suggesting that it is necessary to promote it as soon as possible to sustain the competitiveness of the society. Korean business stakeholders, and SMEs in particular, have not yet noticed the real effect and benefits from the adoption of new technologies, such as deep mining and prediction analytics. Rather, they are worried

about short term sustainability and a lack of plan and budget to embrace AI. Most of the educators state that the current pedagogy in preparation for AI society is inadequate and inapplicable to all disciplines due to its technique-based education programme innovation. Students are forced to learn a programme through coding without understanding the meaning of computational thinking. These are anecdotes of a large number of cases drawn from the field research. More complex layered connotations of AI embeddedness in Korean society also emerge. Deeper analysis of data obtained from the field research will provide more holistic interpretations.

The outcome of this research will be published in a journal article and this project will be introduced at the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society (ICAS) conference in the Philippines in August 2019. Using the same research method, field research will be conducted in Singapore to capture the AI culture in Singapore and carry out a comparative research between Korea and Singapore.

INTERNET LORE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

DR ERIC KERR &
DR CONNOR GRAHAM

'Folklore' encompasses a myriad and protean set of things, texts, and practices. It can be taken to include an extensive list including songs, poetry, ghost stories, legends, rumours and conspiracy theories, crafts, instrument-making, cosmology, dance, and other forms of intangible cultural heritage.



'Writing the Internet' workshop and exhibition

As Dhar wrote, 'It may be ambiguously used for the voices of the "folk", dealing generally with their unrecorded traditions or, as a generic term to designate the customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, songs, etc. that have been handed down from generation to generation' (1976: 294). In our ongoing investigation of digital folklore, we are interested in a specific type of folklore that emerges out of internet culture and subculture: 'The objects and practices emerging from the users' engagement with digital media platforms and computing applications.' (Gabriele de Seta quoted in Valentine 2015).

The term 'lore' repositions our project, focusing on a term that is frequently employed by internet users to refer to an (often admittedly fabricated) history of a website, community or subculture. It has the added benefit of dissolving the problematic question, especially when dealing with online communities, of who 'the folk' are. Lore represents ways of thinking, living, and being, encompassing traditional beliefs, social networks, and the circulation of stories through diverse channels. At its core are the vernacular and everyday narratives that sustain networks and make up local culture. Internet lore extends

lore's place and form through social media, online forums, and other platforms and media. In a time of regional and global integration and technological modernisation, what place has lore in Singapore and the Southeast Asian region?

Drawing from folklore studies, the project comprises four tracks: storytelling, figures, layers, and rumours. These tracks ask pressing questions such as: How are new and old stories circulated and read online and have we reached a closed circuit movement, from pre-text to post-text that is detectable in digital storytelling? How can current academic literature on digital folklore divert from Anglo-centric histories and cultural framings to include Southeast Asian lore, from trolls to memes to influencers? How are the aesthetic and material qualities of digital worlds layered on top of physical worlds in ways that reveal new imaginations, socio-political structures, and forms of life? How might we broaden our notions of digital literacy to critique the spread of information, misinformation, disinformation, and the fragility of biased algorithms as they attempt to tell the difference? Given folklore's ambiguous relation with truth, have digital communities gone post-truth? In addition to centralised purveyors of misinformation such as gossip forums and partisan propaganda websites, much of what drives the development of Internet lore—including online narratives drawing on myths, urban legends, conspiracy theories, etc.—can be characterised in terms of informal communication and vernacular knowledge. This epistemological framing can shed light on the normative question of how (over and above individual exhortations to 'be more vigilant') online communication can be organised in ways that achieve communal sense-making without unduly sacrificing reliability and informativeness.

Mythical characters often seem to reappear online—avatars, ghosts, trolls, and the like (although we shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that the etymological origin of 'troll' is this simple). New legends and figures haunting online worlds are constantly created as well, often recombining traits of the old characters. The prevalence of figures

in lore also gives us an opportunity to study what have variously been called 'users'. While that term has dropped out of fashion for being overly engineering-based (as in 'user-friendly') there still might be a place for us to think about the digital person as a user. Olia Lialina and Dragan Espenscheid make this point in their foundational book, *Digital Folklore*, and we can further trace this back to work in the philosophy of technology that has for a long time considered the meaning of use (not to be confused with *meaning as use*!)

We later developed three commitments that challenge some naïve assumptions about digital communities: 1) That there is not a single, global, monolingual Internet but multiple internets that interact with digital technologies in diverse ways, 2) that the multiplicity of online connected worlds are productive of new cultures and social groups, whose speciation is undertheorized and understudied, and 3) that the tracking of internet lore can draw fruitfully from fields like science and technology studies (STS) and information systems to reveal how online communities form, are maintained, and disappear.

