

WORKSHOP

# DIGITAL WORK, MOBILITIES AND CHANGING CITIES IN ASIA

30–31 OCTOBER 2025

HYBRID FORMAT

Online via Zoom & NUS AS8-04-04



Lee Kuan Yew  
Centre for  
Innovative Cities



More information at

<https://ari.nus.edu.sg/events/digital-work-and-mobilities/>

---

**This workshop is jointly organised and funded by the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, and the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, Singapore University of Technology and Design.**

In recent years, social science scholarship has paid increasing attention to the pertinence of digital technologies in the reorganisation of social and urban life. Such concerns have ranged from the automation of smart cities infrastructures to increased dataveillance. Elsewhere, others have pointed to the impacts of these technologies on employment, professional lives and labour migration, as machines and infrastructures take on greater responsibilities in advanced human functions such as data querying, analysis, decision-making and management. Together, these studies highlight how society, and the materialities and demographics of work are fundamentally being (re)composed by technology.

Yet, in focusing on these macro shifts, current research is less attuned to the ways in which humans individually possess agency in navigating, appropriating and deviating from 'official' and hegemonic stances of what technological change stands for. Specifically, digital mediations can open up a variety of greenfield spaces for 'work' that (young) people are co-creating and inventing alongside technology's advancements. This has in fact led to the emergence of new careers and mobility patterns that have ballooned and accelerated after the pandemic, including digital nomads; freelance service providers; gig platform workers, digital entrepreneurs; content creators on social media or simply work-from-home employees.

Each of these professions brings with it particular views of the self and future, spatial strategies and mobility wants by real-life agents who must be studied in context. Furthermore, these decisions may impact questions of migration and mobilities, engendering possibilities such as: the transnational sourcing of white-collar professionals working remotely, the creation of new kinds of digital nomads, and the transformation of permanent jobs into offshore ones. At the same time, the differential impact of digital work must also be acknowledged, with embodied labour of some migrants further entrenched, while artificial intelligence displaces the skilled. These potential configurations beg questions concerning how far digital work can go, and for whom, as well as the new social inequalities and labour displacements that it may produce.

This workshop aims to offer a nuanced perspective on the proliferation of new digital work modalities, materialities and mobilities in Asia—a region that not only has been understudied with respect to these trends, but that has also, for much of its modern history, relied on urban agglomeration and inward investment to drive economic development. The flexibility of digital work harbours a distinct potential to unravel at least a part of the relevance of this long-held model. The workshop is interested in raising some of these questions and more:

- The changing nature of work along the skills spectrum, including through situated innovations and AI-mediated practices
- Rechannelled migration streams and connectivity
- New work and leisure complementarities and flows
- Changing urban land use due to digital work
- Virtualised consumption, demand shifts, and new materialities
- Alternate conceptions of citizenship and civic participation
- Labour exploitation, logistical innovations and the politics of capital

## **WORKSHOP CONVENORS**

### **Prof Brenda S.A. YEOH**

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

### **Assoc Prof Weiqiang LIN**

Department of Geography, National University of Singapore

### **Dr Connor GRAHAM**

Asia Research Institute & Tembusu College, National University of Singapore

### **Dr Thijs WILLEMS**

Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, Singapore University of Technology and Design

