

9-10  
MAY  
2024

# THE JOHOR- SINGAPORE CAUSEWAY

Celebrating and  
Conceptualising  
its Centenary

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# The Johor-Singapore Causeway: Celebrating and Conceptualising its Centenary

9-10 May 2024 | Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

The year 2024 marks the centenary of the Johor-Singapore Causeway (which was inaugurated on 28th June 1924). This unspectacular but vital piece of infrastructure has been mentioned in many publications on Singapore and Johor as well as in research on (dis)connections between Singapore and (what is today) Malaysia. Yet the Causeway has much less often been the object of analysis in its own right. As the official centenary approaches, this academic workshop brings the Causeway to centre stage. We have assembled scholars who examine the Causeway through a variety of different frames (subnational, national, bilateral or regional), approaches (geopolitical, socio-economic, cultural, among others) and disciplinary perspectives.

In a recent contribution to the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (Hutchinson et al., 2023), the workshop organizers outlined three key thematic categories for humanities and social science research on the Johor-Singapore Causeway: (1) infrastructure and (in)security; (2) urban and regional development; (3) human experience and identity. These categories form the basis for the four main panels in the workshop, with two panels dedicated to issues of human experience and identity, and one panel on each of the other two themes. We are delighted that the programme also includes a keynote address by Prof Wang Gungwu on the Causeway as “Ujong Malaya”, as well as a speech followed by a questions and answer session with Mr Liew Chin Tong, MP for Iskandar Puteri. Across the two days, the workshop encompasses research that is variously historical, contemporary or future-facing.

## WORKSHOP CONVENORS

### Prof Tim BUNNELL

Asia Research Institute and Department of Geography, National University of Singapore

### Dr Francis E. HUTCHINSON

ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute

### Dr Shaun LIN

NUS College, National University of Singapore

## PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

DATE	TIME (SGT)	PANEL SESSION
<b>9 May 2024</b> (Thu)	09:15 – 09:30	<b>WELCOME &amp; INTRODUCTORY REMARKS</b>
	09:30 – 10:30	<b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1</b>
	11:00 – 12:30	<b>PANEL 1 – INFRASTRUCTURE AND (IN)SECURITY</b>
	14:00 – 15:30	<b>PANEL 2 – URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>
	16:00 – 17:00	<b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2</b>
	18:00 – 20:00	<b>WORKSHOP DINNER</b> ( <i>For speakers and chairpersons only</i> )
<b>10 May 2024</b> (Fri)	10:30 – 12:00	<b>PANEL 3 – HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND IDENTITY (1)</b>
	13:30 – 15:00	<b>PANEL 4 – HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND IDENTITY (2)</b>
	15:00 – 15:30	<b>SUMMARY &amp; CLOSING REMARKS</b>

## 9 MAY 2024 • THURSDAY

<b>09:15 – 09:30</b>	<b>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS</b>
	<b>TIM BUNNELL</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i> <b>FRANCIS E. HUTCHINSON</b>   <i>ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute</i> <b>SHAUN LIN</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
<b>09:30 – 10:30</b>	<b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>TIM BUNNELL</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
09:30	Ujong Malaya: A Story of Separations <b>WANG GUNGWU</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
10:00	<b>QUESTIONS &amp; ANSWERS</b>
<b>10:30 – 11:00</b>	<b>TEA BREAK</b>
<b>11:00 – 12:30</b>	<b>PANEL 1 – INFRASTRUCTURE AND (IN)SECURITY</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>FRANCIS E. HUTCHINSON</b>   <i>ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute</i>
11:00	Centering the Role of British Navvies in Constructing the Johore-Singapore Causeway <b>VINEETA SINHA</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
11:20	Water Supply from Johor to Singapore: Contentious Issue in Malaysia-Singapore Relations, 1960s-1970s <b>A RAHMAN TANG BIN ABDULLAH</b>   <i>Universiti Malaysia Sabah</i>
11:40	Rebuilding the Causeway Bridge to Rejuvenate the Tebrau Strait <b>SERINA RAHMAN</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
12:00	<b>QUESTIONS &amp; ANSWERS</b>
<b>12:30 – 14:00</b>	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>
<b>14:00 – 15:30</b>	<b>PANEL 2 – URBAN AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>TIM BUNNELL</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
14:00	Causeway, City, Corridor: Conurbation and Conundrum <b>HOWARD DICK</b>   <i>University of Melbourne</i> <b>PETER J. RIMMER</b>   <i>Australian National University</i>
14:20	"Enjoy the Best of Both Worlds by a Bridge so Near": Property Developer Rhetoric about the Causeway <b>DIGANTA DAS</b>   <i>Nanyang Technological University</i> <b>SARAH MOSER</b>   <i>McGill University</i>
14:40 <i>online</i>	Enduring Space: Urban Development and Socio-Spatial Transformations of Woodlands <b>VANESSA YAN LIN OW</b>   <i>Independent Scholar</i>
15:00	<b>QUESTIONS &amp; ANSWERS</b>
<b>15:30 – 16:00</b>	<b>TEA BREAK</b>