More information on the various endeavours connected to this project can be seen in the project brochure: <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/Assets/Uploads/sts-cluster/Brochure-InternetLifeAndLoreInSoutheastAsia.pdf>.



Mr Amit Jai Pal Julka commenced a 9-month appointment as Research Associate in the Identities Cluster on 1 October 2018. As part of his research in the cluster, he is co-authoring a book project, tentatively titled *The Evolution of Indian National Identity 1950-2010*. His doctoral research focuses on testing the influence of mass common-sense on foreign policy, for which his case study is India's involvement in Jammu and Kashmir from 1947-1950.



Dr Fabian Charles Graham commenced a 2-year appointment as Research Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster on 17 December 2018. He holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from SOAS, London. His research interests include the anthropology of Chinese religion; spirit possession; temple ritual and material culture; the invention, inversion and reinterpretation of tradition; and new ethnographic, narrational and analytical approaches to the study of religious phenomena. At ARI he will begin a new project comparing the Nine Emperor God festivals in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.



Dr Chung Wei Yun commenced a 2-year appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow in the Changing Family in Asia Cluster on 5 December 2018. She received her PhD in Geography from the University of Cambridge and her research interest lies in the workplace and familial gender relations in Chinese societies and communities, including those in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. At ARI, she will be exploring women's changing role in Chinese Singaporean families over the past 40 years and its implication for the making and implementation of national welfare and care policies.



Dr Chen Ning Ning commenced a 2-year appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster on 2 January 2019. Dr Chen obtained her PhD from the NUS Department of Geography. Her research interests include the fields of religion and sacred space, rurality and rural landscapes, and Chinese lineage culture. At ARI, she will work on a project on Chinese clan associations (Zongqinhui).



Dr Sylvia Huwae commenced a 2-year appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow in the Identities Cluster on 2 January 2019. She received her PhD from Tilburg University, the Netherlands. She has research interest in cross-cultural psychology, (intercultural) communication, identity and group processes. At ARI, she will examine how people from individualistic and collectivistic cultures respond when they are being excluded by their own group members or by members from another group.



Prof Venni Venkata Krishna commenced a 3-month appointment as Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Science, Technology, and Society Cluster on 4 February 2019. He is currently Professorial Fellow, at FASS, University of New South Wales. He has more than 30 years of research, teaching and consultancy experience in science and technology policy studies, history and sociology of science and technology, innovation studies and science, technology and the developing world. At ARI, he will be researching science, technology and innovation policies in India and China with a focus on university-industry relations.



Dr Show Ying Ruo commenced a 2-year appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation Cluster on 7 January 2019. She obtained her PhD in Chinese Studies from NUS and specialises in Chinese religion with an emphasis on the Sino-Southeast Asian historical connectivity. She has extensive fieldwork experience in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia where she investigates the religious network of a specific kind of Chinese temple: the Vegetarian Halls (C: zhaitang).



Prof Gavin Willis Jones commenced a 2.5-month appointment as Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Changing Family in Asia Cluster on 21 February 2019. He is Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University; Associate, Asian Research Centre, Murdoch University; and Honorary Research Fellow, University of Western Australia. At ARI, he will collaborate with Prof Jean Yeung and other cluster members for a better understanding of recent marriage trends in East and Southeast Asia, particularly China and Singapore. Prof Gavin Jones had a parallel career as a distance runner, having held long-standing Canberra records for 10,000 metres and 3,000 metres steeplechase and winning some New York metropolitan championships.

(RE)CONCEPTUALISING ASIAN CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE AGE OF POST-POLITICS

DR SONIA LAM-KNOTT & DR CREIGHTON CONNOLLY

On 16-17 August 2018, the Asian Urbanisms Cluster convened a conference examining the capacity of civil society in Asian cities to affect change to urban governance, in an era which has been conceptualised as 'post-political'.

The notion of 'post-politics' refers to the depoliticisation of societies, whereby political concerns are presented as being separate from the domain of everyday life. In this arrangement, the government assumes a largely managerial role, and truly democratic governance is replaced by an emphasis on consensus built around socially normative objectives such as 'sustainability' and economic growth. This conference reviewed how this concept can be applied in Asia, where many countries have a different historical and political trajectory than the Western liberal democracies which form the basis for most post-political theorising. More specifically of interest is how Asian civil society strives to affect changes in how cities are being managed and developed, particularly through their involvement in heritage and environmental governance. Questions surrounding the role and mobilisations of civil society in 'post-political' contexts were addressed by an array of scholars of various disciplinary backgrounds, focusing on countries across East, South, Southeast, and Central Asia.

