# Workshop on Diets & Local Food Systems in Asia

12-13 September 2024

For more information, please visit ari.nus.edu.sg/events/food-systems-in-asia



A lot of current discussion of food systems is often framed within the context of globalisation, with a specific focus on the almost hegemonic power of transnational food complexes. However, recent developments in food systems across the Global South paint a more nuanced picture, that emphasises the multi-scalar nature of these systems.

In this workshop, we bring together scholars based in Singapore and internationally to discuss changes occurring in local food systems throughout Asia through the lens of diets. The workshop features six panels where speakers present their current research and receive feedback, scheduled as follows:

- Panel 1 Different Types of Markets
- Panel 2 Preserving Diets in Industrial Food Systems
- Panel 3 Food Security in Asia
- Panel 4 Local Knowledge and Collaborations
- Panel 5 Local Cuisines in Global Context
- Panel 6 Materiality and Technology in Food Systems

Through this dialogue about the synergy between diets and local food systems, we seek to connect global context and local changes, especially how local/regional actors and locations participate in food production, distribution, and consumption.

#### WORKSHOP CONVENORS

#### **Dr Shumeng Li**

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

#### Assoc Prof Jamie S. Davidson

Asia Research Institute & Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore

### **PROGRAM AT A GLANCE**

DATE	TIME (SGT)	PANEL SESSION
12 SEP 2024	10:30 - 10:50	WELCOME & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
(Thu)	10:50 - 12:30	PANEL 1 – DIFFERENT TYPES OF MARKETS
	14:00 - 15:30	PANEL 2 – PRESERVING DIETS IN INDUSTRIAL FOOD SYSTEMS
	16:00 - 17:30	PANEL 3 – FOOD SECURITY IN ASIA
	18:00 - 17:30	WORKSHOP DINNER (For speakers and chairpersons only)
<b>13 SEP 2024</b> (Fri)	10:30 - 12:00	PANEL 4 – LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND COLLABORATIONS
	13:30 - 15:00	PANEL 5 – LOCAL CUISINES IN GLOBAL CONTEXT
	15:30 - 17:00	PANEL 6 – MATERIALITY AND TECHNOLOGY IN FOOD SYSTEMS
	17:00 - 17:30	SUMMARY & CLOSING REMARKS

# 12 SEPTEMBER 2024 • THURSDAY

10:30 - 10:50	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
	JAMIE S. DAVIDSON   National University of Singapore
	SHUMENG LI   National University of Singapore
10:50 - 12:30	PANEL 1 – DIFFERENT TYPES OF MARKETS
Chairperson	SHUMENG LI   National University of Singapore
10:50	The Key Roles of Wet Markets in China's Sustainable Food System SHURU ZHONG   Sun Yat-sen University, China
11:10	Mapping the Open-air Markets in Surabaya: Illegible Landscapes in a City of Passage ANITHA SILVIA   Independent Scholar, Indonesia
11.20	
11:30	Supermarket Contract Farming for Local Sourcing: A Case Study in Northeastern Thailand
	NAOKO TAKAHASHI   IDE-Jetro, Japan
12.00	
12:00	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:00 12:30 - 14:00	LUNCH BREAK
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12:30 - 14:00	LUNCH BREAK
12:30 - 14:00 14:00 - 15:30	LUNCH BREAK PANEL 2 – PRESERVING DIETS IN INDUSTRIAL FOOD SYSTEMS
12:30 – 14:00 14:00 – 15:30 Chairperson	LUNCH BREAK         PANEL 2 – PRESERVING DIETS IN INDUSTRIAL FOOD SYSTEMS         I-LIANG WAHN   Tunghai University, Taiwan         "Tumpangsari" as the Way to Preserve Local Food System in Javanese Society
<b>12:30 – 14:00</b> <b>14:00 – 15:30</b> <i>Chairperson</i> 14:00	LUNCH BREAK         PANEL 2 – PRESERVING DIETS IN INDUSTRIAL FOOD SYSTEMS         I-LIANG WAHN   Tunghai University, Taiwan         "Tumpangsari" as the Way to Preserve Local Food System in Javanese Society         WASISTO RHARJO JATI   National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Indonesia         Preserving Local Food Forests through Open Collaboration between Farming         Communities and Trading Company: A Case of PT Kaleka Wana Nusantara
12:30 – 14:00         14:00 – 15:30         Chairperson         14:00         14:20	LUNCH BREAKPANEL 2 – PRESERVING DIETS IN INDUSTRIAL FOOD SYSTEMSI-LIANG WAHN   Tunghai University, Taiwan"Tumpangsari" as the Way to Preserve Local Food System in Javanese SocietyWASISTO RHARJO JATI   National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), IndonesiaPreserving Local Food Forests through Open Collaboration between Farming Communities and Trading Company: A Case of PT Kaleka Wana NusantaraDWI PERTIWI   PT Kaleka Wana Nusantara, Indonesia"Against the Grain": Re-learning Tradition and Modernizing Millets for India

16:00 - 17:30	PANEL 3 – FOOD SECURITY IN ASIA
Chairperson	JAMIE S. DAVIDSON   National University of Singapore
16:00 Online	Between Sustainability and Food Poverty: The Role of Food Banks in Vietnam's Food System Transformation JUDITH EHLERT   University of Passau, Germany
16:20	Looking Backwards to Look Forwards: Examining the Resourcefulness of War Time Recipes to Develop Future Urban Food Systems for Singapore SHAN CHIAN (MARK) TEO, RUSSELL NATHAN & JEFFREY KOH   Singapore Institute of Technology
16:40	Agrarian Change Scenarios and the Food System Transition in Indonesia JOHN MCCARTHY   Australian National University
17:00	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
17:30	END OF DAY 1
	Bus transfer to dinner
18:00 - 19:30	WORKSHOP DINNER (For speakers, discussants & chairpersons)