# The Johor-Singapore Causeway: Celebrating and Conceptualising its Centenary

9-10 May 2024 | Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

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<b>16:00 – 17:00</b>	<b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2</b>
	<b>FRANCIS E. HUTCHINSON</b>   <i>ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute</i>
<i>16:00</i>	The Johor-Singapore Causeway: Connections, Competitiveness, and Collaboration
	<b>LIEW CHIN TONG</b>   <i>Member of Parliament for Iskandar Puteri</i>
<i>16:30</i>	<b>QUESTIONS &amp; ANSWERS</b>
<b>17:00</b>	<b>END OF DAY 1</b>
<b>18:00 – 20:00</b>	<b>WORKSHOP DINNER</b> ( <i>For speakers and chairpersons only</i> )

## 10 MAY 2024 • FRIDAY

<b>10:30 – 12:00</b>	<b>PANEL 3 – HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND IDENTITY (1)</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>SHAUN LIN</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
10:30	Inseparable Connections: Land and Maritime Ties across the Tebrau Strait <b>SERINA RAHMAN</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
10:50	The British Consulting Engineers and the Plans for the Johor-Singapore Causeway, 1917-1924 <b>CHONG XU</b>   <i>Soochow University</i>
11:10	Theatrical Representations of Aging and Eldercare in Singapore and across the Johor-Singapore Causeway <b>JILL J. TAN</b>   <i>Yale University</i>
11:30	<b>QUESTIONS &amp; ANSWERS</b>
<b>12:00 – 13:30</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
<b>13:30 – 15:00</b>	<b>PANEL 4 – HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND IDENTITY (2)</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>SHAUN LIN</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
13:30	Last Train from Tanjong Pagar: Stories from Both Sides of the Causeway <b>LAI CHEE KIEN</b>   <i>Society of Architectural and Urban Historians of Asia</i>
13:50	The Linguistic Representation of the Causeway in Malaysia <b>KUMARAN RAJANDRAN</b>   <i>Universiti Sains Malaysia</i> <b>ANG LENG HONG</b>   <i>Universiti Sains Malaysia</i>
14:10	Connected Histories and the Disquieting Present: The Causeway as Imagined by Singaporean and Malaysian Filmmakers and Playwright Alfian Sa'at <b>KHOO GAIK CHENG</b>   <i>University of Nottingham Malaysia</i>
14:30	<b>QUESTIONS &amp; ANSWERS</b>
<b>15:00 – 15:30</b>	<b>SUMMARY &amp; CLOSING REMARKS</b> <b>TIM BUNNELL</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i> <b>FRANCIS E. HUTCHINSON</b>   <i>ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute</i> <b>SHAUN LIN</b>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
<b>15:30</b>	<b>END OF WORKSHOP</b>

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1

**Ujong Malaya:  
A Story of Separations**

**Wang Gungwu**

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The causeway reminds us that we live in a maritime world. Being contrary, it also makes Singapore the southern end of a massive Eurasian landmass. Imagine how the Causeway symbolizes a delicate separation. I shall take up this theme in three parts. First, the cultural and political impact of location on Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula neck. This will take me to the emergence of Malaya as a product of imperial capitalism and the idea of nation-building. Finally, I shall look at the place of borders and bridges: the local, global, and regional.

**Wang Gungwu** has been University Professor at the National University of Singapore (NUS) since 2007, and Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University (ANU) since 1988. He is best known for his explorations of Chinese history in the long view, and for his writings on the Chinese diaspora. Professor Wang began his teaching career at University of Malaya (UM), Singapore, in 1957 after completing his doctorate at University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies. He went on to become Dean of the Faculty of Arts at UM (1962-1963) and a Professor of History at the university (1963-1968). At ANU, Professor Wang headed the Department of Far Eastern History (1968-1975, 1980-1986) and was Director at the Research School of Pacific Studies (1975-1980). From 1986 to 1995, he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong. He later joined NUS in 1997 as Professor (1997-2007) and Director of the East Asian Institute (1997-2007). Professor Wang also holds several positions in various universities and organisations around the world, including Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Science, Honorary Member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Fellow at the Australian Academy of the Humanities. He is also Commander of the British Empire (CBE) and Officer of the Order of Australia (AO). Professor Wang was conferred various international awards, such as the International Academic Prize, Fukuoka Asian Cultural Prize in 1994 and the Tang Prize in Sinology in 2020. He was also awarded the Distinguished Service Order in 2020 by the Government of Singapore.