### **Dr Eric KERR**

Asia Research Institute & Tembusu College, National University of Singapore

# 30 OCTOBER 2025 • THURSDAY

<b>09:45 – 10:00</b>	<b>WELCOME REMARKS</b>
	<p><b>WEIQIANG LIN</b>, National University of Singapore  <b>CONNOR GRAHAM</b>, National University of Singapore  <b>THIJS WILLEMS</b>, Singapore University of Technology and Design</p>
<b>10:00 – 11:30</b>	<b>PANEL 1 • INFRASTRUCTURE</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>ERIC KERR</b> , National University of Singapore
10:00	<p>Cognitively Enabled Urbanisms: Governing the Mind in Workplaces  <b>SIMON MARVIN</b>, University of Sheffield</p>
10:20	<p>The Labour of Standardisation in Trans-territorial Production  <b>JUNE WANG</b>, City University of Hong Kong</p>
10:40	<p>Innovation as Gentrification: Evaluating Planned Innovation Networks in Seoul's Urban Manufacturing Cluster  <b>CHAEWON AHN</b>, National University of Singapore</p>
11:00	Questions & Answers
<b>11:30 – 12:00</b>	<b>MORNING TEA</b>
<b>12:00 – 13:30</b>	<b>PANEL 2 • GOVERNANCE</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>VANESSA BANTA</b> , National University of Singapore
12:00	<p>Between Criminals and Workers: Parallels in South Korea's Digital Surveillance Mechanisms  <b>BOMI LIM</b>, Konkuk University</p>
12:20	<p>Materialising New Realities: Inclusive Virtual Mobilities through Avatar Embodiment  <b>HONGSUK YOON</b>, Konkuk University</p>
12:40	<p>Daangn as a Digital Social Infrastructure  <b>TAEHEE KIM</b>, Konkuk University</p>
13:00	Questions & Answers
<b>13:30 – 14:30</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
<b>14:30 – 16:30</b>	<b>PANEL 3 • FRICTION</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>WALKER DEPUY</b> , National University of Singapore
14:30	<p>Harnessing the Power of AI for the Public Sector  <b>MARK HO</b>, Prime Minister's Office</p>
14:50	<p>Platform Economies of Debility: Accidents and Injury Compensation in Food Delivery Work  <b>RENYI HONG</b>, National University of Singapore</p>
15:10	<p>'Small Failures' in Automation: Everyday Encounters and Tolerated Glitches in Airport Digital Infrastructures  <b>NAOMI IRENE VEENHOVEN</b>, National University of Singapore  <b>WEIQIANG LIN</b>, National University of Singapore</p>
15:30	<p>Riding into Debt: Filipino Returned Migrants and Ridesharing in Metro Manila, Philippines  <b>VANESSA BANTA</b>, National University of Singapore</p>
15:50	Questions & Answers
<b>16:30 – 17:00</b>	<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>

<b>17:00 – 18:00</b>	<b>PANEL 4 • KNOWING</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>ALLEN XIAO</b> , National University of Singapore
<i>17:00</i>	Producing the Future City through Urban Platform Work <b>CONNOR GRAHAM</b> , National University of Singapore <b>CHAEWON AHN</b> , National University of Singapore <b>FASEEHUDEEN</b> , National University of Singapore
<i>17:20</i>	Knowing With (and Without) AI: Epistemic Questions for Design and Innovation <b>THIJS WILLEMS</b> , Singapore University of Technology and Design <b>QIAN HUANG (CATHY)</b> , Singapore University of Technology and Design
<i>17:40</i>	Questions & Answers
<b>18:00</b>	<b>END OF DAY 1</b>
<b>18:15 – 20:15</b>	<b>WORKSHOP DINNER</b> (For Presenters, Chairpersons and Organisers Only)

# 31 OCTOBER 2025 • FRIDAY

<b>10:30 – 12:00</b>	<b>PANEL 5 • NOMADS</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>DYLAN BRADY</b> , National University of Singapore
10:30	Fixing Tech Talent in Place? Digital Nomads and Smart City Formation in Thailand <b>ORLANDO WOODS</b> , Singapore Management University
10:50	Community, Bromads and Digital Newbies: The Role of Social Infrastructure in Shaping the Mobility Pathways of Digital Nomads in Southeast Asia <b>PAUL GREEN</b> , The University of Melbourne
11:10	Maintaining Harmony in the Face of Change: Reflecting on the Role of Digital Work in a Sustainable Bali <b>MICHAEL TUORI</b> , Tsinghua Southeast Asia Center
11:30	Questions & Answers
<b>12:00 – 13:00</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
<b>13:00 – 14:30</b>	<b>PANEL 6 • LEADERS</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>THIJS WILLEMS</b> , Singapore University of Technology and Design
13:00	From Financial Analysts to Algorithm Stewards: Generative AI and the Reshaping of Finance Work in Singapore <b>GORDON TAN</b> , Singapore University of Technology and Design
13:20	Manufacturing Guru-ship: The Rise of Business Youtubers and Virtual Business Communities in Japan <b>SHIMPEI MIYAGAWA</b> , Temple University, Japan Campus
13:40 <i>Online</i>	The Social Life of Digital Work: AI, Legitimacy, and the Reconfiguration of Work Cultures <b>NILANJAN RAGHUNATH</b> , Singapore University of Technology and Design
14:00	Questions & Answers
<b>14:30 – 15:00</b>	<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>
<b>15:00 – 16:00</b>	<b>PANEL 7 • CREATIVES</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>CONNOR GRAHAM</b> , National University of Singapore
15:00	Parasitical Resistance and Pluriversalism: How Artistic Practice Disrupts and Reclaims AI <b>JASMIN PFEFFERKORN</b> , The University of Melbourne
15:20	Building AI Literacy through Visual Communication of Complex Concepts <b>JUAN P. HINESTROZA</b> , Cornell University
15:40	Questions & Answers
<b>16:00 – 17:00</b>	<b>CLOSING REMARKS • KEY THEME &amp; QUESTIONS, WAYS FORWARD</b>
	<b>BRENDA S.A. YEOH</b> , National University of Singapore <b>WEIQIANG LIN</b> , National University of Singapore <b>CONNOR GRAHAM</b> , National University of Singapore <b>THIJS WILLEMS</b> , Singapore University of Technology and Design <b>ERIC KERR</b> , National University of Singapore
<b>17:00</b>	<b>END OF WORKSHOP</b>

