GENDER, MIGRATION AND DIGITAL NETWORKS IN ASIA
20-21 FEB 2020

AS8 BUILDING, SEMINAR ROOM 04-04
10 KENT RIDGE CRESCENT
SINGAPORE 119260

ARI.NUS.EDU.SG
In recent years, emerging scholarship on migration and digital networks have focused on the role of digital technologies in enhancing, hindering and reshaping communication among transnational families, migrant communities and social groups. For example, there has been much interest in the role of social media in the sustenance of emotional bonds, the increasing ubiquity of smart phones and long-distance mothering.

While the growing literature has raised important questions about the relationship between grounded social practices among migrants and the development of digital networks, few has examined how the use of technologies by migrants itself is gendered. This is a significant lacuna particularly in the context of Asia where cultural and socioeconomic practices of migration and digital communities continue to hinge on gendered hierarchy and the regimes of sexuality. Digital networks have created both opportunities and challenges even as they open up innovative forms of gender performance and citizenship among migrants in Asia.

This workshop hence seeks to fill this gap by paying attention to the political economy of gender and its intersections with migrants’ digital networks. It will bring together a range of empirical studies from Asian contexts to contribute towards strengthening theoretical understanding in the study of gender, migration, transnationalism and digital networks. The workshop’s thematic focus will include following broadly-defined areas:

- The digital mobilisation of domestic and care workers
- Digital masculinities and performative citizenships
- The legal control of gendered bodies in a forced migration context
- The global and local circulation of gender and sexuality images and practices
- Female migrants and informal digital economies
- Intimacy in times of migration and digital networks

CONVENORS

**DR SHIORI SHAKUTO**
Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

**PROFESSOR BRENDA YEOH**
Asia Research Institute, and Department of Geography, National University of Singapore
# Thursday, 20 February 2020

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GENDER, MIGRATION AND DIGITAL NETWORKS IN ASIA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Technocolonialism: Digital Humanitarianism as Extraction

Mirca Madianou
Goldsmiths, University of London
m.madianou@gold.ac.uk

Digital innovation, artificial intelligence and data practices are increasingly central to the humanitarian response to recent refugee and migration crises. In my talk, I introduce the concept of technocolonialism to capture how the convergence of digital developments with humanitarian structures and capitalist forces reinvigorates and reshapes colonial relationships of dependency. Technocolonialism shifts the attention to the constitutive role that data and digital innovation play in entrenching power asymmetries between refugees and aid agencies and ultimately inequalities in the global context. This occurs through a number of interconnected processes: by extracting value from refugee data and innovation practices for the benefit of various stakeholders; by materializing gender, race and social discrimination associated with colonial legacies; by contributing to the production of social orders that entrench the “coloniality of power”; and by justifying some of these practices under the context of “emergencies.” By reproducing the power asymmetries of humanitarianism, data and innovation practices become constitutive of humanitarian crises themselves.

Mirca Madianou is Reader in the Department of Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London where she works on the social uses of communication technologies in a transnational and comparative context. Her research focuses on migration and humanitarian emergencies and their intersection with digital technology. She has directed two ESRC grants: Humanitarian Technologies (www.humanitariantechnologies.net) and Migration, ICTS and transnational families (http://www.researchcatalogue.esrc.ac.uk/grants/RES-000-22-2266/read) which have led to several publications on the social consequences of new communication technologies among marginalised and migrant populations. Her current project investigates the role of digital innovation, artificial intelligence and data practices in the humanitarian sector. She is the author of Mediating the Nation: News, Audiences and the Politics of Identity and Migration and New Media: Transnational Families and Polymedia (with D. Miller) as well as editor of Ethics of Media (with N. Couldry and A. Pinchevski).
Digital Intimacies on WhatsApp: Gender, Citizenship, and Migration along the Indo-Pak Border

Natasha Raheja
Cornell University
nraheja@cornell.edu

The majority of Pakistani citizens who have migrated to India within the past decade are low and non-caste Hindus who work as daily-wage laborers. They seek to offer their families improved socioeconomic opportunities in a country where they can participate in religious-national modes of belonging as “Hindus in Hindustan.” Heralding them as persecuted religious minority, the Indian government enables Hindus from Pakistan to migrate to India on longterm visas and apply for Indian citizenship. Among this group of refugee-migrants, WhatsApp is a useful platform for refugee-migrants to keep in touch with family members across the border as well as to engage in forms of digital activism in ways that hinge on a gendered hierarchy and regimes of sexuality. Whereas refugee-migrant women’s use of WhatsApp to keep in touch with relatives is mediated through male family members, refugee-migrant men directly engage in WhatsApp groups where they perform citizenship and stake claims to belonging in India. This paper focuses on how refugee-migrant men share, exchange, and comment on the images of young Hindu women who have reportedly been abducted and/or forcefully converted by Pakistani Muslim men. This paper argues that the production and circulation of these images are implicated in affective economies of care, fear, and outrage that shape transnational digital activism among Pakistani refugee-migrants who seek sociolegal recognition in India. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with Pakistani refugee-migrants conducted over 22 months between 2014-19, this paper offers the framework of “digital intimacies” to then conceptualize how platforms such as WhatsApp are simultaneously a space for the careful maintenance of cross-border relations and the expression of gendered claims to citizenship.