## **Centering the Role of British Navvies in Constructing the Johore-Singapore Causeway**

**Vineeta Sinha**

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The labouring communities that cleared jungles and land, built tunnels, bridges, roads, docks, wharves, ports, and railways in British Malaya are themselves invisible in the official archives. Typically, and unsurprisingly, colonial government accounts privilege the role played by investors, engineers, designers, contractors, and surveyors - who are credited with constructing colonial infrastructure and public works projects- and attended to their comfort and material needs. Such visibility and priority are hardly accorded to the rank and file, the foot soldiers, the manual labourers - who performed the required 'rough work' in these construction projects, but whose labouring capacities are occluded in colonial narratives. This paper centres the role played by different labouring constituencies in building the Johore-Singapore Causeway between 1918 and 1923. It is well known that migrant and indigenous populations were critical actors in producing the infrastructural landscape of British Malaya. The Causeway too was built on the backs of Indian, Malay, Chinese and Javanese labour. In addition, it is less known that groups of British navvies also travelled to the region to contribute to this building project. Writings about navvies are not typically encountered even in scholarly accounts of infrastructural development in the colonies. Strikingly, both these labour clusters were key actors in the same global story of colonial capitalism. This paper demonstrates that these labouring constituencies alike were brought from across the seas and worked in precarious, risk-laden projects and lived in harsh and inhospitable conditions. I argue that a comparative lens potentially enables an examination of the commonalities as well as divergences in the labouring experiences of colonial labour and British navvies as they together participated in materialising the Causeway.

**Vineeta Sinha** is Professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the National University of Singapore. She holds a Master's in Social Sciences from the National University of Singapore, and a Masters of Arts and PhD from the Johns Hopkins University. Her research interests include Hindu religiosity in the Diaspora, religion, commodification and consumption processes, religion and materiality, religion-state encounters in colonial and post-colonial moments, Eurocentric and Androcentric critique of classical sociological and anthropological canons, decolonizing knowledge production and critical pedagogy. Her publications include *A New God in the Diaspora? Muneeswaran Worship in Contemporary Singapore* (2005, NUS Press and Nordic Institute of Asian Studies); *Religion and Commodification: Merchandising Diasporic Hinduism* (2010, Routledge); *Religion-State Encounters in Hindu Domains: From the Straits Settlements to Singapore* (2011, Springer); *Sociological Theory Beyond the Canon* (co-authored with Syed Farid Alatas, 2017, Palgrave-Macmillan), *Southeast Asian Anthropologies* (Co-edited with Eric Thompson, 2019, NUS Press) and *Temple Tracks: Labour, Piety and Railway Construction in Asia* (2023, Berghahn Books). She is Editorial Board Member of *Current Sociology* and on the International Advisory Committee of *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, Co-Editor of *Routledge International Library of Sociology* and International Advisory Board Member of *Decolonization and Social World* Book Series (Bristol University Press).

**Water Supply from Johor to Singapore:  
Contentious Issue in Malaysia-Singapore Relations, 1960s-1970s**

**A Rahman Tang Bin Abdullah**

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This paper examines the historical development of the water supply from Johor to Singapore as a contentious subject in the bilateral relations of Malaysia and Singapore from 1961 to 1990. The presentation on this subject focuses on two significant questions. Firstly, to what extent has Singapore been able to not only sustain but also increase the raw water supply derived from Johor's water schemes for her domestic consumption during this period? Secondly, why is the issue of raw water pricing still in favour of Singapore despite Malaysia's grievances on the existing deal? The conceptual framework of the paper is based on the presentation of legal and diplomatic aspects of the bilateral relations in dealing with the contentious issue in the water deal between the two nations. The methodology employed in the presentation is based on textual content analysis on relevant legal and historical documents, notably archival documents, governmental publications and newspapers. The key finding in this paper is that the preservation of the existing status quo lies the constitutional safeguards and legality in the existing water deal protected under the Singapore Separation Act of 1965 that incorporated the water agreements of 1961 and 1962.

**A Rahman Tang Abdullah** is Associate Professor at the History Programme, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Malaysia Sabah. He is visually impaired. He obtained his BA with First Class Honours in History from the University of Malaya, and then both MA in Southeast Asian Studies and PhD in History from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He was also a visiting scholar at the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge, in 2017 and 2023. He specializes in history of Malaysia, Malay historiography, and comparative history on Modern and contemporary Southeast Asia. His research interests and writings are on history and historiography of Johor, Malaysia and Singapore water issues, Malay economy during the colonial period, Islamic law in Kedah before Colonial rule, legal history on the formation of Malaysia, nationalism and Islam in Southeast Asia in comparative perspective and *Arab Hadramis* in Malaysia.