---

## Cognitively Enabled Urbanisms: Governing the Mind in Workplaces

**Simon MARVIN**

University of Sheffield

s.marvin@sheffield.ac.uk

---

Urban governance in China is undergoing a profound transformation as neurotechnologies begin to reshape city life. This paper explores what we term the cognitive turn in urban governance: a shift from the surveillance of behaviour to the modulation of mental and emotional states through brain-computer interfaces (BCIs), emotion-sensing platforms, and cognitive feedback systems. Focusing on Chinese cities such as Hangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenzhen, the paper examines how neurotechnologies are being operationalised across sectors, education, elder care, transportation, and workplace safety, to monitor attention, manage fatigue, and optimise emotional states. These developments reflect a deeper reconfiguration of urban governance in which cities become laboratories for cognitive experimentation and citizens are reconstituted as neural data subjects. The paper conceptualises these emerging systems as cognitive infrastructures configured through technopolitical assemblages that act not only on bodies and behaviours, but on neural and affective capacities. In doing so, they recast digital work as a matter of emotional compliance, attentional labour, and mental optimisation, extending platform governance into the intimate domains of thought and feeling. The paper provides a critical urban perspective on how neurotechnology redefines the boundaries of work, citizenship, and urban life in China. It highlights the risks of deepening digital inequalities and neuro-extractive regimes, while also identifying spaces of contestation and potential resistance. Ultimately, it calls for urban studies to address the governance of cognition as a key research issue for future cities.

**Simon Marvin** is an urban studies scholar and Professor Emeritus at the University of Sheffield and Honorary Professor at the University of Sydney. His work explores the intersections of infrastructure, technology, and urban governance, with recent research focusing on atmospheric politics, climate control, and cognitive urbanism. He is the co-author of *Splintering Urbanism*, *Urban Operating Systems*, and the forthcoming *Manufactured Climates*. His current research examines how emerging technologies, from neurotech to artificial intelligence, are transforming the socio-technical governance of urban environments in Asia and beyond.

---

## The Labour of Standardisation in Trans-territorial Production

**June WANG**

City University of Hong Kong

june.wang@cityu.edu.hk

---

Digitalisation has disaggregated production, enabling value creation to unfold across territories through standards that mediate compatibility, legitimacy, and exchange. This paper develops the concept of the labour of standardisation to capture the sociomaterial and geopolitical work sustaining these trans-territorial infrastructures. Drawing on Science and Technology Studies and theories of immaterial labour, it examines how standards emerge not only from formal regulation but from distributed human and technical practices that continually align people, technologies, and institutions.

Empirically, the paper analyses Transsion, a Shenzhen-based mobile phone company whose camera and AI systems are tailored to African contexts. Tracing the development of “African aesthetic standards,” it identifies how data are extracted through Kenyan repair networks, translated into algorithms in Chinese university laboratories, and legitimised through patents and policy awards within China’s innovation ecosystem. These processes reveal how African sensory and linguistic experiences are scientified and reterritorialised into Chinese circuits of value. By conceptualising standardisation as colonial infrastructure, the paper shows how digital capitalism reproduces uneven relations of extraction and authorship across “stitched sites” of production, where cooperation, adaptation, and dependency converge.

**June Wang** is Associate Professor in the Department of Public and International Affairs at City University of Hong Kong and, contributes as Visiting Professor at Gran Sasso Science Institute. Her research lies at the intersection of cultural studies and political geography. Her long-term research interest dwells on the Deleuzian (re-)territorialisation of state space, that is, how the intertwined political and economic logics put human and non-human things on the move, resulting in ceaseless re-configuration of economy and population. She has authored papers in journals such as *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *EPA*, *Geoforum*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *Planning Theory*, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Territory, Politics, Governance*, and *Urban Geography*. Her books include *EE Handbook on Urban Development in China* (Edward Elgar, 2019), *Making Cultural Cities in Asia: Mobility, Assemblage, and the Politics of Aspirational Urbanism* (Routledge, 2016).