# **13 SEPTEMBER 2024 • FRIDAY**

10:30 - 12:00	PANEL 4 – LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND COLLABORATIONS
Chairperson	SHURU ZHONG   Sun Yat-sen University, China
10:30	Food Letters: Reconfiguring People, Foods, and Species across Local and National Boundaries I-LIANG WAHN   Tunghai University, Taiwan
10:50	Seeding Sovereignty: Re-tasting Heirloom Rice through Art HAO PEI CHU   National University of Singapore
11:10	Contested Idea of <i>Desi</i> : Ethnography of Forgotten Recipe and Food Memories from Bengal DEBOTTAM SAHA   Indian Institute of Technology - Delhi, India
11:30	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
12:00 - 13:30	LUNCH BREAK
13:30 - 15:00	PANEL 5 – LOCAL CUISINES IN GLOBAL CONTEXT
Chairperson	NAOKO TAKAHASHI   IDE-Jetro, Japan
13:30	Immigrant Restaurants in Tokyo: A Proliferation of Peruvian Flavors AYUMI TAKENAKA   Hitotsubashi University, Japan
13:50	Food Podcasts: Culinary Auditory Experiences Shaping Malaysian Culinary Culture MAY TING BEH   Penang Institute
14:10	Food Sharing Practices and Narratives of Filipino Domestic Workers in Hong Kong JOSEF ADRIEL OLINDAN DE GUZMAN   The Chinese University of Hong Kong
14:30	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
15:00 - 15:30	TEA BREAK

15:30 - 17:00	PANEL 6 – MATERIALITY AND TECHNOLOGY IN FOOD SYSTEMS
Chairperson	MAY TING BEH   Penang Institute
15:30 Online	Ice Cream or Ludoutang? Savoring Summer in Treaty-Port Shanghai, 1900s-1930s ZHENGFENG WANG   Leiden University, Netherlands
15:50	Oyster Opening and System of Provision in Taiwan BO-SHIANG HSU   Tunghai University, Taiwan
16:10	Becoming Boneless <i>Danggit</i> ( <i>Siganus</i> spp.), or Why Dried Rabbitfish is Distinctly Delicious on Bantayan Island, the Philippines JESSIE VARQUEZ   University of Manitoba, Canada
16:30	QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
17:00 - 17:30	SUMMARY & CLOSING REMARKS
	JAMIE S. DAVIDSON   National University of Singapore SHUMENG LI   National University of Singapore
17:30	END OF DAY 2

#### The Key Roles of Wet Markets in China's Sustainable Food System

Shuru Zhong

Sun Yat-sen University, China zhongshr3@mail.sysu.edu.cn; zhongshuru@gmail.com

China's current food system is characterized by intensive production, opaque distribution networks, and excessive consumption, leading to various issues such as food safety hazards and negative environmental impacts. Against this backdrop, this study approaches the issue from the perspective of wet markets to explore pathways toward the sustainable development of a food system that fits the Chinese context. The researcher has conducted extensive and multi-site field investigations into China's wet markets, examining over 200 markets in 40 cities since 2016, to understand the crucial role these markets play in the sustainable transformation of China's food system.

The findings suggest that the food system's challenges arise from the disconnection and fragmentation of relationships among various stakeholders, including humans, food, places, and nature. In contrast, wet markets represent a return to and rebuilding of these relationships. They promote several types of proximity relationships by: 1) connecting consumers' sensory experiences with local foods; 2) enabling collaboration between small producers, retail vendors, and informal dining establishments; 3) improving community interactions and social cohesion; and 4) preserving local food cultures and encouraging food diversity.

The study asserts that a sustainable transformation of China's food system should not be limited to binary oppositions such as "conventional/alternative," "organic/non-organic," and "large-scale/small-scale" farming. Wet markets are crucial in breaking down these binaries and serving as essential connectors. Unfortunately, their multifaceted functions and potential are currently overlooked by public policy, leading to their rapid decline. The study advocates for the revitalization of existing avenues like wet markets to provide more enlightening and practical solutions for the sustainable transformation of the global food system.

**Shuru Zhong** is an Associate Professor at the School of Tourism at Sun Yat-sen University and holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Texas A&M University. She has long been engaged in research on farmers' market culture and sustainable food systems. She has published more than twenty papers in peer-review journals, including the Journal of Rural Studies, Agriculture and Human Values, and Food, Culture & Society, and has led projects funded by the National Natural Science Foundation of China. Her research has been widely reported by media outlets such as *China Daily* and *Southern Weekly*, generating positive social impacts. In addition to her academic endeavors, she actively collaborates with various social organizations to advocate for sustainable food consumption.

#### Mapping the Open-air Markets in Surabaya: Illegible Landscapes in a City of Passage

Anitha Silvia Independent Scholar, Indonesia surabaya.anithasilvia@gmail.com

This article takes the starting point of the significant number of open-air markets in the major Indonesian port city of Surabaya within the trends of the burning down of traditional market buildings and clearance of squatter communities and street vendors from early 2000 until now. The open-air markets in Surabaya are experiencing illegible landscapes in a city of passage because of their informality (Peters, 2009). In 2019-2023 I mapped more than 70 open-air markets in Surabaya which occupy narrow alleyways and streets in the early mornings and are close to the city's poor neighborhoods (kampung) and other city nodes, such as public hospitals, bus terminals, and factories. The open-air markets in Surabaya are a site where cultural differences are articulated and identities formed by Madurese, Javanese, and Chinese. Read through Asef Bayat's notion of 'street politics', I examined patterns and struggles of the open-air markets to survive in the time of modernization imposed in Surabaya since the 1910s, where traders and kampung residents possessed a variety of negotiating strategies for years, even decades with city authorities regarding the anti-vending policies. It is argued that the persistence of open-air markets is the sustainability of the popular economy because it's self-management by the traders and the kampungs where most Surabaya people subsisted in the informal economy.