## **Rebuilding the Causeway Bridge to Rejuvenate the Tebrau Strait**

**Serina Rahman**

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The Tebrau Strait separates Malaysia and Singapore. Heavily built-up on both sides with industry, residences and ports, there are only a few pockets of natural coastal mangrove areas that remain. Yet it is home to myriad endangered species including 4 species of seahorses, 2 species of turtles, shovelnose and eagle rays, dugongs, sharks, and horseshoe crabs. It is also home to the largest intertidal seagrass meadow in Peninsular Malaysia which is the backbone of local fisheries communities. The building of the Causeway Bridge prevented human and faunal movements between the Melaka Strait and the South China Sea. Over the past century there have been myriad reports of increasingly contaminated and polluted waters near the bridge due to poor hydrology, and fish deaths on both sides of the border. This is exacerbated by dredging and pollutant run-off from rivers, coastlines and increased sedimentation from reclamation work along the strait. There have been several proposals to demolish and rebuild the Causeway, or to run culverts under it to improve water flow, yet no action has been taken on either side. This paper examines how these ideas could help the strait's marine biodiversity and the fishermen that depend on these waters.

**Serina Rahman** is a lecturer at the Southeast Asian Studies Department, National University of Singapore, teaching environmental politics; religion, magic and society; and about Southeast Asia by sea. Trained as a conservation scientist, her practice is in community empowerment through citizen science, community research and ecotourism. She also studies artisanal fisheries resource management; all of which is done at Kelab Alami, a community organisation in Johor, Malaysia that she co-founded in 2008. Her work to support this community and its efforts to participate in and benefit from encroaching urbanisation has earned both the organization and herself myriad awards and media recognition. Her research also includes (un)sustainable development (especially Forest City), Malaysian rural politics and political ecology. Serina is Iskandar Malaysia Social Hero Award Winner for Environmental Protection (2014), is Malaysia's Ambassador for Citizen Science Asia, a UN-affiliated organization, and was highlighted as a Channel News Asia Climate Warrior in 2021.

## **Causeway, City, Corridor: Conurbation and Conundrum**

**Howard Dick**

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**Peter J. Rimmer**

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This paper addresses the past, present and future conundrum posed by the centenary of the Johor-Singapore Causeway from historical and comparative perspectives. A short historical review of the relationship between Singapore and its hinterland is followed by four brief case studies: Benelux and Brexit; the bridge and proposed tunnel ending Scandinavia's quasi-archipelago; Japan's Seikan Tunnel; and China's Trans-Oceanic Bridges between Zhoushan and Ningbo. These cases offer fresh perspectives on the political and technological constraints associated with evolution of the Singapore-Johor-Riau Conurbation. Two counterfactual positions are explored. What would have happened if: (a) the Causeway (and Tuas tunnel) had never been built; and (b) national borders had been suspended, as occurred in the European Community? Finally, the Northern Corridor is juxtaposed with the potentialities of the Southern Corridor with the prospect of that extended axis becoming the core of an emerging Southeast Asian economy.

**Howard Dick**, Honorary Professorial Fellow in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Melbourne, is an economist, economic historian and Southeast Asia specialist with a research focus on cities, logistics and regional development. With Peter Rimmer he is co-author of *The City in Southeast Asia: Patterns, Processes and Policy* (NUS Press 2009) and *Cities, Transport and Communications: The Integration of Southeast Asia since 1850* (Palgrave, 2003), also recent chapters 'Shrinking the Pacific' in *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Ocean*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge UP, 2023) and 'Gateways, Corridors and Peripheries' in R. Padawangi (ed.), *Handbook of Urbanization in Southeast Asia* (Routledge, 2019). He is the sole author of *Surabaya, City of Work: A Twentieth Century Socioeconomic History*, Ohio UP, 2002) and a recent chapter, 'Water World to Inundation' in *River Cities in Asia* (Amsterdam UP, 2022), pp. 37-56.

**Peter J. Rimmer** is a geographer and internationally recognized authority on urban and regional development in the Asian Pacific region. Since 2000, he has been Professor Emeritus and Visiting Fellow in Pacific and Asian History in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University, Canberra.

**"Enjoy the Best of Both Worlds by a Bridge so Near":  
Property Developer Rhetoric about the Causeway**

**Diganta Das**

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Johor experienced a sharp uptick of Chinese investment following the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013. A significant amount of this investment was in property development, the earliest of which were clustered around the Malaysian side of the Causeway for its strategic proximity to Singapore and to one of the busiest land crossings in the world. R&F Group, a Chinese real estate company headquartered in Guangzhou, launched Princess Cove, a 116-acre development featuring high-rise condominium complexes, a yacht club, a shopping mall, and a performance center, the same year the BRI was announced. While the Causeway is still the main conduit connecting Singapore and Johor, the Second Link, has also attracted speculative urban development by Chinese property developers, although not as many and several have failed. This paper seeks to understand how the R&F Group promotes its locational advantage next to the Causeway through promotional material in Singapore, Malaysia, and China and how the Chinese developments are perceived by both Chinese investors and locals. We examine promotional material (advertising, websites, and showrooms) to understand the official rhetoric about Princess Cove's strategic locational advantage, as well as social media commentary in English, Malay, and Chinese in property-themed discussions in order to understand the variety of perceptions of this pioneering project that dominates the Malaysia side of the Causeway. Our research demonstrates the ongoing primacy of the Causeway as the main attractor for Chinese speculative urban developments and the resurgence of interest in Princess Cove due to the Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link underway, which runs through R&F-owned land.