---

## **Innovation as Gentrification: Evaluating Planned Innovation Networks in Seoul's Urban Manufacturing Cluster**

**Chaewon AHN**

National University of Singapore  
c.ahn@nus.edu.sg

---

The gentrification of industrial land displaces urban manufacturing firms from city centers. In response, manufacturing clusters are being increasingly rebranded as innovation districts that connect incumbent manufacturers with entrepreneurs and designers. This raises a critical question: Do innovation initiatives help manufacturing clusters mitigate gentrification pressures or inadvertently accelerate them?

This study examines Seoul's "Remake Sewoon" plan to evaluate city government innovation initiatives amid ongoing industrial gentrification. Using social network analysis on official reports from 2015-2019, this study maps networks designed to enhance firms' innovative capacity. The analysis identifies firms with greater betweenness centrality as having superior innovation potential through monopolized information flows bridging "structural holes". Critically, it investigates whether innovation-advantaged firms also bridge heterogeneous communities, a capacity essential for organizing against displacement.

The findings reveal that while networks expanded and diversified, they increasingly empowered incoming cultural and design businesses over incumbent manufacturers. Firms with high innovation potential connected heterogeneous industries, but this effect is stronger for firms with high eigenvector centrality occupying network cores. This pattern generates exclusive subgroups with concentrated opportunities while excluding incumbent industries. The network structure shows that emergent industries gained better access to network positions advantageous for community organizing, while incumbent manufacturers faced compounded vulnerabilities as renters with limited legal rights and costly machinery relocation burdens. The findings demonstrate that innovation programs can function as subtle gentrification mechanisms, creating exclusive networks that privilege incoming firms and isolate incumbents. This study suggests implementing innovation programs with careful attention to preventing inadvertent gentrification intensification.

**Chaewon Ahn** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture and Associate of the Science, Technology and Society Cluster in the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. She is an urban researcher who visualizes urban data and develops participatory data collection methods to better understand cities and empower their citizens. Her research focuses on the generation and use of urban knowledge in urban development in the nexus of community, politics of urban development, smart cities, and urban models. Through her work, she questions how urban data become a system of power when omission from official databases leads to displacement and erasure in urban development. Her work builds on her background in architecture, urban planning, and urban information systems, and combines ethnographic, qualitative research on data systems with hands-on experiments in sensors and data visualization methods.

---

## Between Criminals and Workers: Parallels in South Korea's Digital Surveillance Mechanisms

**Bomi LIM**

Konkuk University  
bomilim@konkuk.ac.kr

---

This study analyzes the expansion of surveillance from its origins in the criminal justice system of South Korea into broader domains of everyday life, particularly digital labor. Surveillance, once justified through the legal legitimacy of criminal law, has evolved into a normalized mode of governance that extends beyond penal control to regulate social and economic behaviors. Focusing on the institutional development of electronic monitoring systems, the study investigates how the language, technologies, and logics of control—consolidated within the criminal justice sphere—have been reproduced in the algorithmic management of platform labor. In this context, surveillance no longer functions merely as a technical or administrative apparatus but emerges as a socio-political infrastructure that defines the conditions under which digital workers live and work.

To address these transformations, the research draws on legislative materials and statistical data from the Ministry of Justice to trace the institutional expansion of electronic monitoring in South Korea. It also engages with theoretical literature on surveillance society and media systems to examine how emotional and technological mechanisms contribute to the legitimization of real-time control over platform workers. By connecting developments in criminal law to those in labor governance, the study critically interrogates how surveillance has become both more ubiquitous and more personalized—producing new forms of social inequality, institutional opacity, and power asymmetry in digital capitalism. The paper ultimately calls for a reconsideration of the normative boundaries of surveillance and highlights the potential for resistance in domains where its legitimacy is weakest.

**Bomi Lim** is Humanity Korea Research Professor at the Academy of Mobility Humanities at Konkuk University. She holds an LLM from the University of Hanover and the University of Le Havre, and a PhD in criminal law from Seoul National University. Her research began in criminal procedure, focusing on jury trials and appellate review, and has since expanded to explore the intersection of law and the humanities. She examines how legal systems reflect and shape cultural assumptions, including the exclusion and marginalization of certain subjects. Her recent publications address diverse issues such as disability rights and legal definitions (“Problems of Mobility Rights for Persons with Disabilities...”), animal mobility in public spaces (“Legal and Policy Considerations for Improving Companion Animal Access...”), and refugee policy reform in South Korea. She also explores new legal challenges posed by digital environments. In her article on avatar-to-avatar sexual assault in virtual spaces, she incorporates insights from human geography and philosophy to reconsider how criminal law should respond to nonphysical forms of violence. Her work reimagines law not only as a normative system but also as a cultural construct shaped by emotion, space, and technology, seeking more inclusive and responsive legal frameworks in contemporary society.