Natasha Raheja is currently a Postdoctoral Associate in the Department of Anthropology at Cornell University and will join the Department as an Assistant Professor in July 2020. She holds a PhD in Anthropology and a graduate Certificate in Culture and Media from New York University, where she trained in filmmaking at the Tisch School of the Arts; an MA in Asian Cultures in Languages from the University of Texas at Austin; and bachelors degrees in Biology and Asian Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. Natasha’s current research focuses on mobility and belonging across the India-Pakistan border. Her research is supported by grants from the American Institute for Indian Studies, The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, and the US Department of Education’s Fulbright-Hays Program. She is the director of Cast in India, a documentary film about the making of NYC manhole covers. The film has screened at colleges and festivals nationally and internationally.
Sex, Gender and Ludic Nationalism among Young Chinese People in Japan

Jamie Coates
University of Sheffield
j.coates@sheffield.ac.uk

Young Chinese people are travelling to Japan at an increasing rate. From students and tourists, to trainees and newly created migration visas, this entangled network of Sino-Japanese mobilities is becoming a significant part of Japan’s urban landscape. Based on roughly 4 years of fieldwork and ongoing digital ethnography among networks of young Chinese people who meet in Ikebukuro, Tokyo, this paper examines the ways gender and sexuality inform efforts to build a sense of commonality both online and offline. Ikebukuro is a popular area for nightlife and adult entertainment, and is often portrayed as liminal in wider Japanese media imaginaries. Its position as a hub for outsiders and nightlife means that it has emerged as a site where young Chinese digital explorations of gender and sexuality intersect with daily life in the migration context. Informed by Japan’s media image in many parts of Asia as a sexually transgressive site of play, many of the young Chinese people I worked with saw their time in Japan as an opportunity to try new things. The desire to create a common ludic vernacular ('in jokes'), particularly online, often meant that these young people would also play with questions of national identity. At times, forms of ludic nationalism emerged that re-asserted hegemonic masculine ideals in the Sino-Japanese context, and posited forms of sexual consumption in nationalistic tones. In particular, militaristic and sexually explicit memes were a common part of banter among migrant groups on social media. These modes of play also afforded new transgressive identities for some, raising questions about how we interpret the ludic nationalism of young overseas Chinese people.

Jamie Coates is an anthropologist who combines traditional, visual and digital ethnographic methods with historical and textual analysis to examine the relationship between technology, mobility and imagination in urban Northeast Asia. Building on his doctoral research on Chinese migration to Japan, he is currently investigating how forms of play, consumption, and media use among Chinese people living in Japan are changing the way interpersonal Chinese relations and Sino-Japanese relations are imagined. His recent publications include ‘The Cruel Optimism of Mobility’ in positions: asia critique 27(3), and the film ‘Tokyo Pengyou’, in the Journal of Anthropological Films see http://boap.uib.no/index.php/jaf/article/view/1538/1319
Growing Up Stateless in the Digital Age: Expressions of Masculinity and Belonging among Stateless Youths in the Social Media

Kamal Solhaimi Fadzil
University Malaya
kamal@um.edu.my

In an increasingly connected world, the image of the global village conjures the breaking down of immigration barriers and yet this is often fraught with problems. The cosmopolitan citizen exists for the privileged. Without capital, one is always being reminded of the dangers and perimeters, which limits one's movement, expression, and opportunities. Although in some ways the digital world may be a reflection of the inequalities in the lived world, in some respects however, the digital space is more democratic in access and use. In a word, the Internet with its social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube, Tik Tok and much more offers the opportunity or liberty to be whomever you wish to be and to do so without fear. The research is qualitative and applies a digital ethnography approach. It focuses on three stateless male youths and follows their presence in cyberspace, namely, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. The youths are between the ages of 18 and 20 years old. One youth, a Rohingya refugee was relocated to a third country and now has lived there for almost two years. The other two youths reside in Malaysia. I have known the for more than five years following their work in person as well as intermittently, following them online. The study identifies the types of social media that they follow. Also it looks at how they use these social media platforms. And, the ways they explore and represent themselves as male youths living in liminal spaces. Their digital platform offers a stage for self-representation as they search for their own space and identity. A preliminary investigation identifies two overarching themes; firstly on masculinity and secondly, identity. They express masculinity in different ways. One often post images of him as a rapper in various pose or with his friends imitating popular rapper pose. These friends are made up of youth who are also refugees. The second youth in Malaysia have been less overt with content reflecting their maturing role as a youth leadership trainer. The third, also active in youth leadership activities however is also a budding song writer and rapper. His work online explores themes of searching for his roots and place to call home. Crossing from being a child into adulthood is both exciting and daunting for anyone. At an age when other young men are finding their footing and place in the world, these three young men have the added burden of negotiating identity and belonging in a delicate space; one in which their existence is viewed with ambiguity. This paper argues that the digital space offers a platform to reify their identity and gives them a voice, in short making the invisible visible. As refugees growing up in Malaysia, one of the common frustrations is the experience of being 'nobody'. Without a document, they have no official footprint. The Internet in many ways does the opposite to what they experience in life, it offers them a creative platform where through their efforts they can be acknowledged; as a person with agency.

Kamal Solhaimi Fadzil is a lecturer in anthropology at the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University Malaya. His research interests includes exploring issues and challenges faced by indigenous communities living within protected areas in Malaysia; Stateless children and child rights in Malaysia; as well as on HIV awareness and safe sex education.

Raelene Wilding  
La Trobe University  
r.wilding@latrobe.edu.au

Loretta Baldassar  
University of Western Australia  
loretta.baldassar@uwa.edu.au

Shashini Gamage  
La Trobe University  
s.kurupanawagamage@latrobe.edu.au

Shane Worrell  
La Trobe University  
s.worrell@latrobe.edu.au

Ageing in a foreign country creates at least two important challenges for older migrants. First, informal family- and community-based networks of care and support are dispersed across distance and national borders. Second, many of the assumptions about good aged care as well as about wellbeing and selfhood as an older person lack the cultural and social foundations that would otherwise be present and available in the home country. In this paper, we explore how older migrants use digital media in ways that address those challenges. Drawing on data from ethnographic interviews conducted in Australia with older Sinhalese migrants from Sri Lanka, and older Karen migrants from Myanmar, we identify three key sets of practices that operate at different scales. First, we consider how digital media are used to help reproduce the cultural norms of ageing while living in a foreign country, a set of practices that we identify as ‘digital homing’. Second, we explore how informal care and support are recreated through communication technologies in what we refer to as practices of ‘digital kinning’. Finally, at the level of the individual, we consider how the social and cultural practices of digital media (ie. digital homing and digital kinning) inform the reproduction of the gendered, aged and ethnic self. We conclude by reflecting on the nuanced impact of gendered hierarchies on the digital homing and kinning practices of older migrants.