**Diganta Das** is Associate Professor of Geography at Humanities and Social Studies Education Academic Group, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. He received his B.A.(Hons) in Geography from Cotton College, Masters in Geography from Jawaharlal Nehru University, India and M.Phil in Planning and Development from Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay. He received his PhD in Geography from National University of Singapore. Diganta is a human geographer and his research focuses on relations between the production of smart cities, high-tech space making and issues of human agency in urban South Asia; (urban) policy mobility; changing dynamics of (urban) waterscape; and issues of liveability and sustainable urban development. He is currently involved in two research projects; the first one examines urban policy trajectories and their mobility, production of high-tech spaces and grounded realities. The second project intends to provide detailed genealogies of smart cities through in-depth empirical contexts of India and South Africa.

**Sarah Moser** is Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at McGill University (Montreal, Canada). Her research examines new cities being built from scratch in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, particularly their political and ideological underpinnings, the rhetoric used to legitimize them, the futures that are imagined in these projects, and the social exclusions that result. Sarah has written extensively on two new city projects in Malaysia: Forest City, a private city on artificial land built by one of China's top property developers, and Putrajaya, the new administrative capital of Malaysia. Her work has been published in journals such as *Urban Studies*, *Geoforum*, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, *Urban Geography*, and *Social & Cultural Geography*.

**Enduring Space:  
Urban Development and Socio-Spatial Transformations of Woodlands**

**Vanessa Yan Lin Ow**

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This paper examines the socio-spatial transformations in Woodlands, Singapore, focusing on the evolution of Woodlands Town Centre, shaped by the estate's proximity to the Singapore-Johor Causeway. Utilising Lefebvre's triadic spatial framework, this study explores the interplay between conceived space, perceived space (spatial practices), and lived space (representational spaces) within this context. The analysis of Woodlands' transformation from a "Frontier Town" into a "Regional Centre" reveals the influence of strategic urban planning, shaped by the Causeway, on the physical and socio-cultural landscape of the area. Through qualitative analysis of urban policies and oral history interviews, this paper explores how shifts in broader national development strategies have shaped the area's socio-spatial dynamics. Investigating enduring place attachment post-demolition of the town centre, this study uncovers a persistent sense of community and identity, sustained through digital and oral histories that resist the abstraction (commodification) of urban space.

**Vanessa Yan Lin Ow** earned her sociology degree from the National University of Singapore in May 2022. She now works as a UX researcher and designer, focusing on creating technology products and services for public good. In her final year of university, her interest in digital technology inspired her to undertake the Sociology Media Honours Thesis, where she built an interactive map-based website to document the demolished Woodlands Town Centre.

**Inseparable Connections:  
Land and Maritime Ties across the Tebrau Strait**

**Serina Rahman**

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The building of the Causeway Bridge blocked maritime movements across the Tebrau Strait; dividing more than it connected. The division of these waters occurred after Singapore parted ways with Malaysia, yet the borders remained permeable until the 1980s. Prior to that, the Seletar indigenous people knew how to skirt the bridge via mangrove waterways and Singapore's southern and northern islanders continued to traverse the Tebrau Strait to exchange goods or meet family. But when Singapore solidified barriers to entry by sea, these practices ceased. The Causeway and Second Link Bridges are now the only way for these communities to legally cross state-imposed boundaries. This paper tells the stories of those who rely on these structures for both familial and economic ties. Across Johor Bahru there are mixed-citizenship families who were suddenly separated over the Covid-period when the bridges were shut down. This made clear how intertwined people are across the strait. While in the past fishermen would cross the water to fish and trade, today their offspring cross the bridges to work. Descendants of former Malaysians return for weekend jaunts and shopping. This is a maritime take on a bridge that once separated, then reconnected communities across the Tebrau Strait.