---

## Materialising New Realities: Inclusive Virtual Mobilities through Avatar Embodiment

**Hongsuk YOON**

Konkuk University

hongsukyoona@konkuk.ac.kr

---

This paper advances a conceptual and practical reframing of Virtual Reality (VR) for mobilities research. First, it theorises virtual mobility as a “mobility of presence”—the distributed capacity to appear, act, and be recognised—shifting attention from immersion to Virtual Embodiment (VE) as performed through avatars. Second, it argues that VR should be analysed not as an application but as a layered sociotechnical infrastructure that collectively conditions who can mobilise presence. To make this infrastructural turn, the paper applies Actor–Network Theory (ANT), relocating the “cyborg’s dilemma” from an individual user to a heterogeneous assemblage of human and non-human actors. Third, aligning to the new mobilities paradigm, it integrates VE with debates on (im)mobility foregrounding inequalities in access and agency. Empirically, the paper introduces the Korean fandom-led community of Woowakgood as an analytic probe: Social VR (e.g., VRChat) is shown to reconfigure creator–audience relations from broadcast to participatory world-building, where grassroots creativity generates multi-layered cultural infrastructures. Building on this analysis, the paper proposes the Inclusive Virtual Mobilities (IVM) framework—Accessibility, Agency, and Accountability—as coupled design-and-governance heuristics. IVM specifies how to widen entry pathways, materialise embodied agency, and institute shared norms and safeguards so that virtual mobilities equitably achievable. The contribution is that connects VE to infrastructure and translates a distinctive Korean case into design guidance for governing next-generation, participatory metaverse practices.

**Hongsuk Yoon** is Humanity Korea Research Professor at the Academy of Mobility Humanities, Konkuk University, Seoul, South Korea. His research bridges science and technology studies, emerging media, and the humanities to explore how design mediates the relationship between technology and human experience. He specialises in human-computer interaction (HCI) for inclusive design and recently completed his thematic PhD at University College Dublin’s SMARTlab at Inclusive Design Research Centre of Ireland, focusing on avatar embodiment in virtual reality for users with mobility constraints.

---

## Daangn as a Digital Social Infrastructure

**Taehee KIM**

Konkuk University  
thcomm@konkuk.ac.kr

---

In the context of the Republic of Korea, the proliferation of digital platforms has been a consequence of the global pandemic COVID 19. Consequently, a range of theoretical perspectives on digital platforms have been proposed, including platform capitalism and platform urbanism. From the perspective of platform capitalism, the phenomenon of digital platforms strengthening monopolies and creating profits and rents is examined critically. In contrast, platform urbanism emphasises the possibility of a emergent and mutual strengthening relationship between platforms and cities. However, it was also posited that the theories' limitations necessitate a re-conceptualisation of the platform as an infrastructure, as a salient feature of digital platform is their operation as an infrastructure. From the perspective of focusing on these characteristics, it is argued that digital platforms are functioning as essential and public infrastructure that enables social life. This article considers the multiple aspects of a digital platform, seeking to re-conceptualise it as a 'social infrastructure'. Eric Kleinenberg has defined social infrastructure as physical space and environment that determine how people interact and whether these interactions can develop. However, it is imperative to expand these social infrastructures to encompass not only physical spaces but also digital spaces, in consideration of the prevailing circumstances in which digital platforms are assuming a predominant role. The present article therefore aims to expand the concept of social infrastructure to the digital sphere, and further re-conceptualise digital platforms as a form of social infrastructure. In this regard, the present study will examine 'Daangn', a neighbourhood-based digital platform in Korea, demonstrating its potential as a digital social infrastructure.