Raelene Wilding is Associate Professor, Sociology at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. Her research explores how people use new technologies to maintain their families, intimate relationships and social connections. She has conducted research with older people from Australian-born and migrant backgrounds as well as young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in rural and urban Australia. Her most recent book is Families, Intimacy and Globalization (Palgrave 2018).

Loretta Baldassar is Professor in the Discipline Group of Anthropology and Sociology at The University of Western Australia. She has published extensively on migration, with a particular focus on transnational families and caregiving. Baldassar is Vice President of the International Sociological Association Migration Research Committee and a regional editor for the journal Global Networks. She is co-Chief Investigator on ARC Discover Projects: Ageing and New Media (Wilding, La Trobe) and Youth Mobilities (Harris, Deakin, and Robertson, Western Sydney).

Shashini Gamage is an academic, researcher and television journalist. She is currently working as a research assistant of the 'Ageing and New Media' project of La Trobe University, affiliated to the Department of Sociology. She has a PhD (Communication and Media–2016) and a Master of Global Communication (2010) from La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. Her research focuses on media cultures and the intersections between media, gender, nationalism, migration, migrants and war, post-war societies, post-colonialism and identity. Her PhD thesis (2016) is a feminist ethnography of soap opera cultures and gender identities of Sri Lankan women who migrated during the three-decade civil war of the island nation, exploring diasporic Sri Lankan soap opera clubs in Melbourne. Her PhD was funded by an Australia Awards Leadership Scholarship (2012-16) – a prestigious international scholarship of the Australian Government.

Shane Worrell is a graduate researcher in sociology whose work focuses on transnational familial communication in the context of humanitarian migrant resettlement. He has worked as a research associate on the ARC Discovery Project, Ageing and New Media, and tutors in the social sciences and humanities. Shane is also an award-winning journalist, whose writing has appeared in global, regional and national publications, including in Cambodia, where he was based for several years.
An Examination of Matchmaking Services in the Context of Changing Norms about Parental Homes in Urban India

Simiran Lalvani*
Independent researcher
*simiran.lalvani@gmail.com (Corresponding author)

Joyojeet Pal
Microsoft Research India

With the growing popularity of digital matrimonial matchmaking services in India in recent years, some scholars have celebrated individual choice and ‘love’ in marriage and dating versus the traditional ‘arranged marriage’ system that still prevails. Scholars have also commented on the changing nature of arrangement as a result of multiple factors including urbanization, cosmopolitanization and the rise of digital socializing. These forces also create gendered anxieties for middle-class parents who perceive a loss of control and break in traditions as their children physically move away from the parental home before marriage for education or work. Through our qualitative fieldwork with matrimonial websites, community-based offline and online matchmakers as well as allied services of astrologers and private detectives we find that matchmakers use both manual as well as technologically mediated methods and remain in demand. They attempt to allay parents’ concerns regarding the reproduction of traditional kinship structures along the lines of caste, religion, class, region given the distance of children from parental homes. Matchmakers’ engagement extends to the post-marital phase evident in their positions on patterns of residence, division of labour within families and the bargaining power of women. Our paper uses the figure of the matchmaker as media and their work practices to pay attention to the entanglements of work, technology and digital networks and socio-cultural and moral orders avoids reducing these orders to non-Western cultural specificities.

Simiran Lalvani is an independent researcher currently working as a Consultant at Microsoft Research India on a ‘Future of Work’ project with Prof Joyojeet Pal studying the impact of technologically mediated matchmaking services on the practice of traditional matchmaking. Prior to this, she was a Research Fellow studying application (app) based food delivery work and workers for a ‘Mapping Digital Labour in India’ project at the Centre for Internet and Society. She has a Masters in Development and Labour Studies from the Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi.

Joyojeet Pal is a principal researcher at Microsoft Research India and holds a position as an associate professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. His research interests are in social media and society in the Global South, specifically in the use of social media in political outreach and elections. He also works on the impact of social media in the evolving professional practices and social capital. He has worked in accessibility and the role of accessible technology in expanding workplace opportunities in the Global South.
The Intimate Lives of Left-Behind Young Adults in the Philippines: Social Media, Gendered Intimacies, and Transnational Parenting

Kristel Anne Acedera  
National University of Singapore  
arikafa@nus.edu.sg

Brenda S.A. Yeoh  
National University of Singapore  
geoysa@nus.edu.sg

Amidst the moral panics around how international labour migration has destabilised the family, many empirically-based studies have established that ‘doing family’ persists across space and time. Familial and intimate relationships are reconstituted in a multitude of ways, as the proliferation of social media and communication technologies afford the scaling up of privacy and publicness, also blurring the lines between presence and absence in the transnational space. Based on a longitudinal and mixed method research on the impact of migration on Filipino left-behind young adult children (n=25) and their carers (n=25), we seek to examine the mediation of transnational parenting and how it shapes the ways left-behind sons and daughters (aged 17-19 years old) navigate heteronormative ideals of marriage and familyhood. In particular, we ask, how does the absence of one or both migrant parent(s) mould young adult left-behind children’s discourses and practices of their intimate gendered lives. As relationships within the transnational family are constantly and intensively mediated through communication technologies, we also seek to understand the Filipino gendered values and affordances of social media at work in enabling (or disabling) young adult children’s intimate subjectivities and relationships. In doing so, we hope to explore how labour migration and the reconstitution of the transnational family influence the current and future familial and marital aspirations of young adult children in migrant families.

Kristel Acedera is a Research Associate at the Asia Research Institute. She holds an MSocSci degree in Geography from the National University of Singapore. Her current research interests explore how intimacies of transnational familyhood unravel in and through the digital spaces and temporalities of communication technologies. She has previously published on this in peer-reviewed journals like New Media and Society and Current Sociology.