Walking is her artistic practice. Since 2011, **Anitha Silvia** has run urban knowledge production programs and projects using the walking method and counter-mapping in Surabaya, such as Manic Street Walkers, Surabaya Johnny Walker, Pertigaan Map, and Suroboyo Ngalor Ngidul. Since mid-2022, she has been developing a long-term research project about market days in the Eastern Archipelagos of Southeast Asia—extending from the southern Philippines to the east Java Sea and from the eastern Borneo coast to the far shores of west New Guinea. Anitha is a BAK Fellowship for Situated Practice fellow in Utrecht in 2021/2022. Recently, she worked for the Mekong Cultural Hub as a researcher in mapping arts and technology in ASEAN. www.suroboyongalorngidul.net

#### Supermarket Contract Farming for Local Sourcing: A Case Study in Northeastern Thailand

Naoko Takahashi IDE-Jetro, Japan Naoko\_Takahashi@ide.go.jp

In the evolving landscape of food systems in developing countries, modern supermarkets are playing an increasingly important role. In particular, when sourcing fresh vegetables, supermarkets seek opportunities to contract directly with farmers to ensure a consistent and high-quality supply as consumers increasingly demand safe and healthy food. The development of the supermarket fresh produce supply chain provides smallholder farmers with access to modern agricultural value chains. When the supply chain circulates within the local food system, it has the potential to support farmers by strengthening local economies and communities. However, due to smallholder capacity constraints and limited resources, supermarkets tend to prefer the stability provided by national-level or global sourcing. The challenging local sourcing requires supermarkets to ensure the establishment of adequate food supply through solving in relationship building, resource scarcity, and quality control. It is critical to examine how supermarkets can effectively and equitably collaborate with local farmers while ensuring supply and environmental sustainability.

With increasing attention to food safety and environmental issues in Thailand, consumer demand is driving supermarkets to source quality food through direct contracts. This research paper examines the recent trend of vertical integration in local vegetable procurement, focusing on the institutional arrangement and transaction cost between the supermarket and the contracting agricultural cooperative. The study focuses on a case study in Northeastern Thailand, a region experiencing a surge in demand for agricultural products but also facing low agricultural productivity. The analysis is based on the data obtained from in-depth interviews and the cooperative's financial statements.

The case study shows that local souring has been promoted by the strong commitment of local administrations and supermarkets. Transaction costs are significantly reduced through resource provision, flexible contracts, and place-based branding through vertical integration with the agricultural cooperative.

**Naoko Takahashi** is a research fellow who joined IDE-JETRO (Japan) in April 2021 after receiving her Master's degree in Agricultural Economics from Kyoto University. Her research mainly focuses on understanding the agricultural system in Thailand from an area studies perspective, with a special focus on farming livelihoods and food systems. At IDE-JETRO, she is also in charge of writing a report analyzing Thailand's economic situation, which is published in the *Yearbook of Asian Affairs* (in Japanese) every year. She is interested in institutional, and system approaches to farming livelihoods and their involvement in food systems, such as markets, contracts, and organizations, with a particular focus on developing sustainable/organic agriculture in Thailand. In other work, her research project with her colleagues focuses on the development and governance of the food-based bioenergy industry in Thailand and the socio-economic impacts on farmers.

#### "Tumpangsari" as the Way to Preserve Local Food System in Javanese Society

#### Wasisto Raharjo Jati

National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Indonesia wasisto.raharjo.jati@brin.go.id

"Tumpangsari" has been a way to preserve locality and seasonality in local Javanese food markets. Since the high demand for local crops recently due to the rapid birth rate, it does not equal the number of farming land that gradually declines. It subsequently leads most farmers to intensify their farm labour by planting two or more crops on the same piece of land for one year instead of just one crop. This technique is locally known as "tumpangsari" among Javanese traditional farmers. Rice remains the main consumption for most Javanese people. However, it is not the main income source of farmers. There are several numbers of causes, such as climate change that makes the rainy season unpredictable, the uncontrollable rodent population, and the imported rice. This condition encourages farmers to plant two or more crops that may be more beneficial, such as chilis, cucumbers, and spring onions. Those three crops are demanded in local markets regardless of price. In addition, those three crops are the main ingredients of "sambal" (chilli paste) dishes that are always consumed by every household. Therefore, it makes farmers preserve the "tumpangsari" system in order to get by making enough money.

This study would like to investigate the relationship between the "tumpangsari" farming system and its production to sustain diets and local food consumption in most of Javanese villages in Indonesia. This study has done by conducting ethnographic research in Yogyakarta and doing documentary analysis. The study shows that the tumpangsari has preserved the local food system by not only planting rice but also other crops that kept local consumption and market afloat.

**Wasisto Raharjo Jati** is a researcher at the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) in Jakarta, Indonesia. He has conducted fieldwork research in villages, especially in Javanese society. Most of his publications have been in national and international journals and open outlets.

#### Preserving Local Food Forests through Open Collaboration Between Farming Communities and Trading Company: A Case of PT Kaleka Wana Nusantara

**Dwi Pertiwi** PT Kaleka Wana Nusantara, Indonesia dwi@kaleka.co.id

Farming in Indonesia has faced many challenges in the last few decades. One of the challenges is the decreasing planting area while, on the other hand, the Indonesian population has increased significantly. Farmers sell their rice fields or farms for quick cash for education and modern needs. The land is then turned into housing, villas, and other buildings. Farmers sell their land because it fails to provide enough monetary income for their needs. That is because they do not have direct access to the market. Thus, a more significant amount of the money goes to the brokers between farmers and customers. Because of the above problems, farmers discourage their children from choosing farming as a profession, which leads to the decreasing interest of young people in being farmers. Kaleka is a trading company founded to solve two major issues in today's farming: 1) The loss of farming land and food forests, and 2) The lack of interest of the younger generations in being farmers. Five years of business contracts with six communities have been signed to do the research. Kaleka is currently implementing a solution by creating an open business collaboration with farming communities. In this collaboration, both parties must disclose all production and marketing costs. Kaleka must also disclose the selling price as well as the names of the buyers to their partners. Conversely, the partners must open their access for Kaleka to visit and communicate directly with the community. With this business scheme, farmers' profits will be much higher. With the more promising economy, hopefully, they will not sell their land, and the younger generations will be more interested in choosing farming as a profession.

**Dwi Pertiwi** founded JC Organics in 2007, a trading company that worked with over 10,000 families across Indonesia and exported organic coconut sugar, organic cacao products and spices to the USA, Europe, Australia, South Africa, etc. It was organic certified in 2008 under EU-Bio, USDA-NOP and JAS standards. In 2016, Dwi established Omah Lor as a communal living and education centre where young people live and learn about sustainable living. She also founded Yayasan BringIn to inspire people to be more aware of their environment and nature and start producing their own foods. She formulated Ethnofarming, where local farming practices and wisdom are combined with permaculture, syntropic farming and organic farming to create the best ethical local food productions that support a better environment, comfortable human settlement and sustainable local economy. Dwi was recently invited by IRASEC to present at a social innovation conference at Mae Fah Luang University. Last August 2023, she also co-founded PT Kaleka Wana Nusantara to assist communities in accessing the market locally and internationally.