The first panel outlined the theoretical framing of the conference, featuring papers that critically analysed the way in which post-political cities in Asia have manifested. Dr David Matijasevich began by grappling with how the post-political concept can be applied in Asia, particularly given the prevalence of quasi-democratic and authoritarian governing regimes in the region. Prof U-Seok Seo followed with an application of the post-political framework to analyse urban governance in Seoul in South Korea. Together, these scholars highlighted the need for researchers to appreciate the distinctive historical development of political dynamics in the region. Complimenting this discussion, the following panel sought to deconstruct how the notion of 'civil society' has been conceived in Asian societies. For example, using Indonesia as a case study, Dr Rita Padawangi suggested that the post-political ideologies of the state have been reinforced through the transformation of the urban landscape, leading to the reconfiguration of civic spaces and of civil society itself.

Subsequent panels in the conference provided on-the-ground studies examining the interplay of state-civil society relations and post-politics, first with a focus on the natural



IDENTITIES

DR FONG SIAO YUONG





aspects of the urban. In particular, participants reviewed key environmental governance and activist initiatives developed to address disaster recovery efforts in Hanoi (Vietnam), along with Tacloban City and Manila (the Philippines). The conference then addressed the cultural aspects of the urban through analysing civil society's engagement in heritage conservation and governance in Malaysian, Chinese, and Indian cities. In particular, scholars identified how heritage has been mobilised by state governments as a means of legitimising particular political and economic objectives. Together, these panels revealed the complex positioning of civil society actors in relation to the state and the myriad strategies and networks that have emerged to tackle existing problems

arising from the pressures of urbanisation, and neoliberal urban governance regimes.

The conference ended with closing remarks from Assoc Prof Ho Kong Chong, Dr Creighton Connolly, and Dr Sonia Lam-Knott, who reflected upon the conversations initiated during the conference by calling on participants to reflexively analyse how the term 'post-politics' (and, by necessity, 'politics') is construed and deployed within their work. They stressed that in order to understand how post-political conditions can be challenged within the context of Asian cities, researchers must first tease out the role of the state and the rationale for its engagement in particular issues, such as heritage and environmental governance.

Our small cluster has been busy over the past few months! First of all, congratulations to our Cluster Leader, Prof Ted Hopf, for winning the Albie award from the Washington Post for his journal article titled 'The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order: China's Hegemonic Prospects', which he wrote together with Bentley B. Allan and Srdjan Vucetic. Named after the late political economist Albert O. Hirschman, the Albie award recognises the best works on political economy every year.

The cluster held its *Making Identity Count in Asia* conference on 10-11 January 2019. This was part of a three-year project funded by the Singapore Social Science Research Council that investigates the national identities of members of the ASEAN as well as other East Asian nations. The cluster will hold another conference titled *Does 'Invisible Privilege' Travel?: Looking Beyond the Geographies of White Privilege* on 2-3 May 2019.

We also have some exciting upcoming research projects. Courtney Fu conducted a first round of fieldwork for her new project on Singapore's fashion history, during which she travelled to the archives in Malacca and Kuala Lumpur. She presented her preliminary findings at the *(Re)thinking Fashion Globalization* conference held at Bunka Gakuen University, Tokyo, in February. She is now continuing her second round of archival research at the National Archives of Malaysia in Penang and Kuala Lumpur.

In a completely different field, our newest member, Sylvia Huwae, is conducting two cross-cultural studies on the impact of social exclusion by ingroup and outgroup members on the identities (personal, social) of people from individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Finally, Fong Siao Yuong won the inaugural ARI/FASS book workshop grant and will hold a one-day session on her monograph in July this year.

LONG-TERM CARE IN ASEAN PLUS THREE

PROF JEAN YEUNG

The Changing Family in Asia Cluster recently published two special issues on Long-term Care in ASEAN plus Three (APT) in *Journal of Aging and Health* and *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* (edited by Prof Jean Yeung and Assoc Prof Thang Leng Leng). The 14 articles highlight the rapidly rising demand and challenges for Long-term Care (LTC) in the next few decades in this region given the declining fertility, lengthening life expectancy, and increasing migration. Although most APT countries, except Japan, are still relatively young, the challenges will be more acute than in the West due to the more rapid ageing and the lower socioeconomic development in these countries. Countries with vastly underdeveloped systems, such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos PDR, are ill-prepared to cope with the demand for LTC. Only a few APT countries, namely Japan, South Korea, China, Singapore and Thailand have established formal LTC systems or key elements of LTC.