Brenda S.A. Yeoh is Raffles Professor of Social Sciences at the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Research Leader of the Asian Migration Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, NUS. Her research interests include the politics of space in colonial and postcolonial cities, and she also 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 on these topics and her recent books include Transnational Labour Migration, Remittances and the Changing Family in Asia (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, with Lan Anh Hoang) and Contested Memoryscapes: The Politics of Second World War Commemoration in Singapore (Routledge, 2016, with Hamzah Muzaini), Asian Migrants and Religious Experience: From Missionary Journeys to Labor Mobility (Amsterdam University Press, 2018 with Bernardo Brown) and Handbook of Asian Migrations (Routledge, 2018 with Gracia Liu-Farrer).
Digital Mediation of Domestic and Care Work

Ambika Tandon  
The Centre for Internet and Society  
ambika@cis-india.org

Aayush Rathi  
The Centre for Internet and Society

The objective of this paper is to examine the impact of mediation by digital platforms on domestic and care work in India. This is a sector that has historically been dominated by women from intersectional marginalities—migrants, lower class, and lower caste. This has contributed to the devaluation of domestic work, in addition to the non-recognition of private homes as spaces of work. Despite being new entrants into the informal sector and domestic work, digital platforms have been growing steadily in urban areas, with the promise of formalising the sector and using technology to empower unorganised workers. We will examine these claims of formalisation, asking the key question: how are relations of social inequality, especially along the axes of caste and gender, reworked through digital platforms? We will adopt feminist standpoint theory as our theoretical framework, with the aim of surfacing intersections and conflicts between dominant and alternative discourses of formalisation and dignity of labour. This will be done through 50 interviews with workers, companies, unions, and government labour departments. We will surface the possible ways in which digital intermediaries rework the relations of employment or impact the conditions of work, with a focus on wages, hours worked, social security, worker surveillance, and the configuration of gender and caste-based exploitation in digitally mediated work. We will also explore the possibilities of collectivisation for platform-based domestic workers, by borrowing from strategies of collective bargaining adopted by domestic workers in other contexts as well as platform workers in other sectors.

Ambika Tandon and Aayush Rathi are policy officers at the Centre for Internet and Society, India. They are interested in research at the intersection of gender and technology, such as data-driven interventions into sexual and reproductive health provision, the impact of technology on women’s labour, and state-led surveillance of women’s bodies. Ambika is a postgraduate from the London School of Economics and Political Science in media and development, and Aayush is a law graduate from the National University of Juridical Sciences in Kolkata, India.
Preaching Islam through Smartphones among Indonesian Female Migrant Workers in Taiwan

Syuan-yuan Chiou
National Chengchi University
sychiou66@gmail.com

Kholidah Zia
National Chengchi University

There have been a significant numbers of Indonesian Muslim migrant workers in Taiwan. However, due to the limitation to attend religious activities for reasons as insufficient mosques and non-flexible working hours, some Indonesian female migrant workers (TKW) have to find their alternative way of attending *pengajian* (religious teaching) in Taiwan. A Muslim organization entitled “Komunitas on Air Muslim Indonesia Taiwan” (KOMIT) was established in 2010 and lead 13 groups of *pengajian* on-air in Taiwan. First, this study intends to discuss and explore how IWAMIT (Ikatan Warga Muslim Indonesia Taiwan), a group of *pengajian* on-air in Taiwan, adopts the system of the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) through networks of smartphones. We argue that the KOMIT builds a transnational digital religious network and explore how Indonesian graduate students in Taiwan and Muslim preachers in Indonesia cooperate to organize TKW for joining *pengajian* in networks of smartphone. Second, the KOMIT provides daily *pengajian* broadcast programs from 4 AM to 10 PM, including sermons, consultations with preachers, Islamic chanting, and the Quran lessons and recitation. In particular, we have found that most of audiences in *pengajian* are female domestic caregivers. Their consultations have shown their moral anxiety as absent mothers/daughters as well as their keen concerns about how to properly deal with family and marriage problems according to Islamic law. Third, how have the smartphone sermons created an interesting “digital soundscape” of Islam, by way of a sensory environment to facilitate Indonesian migrant worker’s floating pious devotions and practices of sonic Islam?

Syuan-yuan Chiou is Assistant Professor at the National Chengchi University (NCCU), teaching sociology of religion and transnational society. He is currently conducting a research project on Indonesian Muslim female migrant workers’ religious lives in Taiwan and see how a transnational Indonesian Muslim community is formulated in East Asia.

Kholidah Zia is a student of International Master’s Program in Asia-Pacific Studies (IMAS) program, NCCU and she is part of the research project.
Digital Mourning on Facebook:
The Case of Filipino Migrant Worker Live-In Caregivers in Israel

Deby Babis
Ariel University, and
The Hebrew University
deby.babis@gmail.com

This qualitative study aims to explore the dynamics of migrant workers’ practices of mourning in digital networks, known as *digital mourning*, by means of a case study of the Filipino community in Israel on Facebook. While scholarly attention has been directed at manifestations of online grief, there is a dearth of research regarding this process on immigrant communities, and even more so on temporary migrant workers. Consequently, there is a need to address the question of how migrant workers construct their mourning on social networks? In the case of Filipino migrant workers in Israel (around 25,000), they are allowed to work only as live-in caregivers for the elderly, with a 24-hour day off at the weekend. Therefore, their community life during the week occurs mainly on Facebook. As part of their job, they have to deal with the death of their employers, and as members of the Filipino community, they have also to cope with the death of other Filipino migrant workers. Based on a digital ethnography on Facebook in the Filipino community in Israel between 2013-2019, this study has found that Filipinos cope with death through Facebook in different ways: while in the case of the death of the employers, caregivers share their pain on their own Facebook wall, in the case of the death of a migrant worker the pain is shared in closed community groups. This study will compare and analyze the dynamics of both types of digital mourning in terms of the visual pictures posted, the text of the posts, and the responses of the community. Furthermore, it will explore whether there are different gender practices. Through this study, light is shed on contemporary forms of community building, generating trust and social solidarity among Filipino digital networks, thus adding to the cultural understanding of Filipino migrant communities in the information age.
Deby Babis is a sociologist and anthropologist specializing in ethnic communities and voluntary organizations. Her research covers both immigrant and indigenous groups in different countries. She has conducted fieldwork in Argentina, Israel, Bolivia, Canada, Hong Kong and the Philippines. Deby's PhD focused on the organization of the Latin American Immigrants in Israel, while her Postdoc dealt with indigenous doctors in Bolivia. Since 2013 she is primarily studying Filipino migrant workers in Israel, Canada and Hong Kong. By means of traditional and digital ethnographies, combined with quantitative methods, she explores different aspects of these communities, such as their voluntary organizations, their practices on Facebook and the emergence of mixed families. Deby is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Ariel University and is a fellow researcher at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
Virtual Connections: Regional Networks, Gender Pluralism and the Digital in Southeast Asia