#### "Against the Grain": Re-learning Tradition and Modernizing Millets for India

**Riya Sharma** University of Illinois at Chicago, USA rsharm50@uic.edu

What does it mean to re-learn a food "tradition"? Since the declaration of 2023 as the International Year of Millets, this nutrient-rich rainfed crop considered indigenous to India has become central to popular and policy discourses. Nearly abandoned in favour of Green Revolution varieties of wheat and rice, millets are now making a comeback to Indian farming and urban diets—fueled by a combination of post-COVID health scares and national-level campaigns looking to promote this grain. This paper ethnographically analyzes how this newfound focus on millets at the national scale intersects with existing local, small-scale food markets for millets—painstakingly preserved by activists, farmers, and health-conscious consumers prior to its contemporary political patronage.

Findings from six months of fieldwork in India's National Capital Region and the southern state of Andhra Pradesh among farmers' cooperatives, millet activists and promoters, and speciality retail spaces show the contradictions of scaling up from local millet food networks to potential national markets for this crop. My paper first analyses how the recent spike in millet sales has created challenges of speculative pricing and crop planning for farmers. Second, urban consumers of millets, while keen to adopt the grain into their regular diets, are unaware of proper processing and cooking techniques, and frequently resort to ready-to-eat versions of millets that may not offer any of its purported nutritional benefits. Finally, the above findings believe in a lack of infrastructure and sustained efforts to boost millet production and consumption. Without these, state-led millet campaigns may fall short of delivering the grain's transformative benefits for improving public health in India and raising the incomes of small and marginal farmers. The paper thus recommends greater collaboration between the state and local millet activists, farmers, and chefs who have long been working to promote millet.

**Riya Sharma** (she/her) is a PhD candidate in Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her dissertation uses ethnographic methods to study the intersection of alternative agriculture, certification methods, and trust and traceability in India's organic food markets. Her ethnographic research has been supported by the American Institute of Indian Studies Junior Fellowship for 2023-24, and the Provost's Graduate Research Award, Award for Graduate Research, and Charles Reed Award from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is an alumnus of the Delhi School of Economics and St. Stephen's College at the University of Delhi, and a recipient of a Junior Research Fellowship from the University Grants Commission of India. As part of her previous training in Sociology (MA and MPhil), Riya has also researched and written about ethical consumption, alternative schooling, value education, and holistic medicine in India.

#### Between Sustainability and Food Poverty: The Role of Food Banks in Vietnam's Food System Transformation

Judith Ehlert University of Passau, Germany judith.ehlert@uni-passau.de

Since the UN ever-first Food System Summit in 2021 and again with the recent COP28, Vietnam is pushing for its international reputation as strong partner in greening agriculture and sustainable food system transformation in the region. Vietnam's National Action Plan on Food Systems Transformation towards Transparency, Responsibility, and Sustainability by 2030 (Prime Minister Decision No. 300, 03/2023), amongst others, targets the growing triple burden of malnutrition through innovations along the food chain. In this regard, piloting a food bank is referred to in the Decision without further details and this is where the paper sets in.

After setting the stage of the current academic knowledge on food banking, the paper will refer to the Southeast Asian branch of the global food banking network and draw on an in-depth interview with representatives of Foodbank Vietnam to highlight its role and challenges in food system change. One of the arguments the paper wants to discuss is the tough competition between the dominant discourse of ecological sustainability and structural food poverty. Furthermore, the paper aims to highlight current research gaps.

Ideally, and following the aim of better understanding the context specificity of local urban food systems, more interviews with food bank representatives in the region will be conducted and included in the paper to be submitted by August 15 2024.

**Judith Ehlert**, a sociologist by training, holds a PhD in Development Studies. Her PhD thesis focused on local knowledge and agrarian change in the Mekong Delta. From this, her interest embarked on urban food consumption issues in HCMC. She was the Principal Investigator of the research project on the body politics of food consumption change in Vietnam, funded by the Austrian Science Fund (2015-2019, based at the Department of Development Studies at the University of Vienna). Inspired by Feminist (Agro-) Food Studies, Judith's interests focus on the food and body nexus, as well as food production and consumption interfaces. Currently, she is Post-Doc at the Chair of Critical Development Studies – Southeast Asia, at the University of Passau in Germany, where she teaches in the field of Food Studies Southeast Asia and Gender and Development.

#### Looking Backwards to Look Forwards: Examining the Resourcefulness of War Time Recipes to Develop Future Urban Food Systems for Singapore

#### Shan Chian (Mark) Teo Singapore Institute of Technology shanchian.teo@singaporetech.edu.sg

**Russell Nathan** Singapore Institute of Technology

Jeffrey Koh Singapore Institute of Technology

Singapore is an anomaly in that despite producing only 10% of its food to meet local needs, it is ranked the fourth most food secured country in the world, according to the 2017 edition of the Global Food Security Index. This is achieved through a heavy dependence on the global food supply and through the diversification of sources. Yet, considering the recent coronavirus pandemic and the growing threats from the impacts of climate change, how does Singapore adapt to enhance its food security?

Understanding wartime diets through recipes and food stories can be an important method for addressing food system challenges exacerbated by climate change. Wartime periods, marked by resource scarcity and rationing, offer valuable insights into resilient food systems and adaptive dietary practices. By examining historical approaches to food production and consumption during times of conflict, and the endemic edible vegetation of Singapore, we can glean strategies to mitigate the impact of climate-induced disruptions on food production and distribution.

During conflicts, nations implemented rationing programs, promoting moderation and reducing waste. Such measures compelled populations to adopt diverse, nutrient-dense diets and minimize reliance on resourceintensive foods. These practices are relevant today as climate change threatens agricultural productivity and strains natural resources, necessitating sustainable food consumption patterns. This is particularly relevant to Singapore, which is highly dependent on other countries to meet its dietary needs.

Wartime experiences highlight the importance of local food production and community resilience. In response to disrupted supply chains, communities turned to home gardens, collective farming initiatives, and localized food networks to supplement rations. These decentralized food systems promoted self-sufficiency and reduced dependence on vulnerable global markets, offering a model for building climate-resilient food systems that are resilient to supply chain disruptions caused by extreme weather events. How might we reference past scenarios mapped to the current context to help us develop strategies and systems to address future needs?