**Serina Rahman** is a lecturer at the Southeast Asian Studies Department, National University of Singapore, teaching environmental politics; religion, magic and society; and about Southeast Asia by sea. Trained as a conservation scientist, her practice is in community empowerment through citizen science, community research and ecotourism. She also studies artisanal fisheries resource management; all of which is done at Kelab Alami, a community organisation in Johor, Malaysia that she co-founded in 2008. Her work to support this community and its efforts to participate in and benefit from encroaching urbanisation has earned both the organization and herself myriad awards and media recognition. Her research also includes (un)sustainable development (especially Forest City), Malaysian rural politics and political ecology. Serina is Iskandar Malaysia Social Hero Award Winner for Environmental Protection (2014), is Malaysia's Ambassador for Citizen Science Asia, a UN-affiliated organization, and was highlighted as a Channel News Asia Climate Warrior in 2021.



## **The British Consulting Engineers and the Plans for the Johor-Singapore Causeway, 1917-1924**

**Chong Xu**

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In 1917, the Johor-Singapore Causeway proposal was accepted by the Federated Malay States (FMS) Chief Secretary, Straits Settlement Colonial Secretary, Straits Settlements Governor, and FMS High Commissioner. In 1918, detailed plans, drawn up by the British consulting engineering firm Coode, Fitzmaurice, Wilson & Mitchell, were presented to the FMS, Straits Settlements, and Johor governments. The final Causeway plan was formally approved by the Straits Settlements government in 1919. Instead of discussing the negotiations between the three governments in the process, this paper proposes to examine the role of the British consulting engineers through a biographical research approach. It argues that the prior experience of these British consulting engineers in designing railways and harbours significantly contributed to the success of the Johor-Singapore Causeway and their expertise played a vital role during the deliberation stage of this great engineering accomplishment of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Chong Xu** holds a PhD in history from Sciences Po Paris and is a member of the Society of Global Nineteenth-Century Studies. Currently, he holds a teaching and research position in Suzhou, China. Before joining the Department of History at Soochow University as a junior distinguished professor in May 2021, he was appointed as an associate researcher at the Centre for History at Sciences Po Paris. His doctoral thesis investigates the construction of the security administration in the French Concession of Shanghai from the angles of the defence and maintenance of public order from its creation in 1849 to the end of the First World War. His teaching and research interests focus on the comparative history of empires and global urban history, one of the ongoing projects examines the images of Jiangnan cities recorded in foreign historical materials.

## **Theatrical Representations of Aging and Eldercare in Singapore and across the Johor-Singapore Causeway**

**Jill J. Tan**

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This paper takes Haresh Sharma's 2015 play, *Pioneer (Girls) Generation*, as an entry point into discussing aging and eldercare for Singaporeans. In Sharma's work, one member of a group of seniors living in a premium Singaporean retirement village chooses to move out to a more affordable nursing home in Johor Bahru after management raises fees without residents' agreement. This theatrical depiction reflects a phenomenon of Singaporeans having increasingly turned to retirement homes in neighboring Johor Bahru across the Causeway since the early 2010s, under the premise and promise of affordable and accessible cross-border care. Through reading this play alongside preliminary research for a future ethnographic project, I critically examine the relationship between Singapore and Malaysia through this border, and the network of people providing and receiving care across divisions of state, economics, and labor, with an eye towards future theorization of dependence, asymmetry, and disruption. This paper also discusses Sharma's play alongside other theatrical and arts works on aging in and across Singapore and Malaysia, such as Claire Wong and Noorlinah Mohamed's multi-iterative *Recalling Mother* and Arts Wok Collaborative and Drama Box's long running community arts project. *Both Sides, Now*, to consider how artistic renderings situate and shape the landscapes and intimacies of care in rapidly aging societies.

**Jill J. Tan** is a writer, artist, and researcher committed to collaborative practice and multimodal exploration through games, performance and poetics. As a PhD candidate in Anthropology at Yale University, Tan studies the contemporary management of death in Singapore, working with funeral professions and public-facing death literacy efforts. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Journal of Public Pedagogies*, *City and Society Journal*, *Guernica*, *Mynah*, *Brack*; and the edited volumes *Resistant Hybridities* (Lexington) and *Death and the Afterlife* (Routledge). Tan undertook a 2022 ARTEFACT residency at Dance Nucleus, and co-created a featured program with artist Alecia Neo for The Esplanade's *The Studios 2022*. Tan's research is supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation; the Social Science Research Council Graduate Research Fellowship Scheme; National University of Singapore Development Grants; Tan Kah Kee Foundation and Tan Ean Kiam Foundation; and Yale University. At Yale, Tan was awarded the university-wide Theron Rockwell Field Prize in 2022, and taught a self-designed Writing Creative Ethnographies course.

## **Last Train from Tanjong Pagar: Stories from Both Sides of the Causeway**

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On 22 January 2011, I conducted a tour of three railway sites in Singapore for the Singapore Heritage Society: the Bukit Timah Railway Station, part of the Jurong Line near Clementi, and the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station. The railway service between Tanjong Pagar and Johor Bahru was to terminate in June that year, so I felt it necessary to explore the spaces and histories of the line and to share it with interested members of the public before it ended. One of the tour attendees turned out to be Koh Hong Teng, a graphic novel artist, who subsequently approached me to render the salient parts of that tour into a graphic novel, so as to commemorate the spaces and experiences which would go into history later that year.