Benjamin Hegarty
University of Melbourne
benjamin.hegarty@unimelb.edu.au

In the past decade, several regional networks place culturally distinct gender and sexual minorities from Southeast Asia in virtual connection with one another. These networks and the identities, often funded by large international organisations based in the West, are often framed as both very new and as an imposition of a Western liberal rights model. However, even as these networks are funded and conceptualized through a dominant Western logic of HIV organising (grouped into “key populations”) that emerged in the late 1990s they also reflect longer national and regional histories of inter-connection that defy a Western-centered model of globalization. This paper addresses forms of virtual connection through regional networks related to gender, sexuality and HIV in Southeast Asia, focusing on the example of transpuan (transgender perempuan) in the Indonesian context. It addresses the emergence of this category as the result of distinctive forms of digital connection within specific regional (Southeast Asian) and national (Indonesian) contexts in two ways. First, the paper historicizes transpuan as a virtual form of connection against a backdrop of “gender pluralism,” one that includes forms of inter-Asian referencing and connection that precede the digital era. Second, it places this history in dialogue with new formats for digital communication and activist engagement through regional forms of connection and interaction enabled by the category transpuan. The research on which this paper is based draws on ongoing ethnographic research (2013 to present) among gender and sexual minority communities in Indonesia, including participant observation (online and in person), interviews and focus group discussions. The paper argues that virtual and digital connection must be conceptualised not as separate from but as embedded within longer histories of virtual communication and exchange in Southeast Asia.

Benjamin Hegarty is a McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellow in Anthropology and Development Studies at the University of Melbourne. His expertise combines ethnographic and historical methods with critical theory to investigate how gender and sexuality are implicated in transnational processes. His research appears in Medicine Anthropology Theory, Transgender Studies Quarterly and The Journal of the History of Sexuality, and his collaborative research with Indonesian critical public health scholars has been funded by a number of competitive grants. In 2018, he was awarded the Australian Anthropological Society PhD Thesis Prize and an Endeavour Postdoctoral Fellowship for research at the University of California, Irvine.
Digital Trans Citizenship: Travelling Across Asia for Gender Reassignment

Michelle H. S. Ho
National University of Singapore
michelle.ho@nus.edu.sg

This paper explores how transgender individuals employ new media to chart their travels across Asia for sex/gender reassignment surgery (SGRS) through a case study of Satsuki, a Japanese male-to-female trans-identified model, television personality, and LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) activist. In this project, “trans” refers to individuals whose configurations of gender do not align with what is assigned at birth and/or the male/female binary. Satsuki first became prominent on the internet when they blogged about their experience of undergoing SGRS in Thailand in 2013. After returning to Japan to recover, Satsuki relocated to Tokyo, debuted as a celebrity, and became a trans advocate. Examining Satsuki’s blog entries spanning two years, I argue that their use of media technologies to document and share information about SGRS is important for shaping the medical migration of Japanese trans people, particularly in inter-Asian contexts. This stems from Satsuki’s engagement with other users about the struggles of Gender Identity Disorder (seidōitsuiseishōgai) and their reflections after interacting with trans individuals from other parts of the world who have similarly journeyed to Bangkok for SGRS. In mapping their transnational border crossing, I further suggest that Satsuki enacts what I call “digital trans citizenship,” the everyday practices of individuals who identify as trans and gender nonconforming and actively participate in society through the online world. Through digital trans citizenship, this study intervenes in present scholarship on gender, migration, and digital networks by asking how differently gendered people’s online engagements surrounding SRGS can lead to social change.

Michelle H. S. Ho (pronouns: she, her) is Assistant Professor of Feminist and Queer Cultural Studies in the Department of Communications and New Media at the National University of Singapore (NUS). She holds a PhD in cultural studies and Advanced Graduate Certificate in women’s and gender studies from Stony Brook University (SUNY). She is currently at work on a monograph exploring trans(gender) and the political economy through an ethnographic study of josō (male-to-female crossdressing) and dansō (female-to-male crossdressing) cafe-and-bars in contemporary Tokyo, Japan. More information can be found at: www.michellehsho.com
The Curated Life of a Filipina Bride: YouTubing Interracial Marriages in a Mobile Era

Earvin Charles Cabalquinto
Deakin University
earvin.cabalquinto@deakin.edu.au

The advent of smartphones and mobile social media has enabled migrants to curate and display their personal and intimate lives to diverse groups and in various contexts. As part of a broader project that seeks to examine the mediation of intimacy through online platforms among Filipino women, this paper examines how Rhaze, a lifestyle and beauty vlogger, utilises YouTube to broadcast and monetise her married life with her Australian partner. Simply Rhaze is one of the popular YouTube channels of a Filipina migrant in Australia, amassing a following of more than 450 thousand subscribers and garnered over 85 million views since 2012. Further, her YouTube channel offers over 1000 videos that set across a variety of genres, including make-up tutorials, confessional talks, travels, and so forth. By conducting a discourse analysis of the most popular videos in Simply Rhaze, I unravel how the paradoxes of global interracial marriages are reflected in online spaces. On the one hand, Rhaze tends to challenge the stigma surrounding the representation of a ‘mail-order bride’. On the other hand, online performativity is engendered through a highly gendered and marketised frame. In a digital era, the ideal and tech-savvy wife has to perform emotional and affective labour that align with the ethos of a feminised and neoliberal Philippine labour export system. In sum, this paper invites us to further re-think the role of mobile platforms in reconstructing agentic femininity, belongingness, and social im/mobility in networked spaces.