In conclusion, insights from wartime diets offer valuable lessons for addressing contemporary food system challenges arising from climate change. By promoting resourcefulness, decentralization, and equity in food production and distribution, Singapore can enhance resilience and adaptability in the face of environmental uncertainty.

**Shan Chian (Mark) Teo** received his Bachelor of Planning and Design and Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Melbourne, Australia, and his Master of Science in Environmental Management from the National University of Singapore. He is currently Assistant Professor of Design at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT). Prior to joining SIT in a full-time capacity, Mark ran his own architecture practice and has worked in Singapore, Melbourne, and Montreal. In practice, he has crafted and overseen projects of varying scales, from small lighting installations and exhibitions to conservation shophouses and multi-unit high rise residential development. His research interests lie in the intersection of design, environmental sustainability, and people. This specifically includes public housing, food systems, systems thinking and interdisciplinary collaboration. His current research examines the impact of climate change on urban food systems and focuses on integrating food production with public housing in Singapore.

Jeffrey Koh's journey spans cities like Sydney, Zurich, and Tokyo, reflecting his diverse career and studies. As a transdisciplinary experiential designer, he's worked with brands like PRADA and agencies like KesselsKramer. His art has been showcased in venues from the Barbican to galleries in Berlin and Tokyo. With a background in Semiotics and Fashion Photography, he holds degrees from the Aki Academy of Art and Design and Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design. He's earned a d.MBA in business design and a PhD from the National University of Singapore, conducting research at Keio University, Japan. Past roles include UX Lead at the National Gallery Singapore and Vice President of Transmedia at Villains. Presently, he's an Associate Professor at the Singapore Institute of Technology, focusing on regenerative design and the circular economy, while advising at Chemistry and Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Design.

**Russell Nathan** is no stranger to the F&B industry, Russell's work has taken him to acclaimed restaurants in the UK, Japan, Vietnam, Denmark, and Belgium. Settling closer to home in sunny Singapore, his last venture in the kitchen was at Nouri, where, as Head Chef, he helped develop and implement a system of cross-cultural cuisine now known as 'Crossroads Cuisine'. Since then, he has transitioned to working as a freelance consultant specializing in food sustainability, where he helps implement circular food systems in F&B establishments. Additionally, he is a co-founder of Bricolage SG, an independent events organiser that focuses on food sustainability and food security in Singapore.

#### Agrarian Change Scenarios and the Food System Transition in Indonesia

John McCarthy Australian National University john.mccarthy@anu.edu.au

Indonesia, alongside other countries in the global south, has achieved middle-income status as global market integration has provided many rural people with the means to escape poverty. Yet, while significant cohorts of people have moved out of poverty and stunting rates have fallen as state social protection programs have rolled out, food and nutritional insecurity persist across many rural areas. This paper considers the paradox of why many rural households rapidly ascend while others experience thin or insecure progress, uncertain integration, or integration on adverse terms. The conventional approach is to understand these problems in terms of a failed structural transformation of the countryside or a truncated agrarian transition. Based on an analysis of several cases, the paper extends such analyses by explaining food insecurity and vulnerability in relation to (1) varying agrarian change scenarios that combine structural, relational and contextual dynamics in different ways; (2) how social reproduction dynamics shape the welfare of women and children within these scenarios; (3) and how ecological decline, climate change, declining subsistence capacities and food systems transitions are reshaping diets. The paper suggests that new understandings are required to address the drivers and effects of persistent patterns of seasonal scarcity in different production contexts.

**John McCarthy** is a professor of rural development and the anthropology of policy. He has an abiding interest in the rapid socio-environmental change taking place in the Global South. His work focuses on environmental change, rural development, food and livelihood security and the impacts of climate change on the global south. As a scholar of rural development, environmental sociology, and the anthropology of policy, he has concentrated his work on critical issues related to this transition with a focus on the case of Indonesia, converging on three specific themes: vulnerability and food security; smallholder development and rural change; and forest and land governance.

#### Food Letters: Reconfiguring People, Foods, and Species Across Local and National Boundaries

I-Liang Wahn Tunghai University, Taiwan ilwahn@thu.edu.tw

The local food movement in Taiwan has been inspired by Japan, such as the imitation of Teikei and collaborative purchases in the past. Food letters (taberu) is the latest initiative imitated from Japan, that use magazines and food samples to support alternative agrifood economy and re-imagine the countryside. The magazines feature farmer stories, farming techniques, the history of a place, as well as food stories, ecology and creative dishes using local foods. As such it is not only a new way to reconnect consumers and producers, but also recognizing the links between people, foods, species in specific places.

This paper explores how food letters in Taiwan re-present the relationship between people and food, and between food and animals and plants, and how it uses the reconfiguring of relationships to reorganize local food system and place. It focuses on a case Three-small farmers' market that publishes Yunlin food letters and created a networking hub for local development. The paper uses the Polanyian concept of "the economy as instituted processes" and recent discussion on Anthropocene to analyze the instituting of a local food economy that also changes human, material and environmental configurations.

The paper first examines the development of the Taiwan Taberu Alliance and its interaction with pioneers in Japan to explore the shared challenges faced by local places and revitalization actions in East Asia. It then analyses 6 issues of Yunlin food letters and interviews with editors and readers to understand the instituting of new farming, distribution and buying and eating practices. It also analyses the interaction between an alternative food economy with the environment through the reconfiguring relationship between people, food, animals and plants in specific places. Finally, the paper discusses how to put the reconfigured relationships between people, food and species in a global framework to connect with local initiatives in other places and to explore the interaction between diets, local food systems and environmental changes.