Studies show that elderly women and those in disadvantaged households will have higher needs for LTC given the expected period of widowhood and a decline in financial resources at advanced age. While relying on family members, particularly women, remains a norm of elderly care in Asia, evidence shows that the community, state, and private sectors play increasingly important roles. Home-based and community-based care services are set to become an integral part of the LTC system in the region. These services are not only cost-effective compared with residential care, but they are also favoured as they enable older adults to age in place. The articles describe community-based care in Indonesia, Thailand, South Korea, and China. Myanmar has recently set up a pension system and promotes community-based care through the Older Persons Self-Help Groups (OPSHGs). HelpAge Korea in collaboration with HelpAge International has been working with ASEAN governments and NGO partners to develop home-based and community-based service programmes at selected sites.

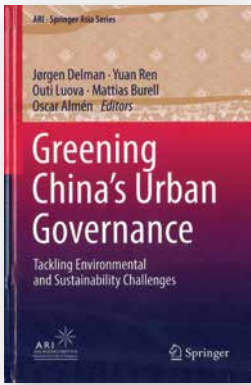
Studies show that it is important to incorporate older adults' values and wishes in their care plan and provision as there are significant diversities of ethnicities and values in this region. While Asian older adults in general prefer care provided by family members, some studies have shown that today's Asian older adults increasingly value self-reliance and privacy, and are more reluctant to burden their family members. They also tend to have more financial resources and are healthier and better educated than their predecessors, which will affect the kind of care they need or prefer.

Developing an adequate and effective LTC system will require multi-sector collaborative efforts. Japan and Singapore's approach of aiming for a comprehensive LTC integrated system offer valuable sites of learning. Finally, policy support for LTC need not be restricted to direct LTC provision. In Korea, shortening work hours increases adult children's visits to elderly parents and in China, building infrastructure enhances active ageing, possibly delaying older adults' need for LTC. In Singapore, housing policies that provide incentives for adult children to live close to their parents have facilitated higher frequency of mutual support. Singapore has also focused on increasing older adults' employment activities and enhancing skills to meet their own income needs and maintain their physical and mental health.

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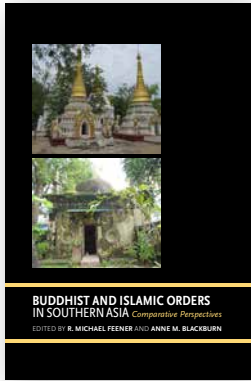
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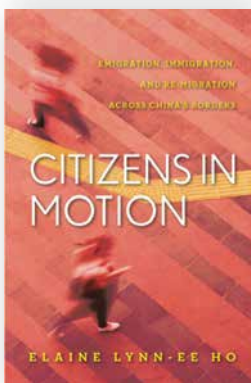
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MEETING MIGRANTS' NEEDS: SHARING KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

DR CHAND SOMAIAH



Photo Credit: CAPT

On 15 September 2018, Brenda Yeoh, Kellynn Wee, and Kristel Anne Acedera from the Asian Migration Cluster collaborated with The College of Alice & Peter Tan (CAPT) and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Social Science & Policy Cluster to present a research forum titled *Meeting Migrants' Needs: Sharing Knowledge from Research and Practice*.

Migration scholars who specialise in gendered migration, occupational health and precarious work, and community practitioners from non-profit organisations (including Aajeevika Bureau from India, and Transient Workers Count Too and HealthServe from Singapore) were placed in conversation with each other to share important findings from fieldwork, research and practice. This was done so as to foster better communication, and advance stronger ties and more robust praxis between those invested in alleviating the plight of migrant workers in and around Asia. Much was gained through understanding scales and social geographies of migration viz-a-viz issues of internal and international migration, gender, ageing, social inclusion, citizenship, im/mobilities, access to nutrition, access to safe spaces, and aspirations for migration or staying.

A welcome address by Adeline Seow, Master of CAPT, and the opening remarks by Reuben Wong, Director of Studies, CAPT, set the tone for a day which dealt with some very confronting truths about abuse and the infrastructures of injustice that invisibilise these. Dialogue with the presenters, moderators and members of the audience (which included students, faculty and members of civil society in Singapore) was engaging and insightful leading to conversations flowing into break-times. The forum provided a space for productive discussions for those united in issues of human rights, and in making labour migration in Asia a humane and decent process with the dignity of workers and their families left-behind intact. An outcome of the forum was a collaborative seminar organised by ARI and Aajeevika Bureau which was held on 5 March 2019 at ARI titled *Migration, Health and Later Lifecourse*.