Earvin Charles Cabalquinto is a Lecturer in Communication (Digital Media) in the School of Communication and Creative Arts (SCCA) at Deakin University, Australia. He was a Visiting Scholar in the Centre for Mobilities Research (CeMoRe) in June 2019. He is also member of the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation. He is one of the convenors of the Asia-Pacific Digital Culture & Society in Melbourne, Australia. His works on the intersections of digital media, mobilities and migration have been published in top peer-reviewed journals, including Mobile Media & Communication, Media Culture & Society, International Journal of Communication, and Information Communication & Society, as well as in edited book collections. He is currently working on a two book projects. One is based on his PhD thesis, which examines the role of digital communication technologies in sustaining long-distance relationships among transnational families. The other project is a collaborative work on brokerage via YouTube in the Philippines.
‘My Drunk Husband Doesn’t Know’:
Informal Income, Phone-Banking and Female Migrant Workers in Kolkata, India

Atreyee Sen
University of Copenhagen
atreyee.sen@anthro.ku.dk

With more than half a billion internet and digital subscribers, India is one of the fastest-growing markets for digital consumers, second only to China. Through Aadhaar, the world’s largest bio-metric identification system, the central government has driven individual citizens to link their personal data to a host of services, including mobile sim cards, bank accounts, provident fund systems, welfare schemes, public distribution systems and old age pensions. For example, mAadhaar is an official mobile application that allows Aadhaar holders to link their demographic and banking information solely to their smartphones. While some scholars have argued that Aadhar offers a channel for financial inclusion of the poor into mainstream economies, others have criticised the coercive nature of invasive bio-metric technologies. Etched in relief against the surface of this debate, the paper will analyse rural-urban migrant women workers’ multiple journeys of secrecy and solidarity with telephone and net-banking (through Aadhaar and smart phones). Using the narratives of underprivileged women employed in the informal domestic and care sector in Kolkata, I show how female migrants conspired with each other and creatively managed digital banking to scatter their wages into numerous bank accounts. This ensured that a chunk of their income did not come under the radar of exploitative in-laws, and retaining control over the undisclosed money offered poor women different/empowering visions of their financial futures. The paper is framed through the concept of women’s ‘migra-monies’. It refers to shadow networks of domestic remittances that lie at the interface of emerging digital technologies and gendered social relations within local migration landscapes.

Atreyee Sen is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Copenhagen. She is a political anthropologist of urban South Asia. She is author of Shiv Sena Women: Violence and Communalism in a Bombay Slum (Hurst and Co. London, Indiana University Press 2007) and co-editor (with Dr David Pratten) of Global Vigilantes (Columbia University Press 2008). Her recent publications include ‘Torture and laughter: Naxal insurgency, custodial violence, and inmate resistance in a women’s correctional facility in 1970s Calcutta’, Modern Asian Studies (2018), and “Teach your girls to stab, not sing: Right-wing activism, public knife distribution and the politics of gendered self-defense in Mumbai,’ Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society (2019). She has received a research grant from the Danish National Research Fund to explore the impact of growing cashlessness and digital finance on cash economies sustained by the urban poor across global cities in Asia, Europe and Latin America.
Digital Entrepreneurship after the Disaster: Japanese Women’s Evacuation to Southeast Asia after Fukushima Nuclear Disaster

Shiori Shakuto
National University of Singapore
arisha@nus.edu.sg

This paper examines the emergence of digital entrepreneurship following disasters and the opportunities and risks it offers for the performance of affective labour of care among migrant mothers. Reporting in particular on the experiences of young Japanese mothers who evacuated with their children to Southeast Asia after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, I discuss how the presence of social media and digital network provided opportunities to forge supportive ties among the transnational network of Japanese mothers. I argue that digital networks, including twitter and blogs, were embraced by mothers for their potential to share and express their concerns, especially in a post-disaster context where the masculinist state’s policy of reconstruction has labelled these concerns as irrational and unscientific. Yet their own affective labour of care is produced within the conditions of economic precarity. They typically engage in a flexible, yet highly exploitative, gig economy to support themselves and their children abroad. The digital labour is not divorced from the terms of a gendered and class-based economy. Their lives are also illustrative of the tension between the collective and empowering potential of social media, and their contradictory enactment through individual entrepreneurship. Based on ethnographic research using social media analysis and 20 interviews with mothers who evacuated to Malaysia and Thailand, the paper attends to the opportunities and risks of digital entrepreneurship and networks as un uneven experience between middle-class and working-class mothers.

Shiori Shakuto is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Asian Migration Cluster of the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. She obtained her PhD in Anthropology from the Australian National University in 2017. Her research interests lie in the intersection across gender, environment and migration, with a geographical focus on the movement of people and things from Japan to Malaysia. Her research has been published in various journals including the most recent article ‘Post-work intimacy’ in American Ethnologist (2019).
Gendered Bodies: The Politics of Biometric Identification amongst Rohingyas