I-Liang Wahn is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at Tunghai University, Taiwan. He obtained PhD in Sociology from University of Essex and MA from The University of Manchester. His research revolves around the politics of consumer societies, the development of alternative food networks in East Asia and the interaction between morality, market, and everyday practices. More recently, he is interested in sustainable consumption and his latest research project explores home decorations in urban Taiwan. In these works, he develops the Polanyian concept of "the economy as instituted processes" by combing social practice theories and Callonian concept of market devices and agencement. Wahn is East Asian editorial representative for the journal Consumption and Society. His works has been published in *Agriculture and Human Values, Journal of Rural Studies, Cultural Sociology, The Sociological Quarterly, Journal of Consumer Culture, Taiwanese Sociology and Routers: A Journal of Cultural Studies.* 

#### Seeding Sovereignty: Re-tasting Heirloom Rice through Art

Hao Pei Chu National University of Singapore chuhp@nus.edu.sg

Secret Rice Society is a guerrilla garden which serves as an experimental living seed bank to grow heirloom rice varieties and to develop vernacular rice growing methods through experimental techniques. Employing taste as the medium, I propose understanding the importance of heirloom rice varieties to connect the audience to broader questions on the lack and loss of heirloom rice varieties. I focus my analysis on a series of socially engaged artistic engagements and collaborative projects in three countries – Indonesia (Growing Rice Growing Taste), Myanmar ( $0 \circ O \int_{0}^{2} S \circ \int_{0}^{2} O \int_{0}^{2} S \circ O \int_{0}^{2} S a Pi Pi La? (Have you eaten?))$  and Singapore (Grind,

*Boil, Smell and Taste*) – where the activity of tasting rice is central to those engagements. Based on my engagements and observations, I argue that the combination of narration, visual aids and rice-tasting sessions trigger recollections of past or forgotten taste(s), which sets a precedent in connecting the audience to heirloom rice varieties. Through rice tasting, mapping and storytelling, I unearth memories of forgotten taste(s) as a way to invite the audience to expand their knowledge and palette of rice varieties apart from those commonly available to us. This paper contributes discussions about how taste can reinvigorate heirloom rice varieties in light of the global trend in preserving indigenous varieties.

**Hao Pei Chu** is a visual artist and researcher whose works are primarily influenced by his long-standing interest in the interrelations between culture and the environment. Hao Pei's practice explores the shifting physical, sociological and emotional connections with our natural and urban landscapes. His works shed light on the overlooked and accidental by interweaving the engagement processes, documentation and research to examine the complexities of environmental and cultural loss (or resurgence) shaped by political, economic and social factors. Most recently, Hao Pei started a long-term project looking into the social and historical nuances of rice in Southeast Asia after an artist residency in *Cemeti, Institute for Art and Society*, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in late 2019. Hao Pei is also a self-taught researcher and is currently a research assistant at the National University of Singapore's Asia Research Institute under the Science, Technology and Society Cluster.

#### Contested Idea of *Desi*: Ethnography of Forgotten Recipe and Food Memories from Bengal

Debottam Saha Indian Institute of Technology - Delhi dbt.saha@gmail.com

Drawing from my own personal journey and ethnographic work across the rural and urban settings of Bengal, the state belonging to the eastern side of the Indian subcontinent, the present paper explores the complex nature of the idea of *desi* or indigeneity within the food systems of India. In the present context, with the rise of extreme cultural nationalist ideas in the subcontinent, the idea of desi is often interpreted through the lenses of vegetarianism, puritan practices and parochial framework of naturally home-grown products against the foreign/ artificial influences over food systems. However, there lies various contradictions in such framework. First, the paper argues that instead of questioning the continuous corporatization of food systems and the practice of food adulteration and over production, the idea of desi legitimizes the puritan-caste based food practices of majoritarian population from the Hindi heartland of India. Along with that, while producing the so-called desi food, local producers imitate the same industrial model and marketing strategy by capturing, exploiting and extracting natural resources.

Having said so, there remains a worldview of desi beyond the parochial and puritan framework as well. The small and marginal farmers, middle-class housewives and small-scale sellers in the local market conceptualize desi as imperfect, unprocessed and non-refined food suitable for gastronomy against the food produced for markets. Following which, desi embodies those forgotten recipes, which otherwise have obliterated due to the destruction of certain ecosystems. Historically, these ecosystems were responsible for the survival of those recipes. Hence, these actors in the field try to retain and revive these recipes in whichever ways they can. These recipes carry intergenerational memories and stories about food. By using the concept of food-memory the paper engages with the affectual interpretation of desi and its connection with one's own existence or root. The root is not a parochial one. The root gives meaning to their existence against the homogenized popular food systems in the region.

**Debottam Saha** is a senior research associate in the oil and gas team for the upstream project in petrochemical sector and has recently completed extensive fieldwork in various villages of Bengal. He joined the PhD program at the Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, in January 2017 and is currently in his writing phase towards the final submission of his thesis *"Reimagining Agrarian Transition in India: Understanding Alternative Practices of Agriculture in Bengal"*, which focuses on the interdisciplinary work cutting across the fields of rural and agrarian studies, science and technology studies and gender studies. His research interests are food and agriculture, rural studies, political ecology, science and technology studies, gender and sexuality. His recent publications include: "Agrarian Reforms and Farmers' Protest in India: A Policy Perspective" in *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy* (Vol. 2021 No. 80); and Swadhinotter Bharote Krishak Andolan: Krishibastutantrik Porjalochana in *Farmers' Protest in India: An Agroecological Enquiry* ISSN 2321-158X, Bengali.

#### Immigrant Restaurants in Tokyo: A Proliferation of Peruvian Flavors

Ayumi Takenaka Hitotsubashi University, Japan ayumi.takenaka@r.hit-u.ac.jp

In the past few decades, Peruvian restaurants have grown rapidly across the globe, both in number and diversity. This is largely due to growing emigration from Peru and gastro diplomacy efforts, led by the Peruvian government, trying to promote 'their' food as part of their cultural diplomacy. Many of these restaurants are run by Peruvian immigrants who reside in various countries, ranging from the United States to Spain and Japan.

This paper examines the transformation of immigrant restaurants and strategies by focusing on Japan, where Peruvians migrated in large numbers in 1990 as a form of ethnic return-migration. Many of these migrants were (and still are) of Japanese ancestry who traced their origins to Okinawa. Many of them (or their families) engaged in the restaurant business in Peru, serving Okinawan-influenced Peruvian food, before migrating to Japan. Since 1990, the number of Peruvian restaurants has grown in Japan, which mostly cater to Peruvian migrants in factory towns where they reside. Many have since closed down, while some remain in operation. Recently, more upscale restaurants began to appear, targeting Japanese customers in urban centres. It was made possible by an easier access to ingredients, accumulation of capital, exchange of ideas through migrants' networks, and the global Peruvian gastronomic 'boom,' aided by the Peruvian government and elite chefs.