The eventual work, published in 2014 as *Last Train from Tanjong Pagar*, permitted us to not only narrate the physical and social histories of the railway line in pictorial form, but to also weave in discussions of other aspects and stories that connected people from both sides of the Causeway, some of which were from my childhood. It captured the multi-ethnic Kampong Sungei Pandan communities interacting with each other within the railway cutting reserve, the workings of the railway turntable, and the semi-legal shrines of different devotional groups etc. The stories traversed across time including the Malayan Emergency as well as the Japanese Occupation. This paper discusses how our collaboration meshed the intertwined stories through that graphic novel, and the attendant histories and stories.

**Lai Chee Kien** is an architectural and urban historian. He is a registered architect in Singapore, and is Vice-President of the Society of Architectural and Urban Historians of Asia. He researches on the histories of art, architecture, settlements, urbanism and landscapes in Southeast Asia. His publications include *Through the Lens of Lee Kip Lin* (2015) [Best Non-Fiction Title, 2016], *Building Memories: People, Architecture, Independence* (2016) [Book of the Year, 2017], *The Singapore Chronicles: Architecture* (2019) and *Early Hawkers of Singapore: 1920s and 1930s* (2000). He also appeared in character in *Last Train from Tanjong Pagar*, a 2014 graphic novel discussing the KTM railway and stations.

## **The Linguistic Representation of the Causeway in Malaysia**

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The Causeway is rarely an object of research but is an object of commentary in several mediums and domains, which implies a substantial amount of language about the Causeway. This language cumulatively shows the imaginaries of Malaysians and Singaporeans regarding the century-old structure between their countries. This research examines how Malaysians who use the Malay language represent the Causeway. Researchers can gather language from various sources into a computer-readable format. It propels the creation of a corpus and we selected two generalized corpus, the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) corpus and Malaysian web corpus (MalaysianWaC). The corpus analysis is grounded in Discourse Studies (DS), particularly Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS), which requires a layering of analysis in two sequential steps. The first step utilized two corpus processes- frequency and concordance of the case insensitive node word 'tambak', the Malay equivalent of Causeway. The second step was reading a span of 5 words to the left and right of 'tambak' to discover its semantic environment. The analysis reveals various representations of the Causeway in Malaysian Malay. First, the Causeway bridges geography, linking Malaysia and Singapore, and evoking Singapore. Second, it facilitates movement of people and products across countries. Third, this movement causes congestion. Fourth, the congestion or other reasons has motivated proposals for the Causeway to be reconstructed. These imaginaries are inherently bilateral and involve Malaysia and Singapore. The Causeway is recognized as a shared but transactional infrastructure.

**Kumaran Rajandran** is Senior Lecturer at the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia. He teaches and supervises BA, MA and PhD in Linguistics. His research involves the multimodal study of corporate, health, historical, political and religious discourses in English, Malay and Spanish, exploring the articulation of identity and ideology in contemporary societies.

**Ang Leng Hong** is Senior Lecturer at the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia. She teaches undergraduate courses, and also supervises undergraduates and postgraduates in language and linguistic studies. Her main research interests include corpus linguistics and phraseology studies, with a particular focus on their applications in academic and learner writing. In addition to her core research areas, she holds a keen interest in the corpus-based study of Malaysian English, exploring the characteristics and evolution of English within the Malaysian context.

**Connected Histories and the Disquieting Present:  
The Causeway as Imagined by Singaporean and Malaysian Filmmakers and Playwright  
Alfian Sa'at**

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In the imagination of Singaporean filmmakers, the Causeway represents a temporal bridge into the past, when Singapore was part of Malaysia and Singaporeans and Malaysians shared a sense of the modern future together across ethnic divides. The Causeway connects a Singaporean Chinese family whose grandfather's grave is in a cemetery in Johor where the family pays annual pilgrimage. At the same time, awareness of the unequal relationship (one of mutual dependency) between Malaysia and Singapore is presented through the focus on the water pipes that run along the bridge and the uneven landscapes on both sides of the Causeway, one ultra-modern, urban and systematic, the other of rural plantations and kampung houses. For Malaysian filmmakers looking from the Malaysian side, the Causeway channels and mediates Malaysian working bodies, and their desires for a better life, while also separating them from their families. This presentation will focus on Boo Junfeng's "Parting" and Kelvin Tong's "Grandma Positioning System," two short films commissioned by the Asian Film Archive as part of the omnibus *7Letters* (2015) for Singapore's 50<sup>th</sup> year of Independence and a short film by Malaysian filmmaker Aw See Wee called *Kampung Tapir* (2017).