Nasreen Chowdhory
University of Delhi
nchowdhory@gmail.com

Shamna Thachampoyil
University of Delhi
shamnamehanaz@gmail.com

Recently the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with the assistance of Bangladesh government issued biometric identity cards to nearly five lakhs of Rohingya refugees sheltered in Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazar refugee camps. Biometric credentials are expected to aid the authorities in processing the asylum claims of refugees apart from reducing the instances of arbitrary detention that arises due to lack of adequate documentation. Such ‘datafication of bodies crossing the borders’ using biometrics possibly would assist the asylum countries to enforce strict policing of territories, but simultaneously pose certain normative concerns. Contrary to the perception of a body that undergoes codification as a mere “incidental moment in the transmission of code and information” (Gilroy, 2000:36), the biometricised body, epitomizes a subjective self that can further emphasize the distinguishing variables like gender and ethnicity at borders. The racial attribute is one among the key markers that is instrumental in denoting identity of Rohingya refugees and demarcating them from the host population in their country of asylum. Internally among the Rohingya refugees, a hierarchy of gender is explicit in the way patriarchal norms and prejudices manifest within the domestic sphere and everyday practices. Due to the absence of gender-disaggregated data on refugees in camps, the nature of assistance available from the authorities and humanitarian agencies in refugee settlements are largely gender-blind. Yet women refugees given an opportunity within camps have shown strong indication in resource management (Chowdhory, 2016). The inherent power asymmetry that exists between the refugees and humanitarian organisation demonstrates that the aid received more than often does not account for a targeted approach, but acknowledges the specific susceptibilities which refugee women are subjected to within the camps. Together, these factors render women as the most vulnerable amid the already deprived refugee population. By minimising the time-lag required for authenticating identification documents and streamlining specific assistance for women, biometrics is expected to increase the overall efficacy of aid delivery on camps (Oxfam report, 2018).

In the context of converting bodies to biometrics, it is necessary to analyze the complexities associated with ways in which such technology produce and problematize inherent bodily differences. Contextualizing the intersectionality of gender identity and racial identity configures a social hierarchy of power for the ruptured communities of refugees. As the deprivation encountered by Rohingya women are a function of multiple variables, it is necessary to undertake such an intersectional analysis that throws light on how gender and race mutually constitute their social identity during displacement and exile.
The paper seeks to answer the following questions: Does the biometric system validate the existence of individuals to predefined categories of identities or does it configure and authorize new categories of identities? In acting as a tool that verifies and sanctions identities, does biometric verification facilitate a more diversified nature of humanitarian assistance and policy decisions that are gender-sensitive? How does this shape the gender relations in ‘exile’ in relation to the traditional notion of masculine and feminine that was prevalent at ‘home’? The methodology of research includes digital ethnography using online resources so as to determine the usage of digital innovations like biometrics by various agencies like UNHCR as per their reported data.

Nasreen Chowdhory teaches in the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. She has done PhD in Political Science from McGill University, Canada, and Masters and MPhil from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She has published several research papers in national and international peer-reviewed journals, and guest edited of a special issue on “Displacement: A ‘state of exception’” in the International Journal of Migration and Border Studies, 2016. Some of her significant publications include Refugees, Citizenship and Belonging: A Contested Terrains (Springer 2018) and edited volume on Deterritorialised Identities and Transborder Movement in South Asia with Nasir Uddin with Springer 2019. She is presently working on an edited volume on Gender, Identity and Migration in India (Palgarve 2020, forthcoming) with Paula Banerjee. She is holding the position of Vice President of International Association for the Study of Forced Migration and Vice President of Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata.

Shamna Thachampoyil is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi. Her research focuses on the narrative of statelessness of the Rohingyas and the politics of exclusion where denial of citizenship is used as a strategy for ethno-political nation building in Post-colonial Burma, rendering minorities like Rohingyas Stateless. Her MPhil dissertation titled “Birds of Freedom: Depiction of LTTE militant women in Tamil Cinema” explored the representation of militant women challenging the binary of agency and victimhood. Apart from holding a Bachelor’s degree in Electronics and Instrumentation Engineering, she graduated summa cum laude from her Masters in Conflict studies and peace building from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Her recent publications include, The idea of protection: the norms and practice of refugee management in India, Refugee Watch (2019) with Dr Nasreen Chowdhory and Meghna Kajla; Transitional justice, reconciliation and reconstruction process: the case of the former LTTE female combatants in post-war Sri Lanka with Dr Nasreen Chowdhory in Transitional Justice and Forced Migration, ed. Nergis Canefe Cambridge University Press 2019 (Forthcoming December).
Data Privacy and Gender in a Forced Migration Context

Saskia Witteborn
Chinese University of Hong Kong
sawit@cuhk.edu.hk

Hegemonic norms and values have long structured female mobility and conditions for privacy, with privacy being understood as a person or her information being “beyond the range of others’ five senses and any devices that can enhance, reveal, trace or record human conduct, thought, belief or emotion” (Allen, 1988, p.15). Privacy is hard to maintain, especially for women and gendered Others who are displaced. Learnt norms (e.g., modesty) are challenged in different socio-political systems, such as during asylum claims processes and while adjusting to a new cultural context. Pressures on gendered privacy are compounded by the fact that the displaced are heavy social media users (e.g., Borkert et al., 2018; Gillespie, 2016; 2018; Smets & Leurs, 2018; Witteborn, 2010, 2015, 2018) but tend to have little information about privacy and data protection (Witteborn, under review).

This article discusses data privacy from a gendered migration perspective, particularly asylum seeker and refugee women from West Asia (including Syria, Iran, Iraq, and Palestine) waiting in Germany for their claims to be assessed. Data materials were collected from 2011 to 2015 through interviews and participant observations of digital practices of the displaced. The data from a period leading up to the “great migration” of refugees into Europe in 2015 illustrates that data privacy is not a new phenomenon but has been important for refugees for many years, especially in settings that upset cultural norms linked to the physical and digital mobility of women. The displaced are an important sample as they are torn from the sociocultural setting they were socialized in, and exposed to new norms, amplifying and restricting the physical and digital mobility of women in particular (e.g., living in collective shelters and using collective spaces for digital engagement). First, the article explores existing notions of gendered privacy in embodied life (Allen & Mack, 1991). Second, the article shows how gendered privacy values codified in Western liberal democracies, such as decision-making and personal sovereignty, are translated into universal digital code. Data privacy defines the person as a sovereign and autonomous subject with agentic decision-powers over her communication, which are reflected, for example, in the notion of “giving consent” to gathering, storing, and processing information produced by and about her.