Why do certain kinds of restaurants open and close, and how do 'successful' restaurants operate? And how do immigrants try to produce, market, and define 'their' food in different local contexts? By engaging in an ethnographic study of Peruvian restaurants in Tokyo and tracing the history of Japanese-Peruvian restaurant business, I examine how certain kinds of restaurants develop and how they play a role in immigrant integration in general.

**Ayumi Takenaka** is a professor of sociology at Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo, Japan. Since she obtained her PhD in sociology at Columbia University. She has taught in the sociology faculty in the U.S., the U.K., and now Japan. She specializes in the fields of global migration, racial and ethnic identities, diasporas, and food studies. Her current research projects include (1) gastrodiplomacy and the creation of a Japanese and Peruvian fusion cuisine, called Nikkei food; (2) diaspora engagement and the role of sending countries in immigrant integration; and (3) trade diasporas and the role of Japanese emigrants in global cotton trade (1920s-1950s).

#### Food Podcasts: Culinary Auditory Experiences Shaping Malaysian Culinary Culture

May Ting Beh Penang Institute mayting.beh@penanginstitute.org

In recent years, the proliferation of food podcasts has contributed significantly to the dissemination of culinary knowledge, culture, and trends. This research examined the influence and impact of food podcasts on Malaysian culinary culture and consumption patterns among its listeners. Through a qualitative analysis of popular food podcasts and interviews with podcast hosts and listeners, the study sought to elucidate the ways in which these digital platforms shaped food discourse, consumer behavior, and the broader food landscape. Key research questions included the role of food podcasts in fostering culinary education and exploration, their impact on food preferences and consumption habits, and their potential to influence food-related social and cultural norms. Additionally, the study examined the challenges and opportunities inherent in the production and consumption of food podcasts, including issues of representation, authenticity, and commercialization. Findings from this research contributed to a deeper understanding of the evolving dynamics between digital media, food culture, and consumer behavior in the contemporary culinary landscape.

**May Ting Beh** is Programme Coordinator and Senior Analyst at the History and Regional Studies Programme at Penang Institute, one of Malaysia's major think tanks. She holds a PhD in Anthropology from Monash University and an MSocSc in Asian Studies from Universiti Sains Malaysia (where she graduated as the Gold Medalist of the faculty during her BSocSc). She specialises in Urban Anthropology, Food Studies, and Cultural Geography. Prior to joining Penang Institute, she was a lecturer at the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Monash University Malaysia. Her current policy research includes works on creative cities, cost of living issues, social infrastructure, and education issues. Apart from research work, May Ting is a polyglot, athlete, and musician.

#### Food Sharing Practices and Narratives of Filipino Domestic Workers in Hong Kong

#### Josef Adriel Olindan De Guzman

The Chinese University of Hong Kong deguzmanjad@link.cuhk.edu.hk

This paper examines the narratives and practices of Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong related to food sharing. By law, domestic helpers in Hong Kong are required to live with their employers, and as such much of their diet is influenced by this living arrangement. However, a key part of Filipino domestic helpers' activities involves their days off, which they usually spend with other Filipinos and where they often share food in addition to other activities. As part of my dissertation fieldwork that aims to understand the diet and eating habits of Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong, I conducted interviews and spent time with my informants on their days off. One activity that has been very salient in my fieldwork is the food-sharing practices of these domestic helpers, which is one of the main ways they are able to eat Filipino food in Hong Kong, particularly for those unable to prepare their own food in their employers' homes. Through narratives and ethnographic vignettes about these food networks, which are mostly done not for profit but through a network of reciprocating relationships. The food shared through these networks are not only a significant part of these helpers' diets but also provides some insights on how Hong Kong's culinary infrastructure shapes its urban foodways.

Josef Adriel Olindan De Guzman is a PhD student from the Department of Anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests include the anthropology of food and eating, migration studies, and archaeological and anthropological studies on the development of human diets and eating habits. His current dissertation research is about Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong as a case study on understanding how eating habits change and develop as a result of migration and through the influence of other eating cultures.

#### Ice Cream or *Ludoutang*? Savoring Summer in Treaty-Port Shanghai, 1900s-1930s

Zhengfeng Wang Leiden University, Netherlands z.f.wang@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Opened to foreign trade and residence as a treaty port city, Shanghai became renowned for its hot and sultry summers. Frozen desserts and chilled beverages entered the Western-administered areas and quickly gained popularity among locals seeking relief from the heat, alongside traditional Chinese favorites such as *Ludoutang* (green bean soup) and *Suanmeitang* (sour plum drink), valued for their cooling and detoxifying properties. However, traditional Chinese medicine warned against cold drinks and foods for their potential to destabilize bodily health balance. Sanitary authorities governing the International Settlements recommended thoroughly cooked meals and tea from boiled water, following local customs, as effective disinfection protocols. Ice cream and aerated water, often lacking sterilization, were deemed societal hazards.

By 1930, Shanghai was the world's fifth-largest city, a vibrant metropolis hosting the headquarters of China's food industry. Sanitary reforms led by Chinese and Western authorities, along with routine bacteriological examination, resulted in the standardization of food production, preservation, and distribution. Public health propaganda promoting germ theory served to discipline the public's behavior and habits. Meanwhile, qualified ice cream became affordable and the localized flavor beloved. Scientists unveiled the cooling mechanism of Chinese summer refreshments by examining their chemical ingredients. Housewives learned about modern hygiene from mass media and utilized refrigerators and ice-boxes to chill their homemade *Ludoutang* and *Suanmeitang*.

Examining the impact of artificial cooling on non-Western society, scholars, such as Hi'ilei Hobart, argue that the technology served a colonial civilizing mission, helping rationalize the dispossession of Indigenous senses. However, by scrutinizing the (re)production and dissemination of dietary knowledge entwined with local and, at the same time, transnational influences shaping the diet for consuming cold food and beverages in Shanghai, this paper contends that these entanglements empowered the public to make informed choices, navigate the culinary landscape, and contribute to the formation of cosmopolitan identities.