**Khoo Gaik Cheng** is Associate Professor and Director of the University of Nottingham Asia Research Institute, Malaysia. She is interested in cinema and independent filmmaking in Malaysia, the politics of food, and Korean migrants in Malaysia, in particular, how temporality, modernity and happiness figure in their migration and settlement. Her most recent research is on the political economy of the Malaysian durian, focusing on the supply chain and funded by the Malaysian Fundamental Research Grant Scheme. She has published several books (*Reclaiming Adat; Eating Together*), edited several book collections and special issue journals on Southeast Asian film, citizenship and issues of race and multiculturalism and is currently working on a special half issue for *Continuum* on "Durian Matters." She is pleased to announce the recent publication of "Countering durian plantationocene visuality and the erasure of nature-culture histories in Malaysia," which she co-authored with Rusaslina Idrus for *Continuum Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*.



## **ABOUT THE ORGANISERS & KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**

**Francis E. Hutchinson** is Senior Fellow and Co-ordinator of the Regional Economic Studies and Malaysia Studies Programmes at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. He holds a PhD in Public Policy and Administration from the Australian National University and degrees from the Universities of Cambridge and Sussex. Francis' research interests include governance, state-business relations, federalism, decentralization, and industrialization in Southeast Asia. He has written or edited five books including *Asia and the Middle Income Trap* (Routledge 2016); is Managing Editor of *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*; and has published on Southeast Asian economic and political issues in *Asian Affairs*, *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Asian Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, and *Southeast Asian Affairs*. Prior to joining the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Francis carried out applied research for agencies such as the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, AusAID, as well as political risk consultancy firms such as Oxford Analytica.

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**Liew Chin Tong** is the Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry. He is currently the Member of Parliament for Iskandar Puteri and the State Assemblyperson for Perling, Johor. He was first elected Member of Parliament for Bukit Bendera (2008-2013) and was subsequently the Member of Parliament for Kluang (2013-2018). Since 1999, Chin Tong has served the Democratic Action Party (DAP) in various capacities and is now a member of its Central Executive Committee, serving as the Deputy Secretary-General. He is also the Chairman of Johor DAP.

**Shaun Lin** is Lecturer at NUS College of the National University of Singapore (NUS). Before this, he was Max Weber Foundation – NUS Research Fellow at the Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (July 2020-July 2022) and Postdoctoral Fellow under the same research fellowship (June 2017-June 2020). Shaun completed his DPhil at the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), University of Wollongong. He received a Bachelor of Social Sciences majoring in Geography in 2011 from the National University of Singapore. Shaun serves as Social Media Editor for Space and Polity and Book Review Co-Editor for *the Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*. He is also a member of the editorial board of *Political Geography Open Research*. Within NUS, Shaun chairs the Educator Track Advancement group at NUS College.

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**Tim Bunnell** is Professor in the Department of Geography and Director of the Asia Research Institute (ARI), where he is also Leader of the Asian Urbanisms cluster. The primary focus of his research is urbanisation in Southeast Asia, examining both the transformation of cities in that region and urban connections with other parts of the world. Tim's publications include *From World City to the World in One City: Liverpool through Malay Lives* (Wiley, 2016) and *Urban Asias: Essays on Futurity Past and Present* (Jovis, 2018; co-edited with Daniel P.S. Goh). His interest in the nexus of new technology and urban development began with doctoral research on the high-tech Multimedia Super Corridor in Malaysia in the 1990s.

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**Wang Gungwu** has been University Professor at the National University of Singapore (NUS) since 2007, and Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University (ANU) since 1988. He is best known for his explorations of Chinese history in the long view, and for his writings on the Chinese diaspora. Professor Wang began his teaching career at University of Malaya (UM), Singapore, in 1957 after completing his doctorate at University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies. He went on to become Dean of the Faculty of Arts at UM (1962-1963) and a Professor of History at the university (1963-1968). At ANU, Professor Wang headed the Department of Far Eastern History (1968-1975, 1980-1986) and was Director at the Research School of Pacific Studies (1975-1980). From 1986 to 1995, he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong. He later joined NUS in 1997 as Professor (1997-2007) and Director of the East Asian Institute (1997-2007). Professor Wang also holds several positions in various universities and organisations around the world, including Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Science, Honorary Member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Fellow at the Australian Academy of the Humanities. He is also Commander of the British Empire (CBE) and Officer of the Order of Australia (AO). Professor Wang was conferred various international awards, such as the International Academic Prize, Fukuoka Asian Cultural Prize in 1994 and the Tang Prize in Sinology in 2020. He was also awarded the Distinguished Service Order in 2020 by the Government of Singapore.

*Secretariat*

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