The article argues that definitions of data privacy impose an already existing meaning framework onto the digital practices of women. This does not translate into women having more meaningful forms and experiences of privacy. Women in the intersection between displacement, gender, and culture are now regulated by discursive and legal privacy rules, taken as being universal. Hence, they experience multiple layers of old and new forms of marginalization. Examples are having to give digital consent, having their digital practices monitored by partners and relatives, being dependent on their husbands and children for digital literacy, and having to violate cultural norms by navigating public space physically and technologically for the first time. The article concludes that data privacy has to be understood beyond a narrow and yet universal definition of being left alone and in the intersection between space, culture, and mobilities.
Saskia Witteborn is Associate Professor in the School of Journalism and Communication at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). She received her PhD from the University of Washington and specializes in transnational migration and technologies. Saskia has worked with migrant groups in North America, Europe, and East Asia. She has strong expertise in forced migration, featured in various press outlets, with contributions to the political economy of mobility and space, digital heterotopia, affect, grouping processes, and recently, AI and ethics. Her work has appeared in leading journals such as the *Journal of Communication*, *Cultural Studies*, *ROLSI*, and the *Journal of Refugee Studies* as well as in edited collections. As Associate Director and founding member of the Research Centre on Migration and Mobility at CUHK, she is interested in culturally grounded approaches to communicative action around agendas for change.
About the Chairpersons and Organisers

Bittiandra Chand Somaiah is a Research Fellow in the Asian Migration cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, and at the Centre for Global Social Policy, University of Toronto. She received her PhD in Sociology from Macquarie University. She has been working on the Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia (CHAMPEA) Wave 2 project, with a focus on Indonesia, since 2017. Her research interests include mothering, migration, class, carework, youth and children’s aspirations, multiple modernities, new cosmopolitanisms, intimate citizenship practices, circulations of care, sociologies of the body, gender and emotions.

Brenda S.A. Yeoh is Raffles Professor of Social Sciences at the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Research Leader of the Asian Migration Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, NUS. Her research interests include the politics of space in colonial and postcolonial cities, and she also 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 on these topics and her recent books include Transnational Labour Migration, Remittances and the Changing Family in Asia (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, with Lan Anh Hoang) and Contested Memoryscapes: The Politics of Second World War Commemoration in Singapore (Routledge, 2016, with Hamzah Muzaini), Asian Migrants and Religious Experience: From Missionary Journeys to Labor Mobility (Amsterdam University Press, 2018 with Bernardo Brown) and Handbook of Asian Migrations (Routledge, 2018 with Gracia Liu-Farrer).

Lue Fang is Research Fellow in the Asian Migration cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Her research interests include acculturation and migration, youth psychological wellbeing and educational achievement. Her recent work has been focusing on psychological wellbeing of rural to urban migrant children in China and the impact of parental migration on left behind children’s mental health in Southeast Asia.

Shiori Shakuto is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Asian Migration Cluster of the Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore. She obtained her PhD in Anthropology from the Australian National University in 2017. Her research interests lie at the intersection between gender and mobilities, with a focus on how gender relations in Japan both affect, and are affected by, transnational movement to Southeast Asia. She received an inaugural ARI-FASS Manuscript Workshop Grant 2019 to develop her dissertation into a monograph, tentatively titled, ‘Anxious Companionship: Japanese Silver Backpackers.’ It presents a critique of patriarchy in retirement. Her research has been published in various journals including an article ‘Post-work intimacy’ in American Ethnologist. At ARI, she will be carrying out research on how the tsunami and nuclear disaster of 2011 has motivated some Japanese people to move to Southeast Asia and how such movement has been gendered.

Shu Min Yuen is a Faculty Member of the Department of Japanese Studies at the National University of Singapore. Her key research interest is in gender and sexuality in contemporary Japan, with a particular focus on popular representations and the lived experiences of gender/sexual non-conforming people. She is interested in exploring the emergence and proliferation of Japanese (and more broadly, Asian) queer subjectivities with the aim of both interrogating structures of power and difference in Japan, as well as de-centering the hegemony of 'western' queer cultures/models. Her PhD dissertation, which was recently completed in 2015 at the School of Culture and Communication, the University of Melbourne, archives the cultural history of Female-to-Male transpeople in present-day Japan. As part of her continuing effort to account for trans lives in Japan, Dr Yuen will be examining the (trans)national border-crossing practices of Japanese transpeople in her post-doctoral project, which will be undertaken at the Centre for Gender Studies at the International Christian University (Tokyo).
Sylvia Ang is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Asian Migration Cluster, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Her research interests lie at the intersection of race and migration, including racism, co-ethnicity and Chineseness. She has published in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Gender, Place and Culture, Journal of Intercultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies and Cultural Studies Review*. She is currently working on two projects: the first is a multi-sited grant project Transnational Relations, Ageing and Care Ethics (TRACE) where she investigates how older Singaporeans age and care in China; second, she is developing her PhD dissertation into a book preliminarily titled *Contesting Chineseness: new Chinese migrants and the politics of co-ethnicity*.

Theodora Lam is Research Fellow in Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (NUS). She obtained her PhD in Geography from NUS and her dissertation focused on understanding changing gender subjectivities, web of care and relationships within the family in the wake of transnational labour migration. Her research highlights the voices of return migrants as well as carers and children who have remained in the home countries. Theodora is currently involved in a longitudinal research project, Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia (CHAMPSEA): Waves 1 and 2. Her research interests cover transnational migration, children’s geographies and gender studies. She has co-edited several special journal issues and has also published on themes relating to migration, citizenship and education in various journals and edited books including *American Behavioral Scientist, Asia Pacific Viewpoint, Environment and Planning A* and *Population, Space and Place*.

Yi’En Cheng is Research Fellow in the Asian Migration cluster at Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore. His research interests lie in the intersection across education, youth, and mobilities in Asian cities. He is the guest editor of special issues ‘Geographies of Citizenship in Higher Education’ in *Area* (with Mark Holton) and ‘Mobile Aspirations? Youth Im/mobilities in the Asia-Pacific’ in *Journal of Intercultural Studies* (with Shanthi Robertson and Brenda Yeoh). Prior to joining ARI, he was a postdoctoral fellow at Yale-NUS College and Clarendon Scholar at University of Oxford where he completed a DPhil in Human Geography.