**Zhengfeng Wang** is a postdoctoral researcher in Environmental Humanities at Leiden University, where she is currently working on her first book project, tentatively entitled "Building Freshness: Refrigerated Space for Foodway and Techno-politics in Treaty-Port China." At Leiden Institute for Area Studies, she also instructs courses on urban ecology, art and environment, and Chinese history in a global context. With previous study and working experience in Shanghai, Barcelona, and Dublin, Wang has extensive interests in foodscape, environment, and infrastructure from an interdisciplinary aspect and has published works on commercial space and food markets in Asian and European contexts. Her article "Modernizing Urban Food Provisioning: The 1936 Shanghai Fish Market" is forthcoming with the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* this March. Wang's research has received support from the Irish Research Council, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, the Society of Architectural Historians, and the Global Urban History Project.

#### **Oyster Opening and System of Provision in Taiwan**

**Bo-Shiang Hsu** Tunghai University, Taiwan G11550012@go.thu.edu.tw

It is only recently that food scholars in Taiwan become interested in seafood. Yet seafood tended to be treated as a whole, with increased consumption and the shift to freshness explained by economic growth, advances in refrigeration technology and transportation, and changes in the meaning of feasting. This paper aims to develop a different perspective in explaining the changes in seafood system that brings together production and consumption and pay closer attention to materials, practices, and the dynamics between different economic sectors.

The study adopts the theoretical framework of System of Provision (SOP), and makes use of historical studies, interviews with oyster producers and dealers, as well as exploration of oyster snacks in restaurants and street vendors. The paper begins by tracing the development of oyster food system in the industrialization period when rapid development of industries resulted in labor shortage in rural industries, and also traces the development of oyster snacks in Taiwan's food culture. Then the paper points to the importance of the advancement in oyster farming technology and the actions of oyster dealers in Dongshih, Chiayi, Taiwan to connect different oyster producing areas facing labor shortage. The paper illustrates how oyster opening is a key element connecting production and consumption, non-human actors and food culture.

This essay aims to make two contributions. First, empirically, this paper argues that future seafood studies or food studies should focus on specific products, so as to highlight the uniqueness of each production-consumption system. Second, theoretically, this study argues that it is helpful to understand the relationship between different SOPs by incorporating them into history, so as to see the tension between different systems.

**Hsu Bo-Shiang** is a graduate student in the Department of Sociology, Tunghai University. His mom's family has been residing in a fishing village in Southern Taiwan for over a hundred years and, during his study at Tunghai, he developed interests in food studies and rural studies. He aims to broaden existing studies by exploring seafood and coastal villages. In research work, Hsu is an assistant in Dr. Wahn I-Liang's research team at Tunghai. He is involved in organizing a special issue on food consumption in East Asia for the journal Consumption and Society. He is also a member of a study group on rural and urban changes in Taiwan. In the department, Hsu has been teaching assistance for Qualitative Research and Social Research Methods. Moreover, Hsu is the president of the Tunghai University Sociology Graduate Student Association (THUSOCGSA), which holds an annual graduate seminar. Currently, Hsu is trying to finish his master's thesis.

# Becoming Boneless *Danggit* (*Siganus* spp.), or Why Dried Rabbitfish is Distinctly Delicious on Bantayan Island, the Philippines

Jessie Varquez University of Manitoba, Canada varquejj@myumanitoba.ca

Boneless danggit, as it is known in the market, is split-opened and deboned dried rabbitfish (Siganus spp.) that has increasingly become popular in Philippine foodways. Often served fried and dipped in vinegar, boneless danggit is a familiar breakfast item not only on the Filipino plate but also in the tourism and hospitality industries that cater to foreign nationals. While boneless danggit is produced in many parts of the Philippines, one of the most popular sources is in Taboan Market in Cebu City, where boneless danggit, mostly produced from Bantayan Island, is marketed as "unsalted," quality, and delicious dried fish. Taking off from this consumer preference and marketing practice, I principally ask why boneless *danggit* from Bantayan Island tastes distinctly delicious. Drawing from an assemblage perspective, I argue that the answer lies not only in the extensive tidal flats with vast seagrass meadows that serve as home where the rabbitfish can flourish but also in the intersection of values and governmentality regimes among various actors in the dried rabbitfish economy. I thus explore themes on coastal ecology, local knowledge in artisanal fisheries, dried fish processing as a craft, and coastal governance and management. By becoming boneless, I render the rabbitfish as an analytical takeoff to locate themes on values and power as they are gathered, articulated, and negotiated in the production and consumption of boneless danggit. This case illustrates, among other things, that local food systems can be gleaned by examining the materiality, knowledge, and social complexities that a particular commodity engenders. My discussion and analysis are based on my 16-month ethnographic fieldwork on Bantayan Island as part of my doctoral dissertation in anthropology to assemble an ethnography on human-rabbitfish relations.

**Jessie Varquez** is currently a PhD candidate in anthropology at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. He holds a B.A. (magna cum laude) and an M.A. in anthropology from the University of the Philippines Diliman. Since February 2023 until presently, he has been conducting ethnographic fieldwork on Bantayan Island in Central Philippines for his doctoral thesis, which explores the intersecting themes of artisanal fishing, coastal governance, and human-dried fish relations. His research interests broadly fall within environmental anthropology, exploring the intersecting themes of livelihoods, food systems, and more-than-human relations.

# ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

Jamie S. Davidson is Associate Professor of Political Science at the National University of Singapore. He re-joined the Asia Research Institute in 2021 and now heads its latest cluster – Food Politics and Society. He has nearly twenty-five years of experience of teaching and writing on the politics of Southeast Asia, and especially that of Indonesia. His books and articles have focused on a range of issues, including ethnic violence, indigenous peoples' activism, law and society, infrastructure, democratisation, and, most recently, rice politics. Jamie sits on a number of editorial boards for book series and journals.

E | poldjs@nus.edu.sg

**Shumeng Li** is Postdoctoral Fellow in the Food, Politics and Society Cluster at Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore. She attained her PhD in Sociology from Cornell University, New York, USA in May 2023. Her research focuses on the value chain in Chinese agriculture, food consumption and class identities, and knowledge production in agriculture. During her stay at ARI, she will work on publishing her dissertation chapters and start a new project on online food consumption. E | s.li02@nus.edu.sg