**Taehee Kim** is Associate Professor at the Academy of Mobility Humanities, Konkuk University in South Korea. He earned his PhD in Philosophy from the Seoul National University. Based on the modern interpretation of phenomenology, his research focuses on the issues of mobility, infrastructure, and time-space in modern society. He is currently serving as Associate Editor of *Mobility Humanities*, Chair of the Ethics Committee of *International Journal of Diaspora and Literary Criticism*, and Vice President of the Korean Society for Phenomenology. He (co-)authored *Connections: Arts and Humanities for Just Mobility Futures* (2025); *Mobility, Humanities, and Future World* (2025); *Phenomenology, A Breakthrough to the Modern Philosophy* (2021); *A Phenomenological Reflection on Time* (2014). He also (co-)translated *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844* (2024) ; *Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung* (2024); *Dinge und Undinge* (2023); *Hegels Welt* (2023); *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (2020); *Alienation and Acceleration* (2020); *Ding und Raum* (2018). The following list comprises his major academic papers: "The Mobility Biography of Things and the Climate Emergency" (2024); "A Phenomenological Study of Islandness as a Global Sense of Place" (2024); "From Immobility to Mobility: The Korean DMZ as a Heterotopia" (2021); "How Mobility Technologies Change Our Lived Experiences: A Phenomenological Approach to the Sense of Agency in the Autonomous Vehicle" (2021); "Significance of Kinaesthesia for Mobility Humanities" (2021).

---

## Harnessing the Power of AI for the Public Sector

**Mark HO**

Prime Minister's Office  
mark\_ho@psd.gov.sg

---

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies are reshaping how we live, work and interact. As AI becomes increasingly accessible to all, organisations are adapting to this new norm and exploring its capabilities to sharpen competitiveness and unlock new sources of value. Whether it is driving greater productivity, enabling breakthrough innovations in products and services, or elevating customer and citizen experiences, AI is becoming a force for transformation.

For the public sector, this new era presents both unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges. Unlike private enterprises, public agencies must pursue innovation while safeguarding public trust and upholding the broader public interest. Striking this balance is crucial in ensuring that we are able to use AI responsibly to strengthen institutions and build a more future-ready public service which is able to deliver better outcomes for Singaporeans. This presentation provides practical insights on the public sector's approach to AI transformation across three dimensions: work, workforce, and workplace.

**Mark Ho** is currently Senior Director of Workforce Development (WD) at the Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore. With over two decades of policy and leadership experience across multiple public agencies in Education, Health, Defence, and Foreign Affairs, he brings a unique cross-sectoral perspective to advancing workforce strategy and organisational transformation. He leads initiatives that integrate workforce insights with long-term capability planning to shape a future-ready public service. In his current portfolio, WD helps drive the review and implementation of the Competency-Driven Growth framework, and promote various career development initiatives to address the changing and dynamic needs of the public service. Initiatives include the development of inclusive career ecosystems, progressive employment practices and structured career coaching and development frameworks, and advancing the public sector's adoption of emerging technologies such as AI, to ensure public officers remain relevant and productive in an evolving public service landscape.

---

## Platform Economies of Debility: Accidents and Injury Compensation in Food Delivery Work

**Renyi HONG**

National University of Singapore  
renyihong@nus.edu.sg

---

Digital platforms have created one of the most hazardous urban professions in recent decades: on-demand food delivery. This talk examines how injury in such work in Singapore is tied to an *economy of injury*—a context in which harm is experimented with, made manageable, and redirected toward profitable ends. While critical scholarship has often interpreted platform-related injury through the lens of biopolitics—especially citizenship, race, and class—this framework falls short in Singapore, where most platform workers are citizens and where injury is formally addressed through legislation, like the new Platform Workers Bill introduced late 2024.

Focusing on three objects—sentimental videos used to justify legislative reform, dashcam footage of accidents shared on social media, and the accident insurance schemes provided by platforms—I show how injury is modulated to align with economic growth. For example, videos advocating for policy change frequently frame accidents as the personal failings of workers, deflecting attention from structural issues. This influences public sentiment which tends to demean workers for causing, rather than suffering, injury, and reinforces stereotypes of deservingness amongst injury victims. Meanwhile, platforms seek to monetize injury by repurposing worker data into safety algorithms and converting workers into consumers of personalized insurance products. In this way, injury—though publicly disavowed—is incorporated into an economic logic that diverts attention from class-based harm, while continuing Singapore's longstanding approach to regulating work injury.

**Renyi Hong** is Associate Professor in the Department of Communications and New Media at the National University of Singapore. He is interested in labor and its relationships with affect, technology, and capitalism. His first monograph, *Passionate Work* explores the uses of passion as a means of generating a milieu of endurance for those left out of the good life. His monograph in development, *Work's Plasticity*, examines the biopolitical relationship between human adaptation and computational media. His works can be found in *Social Text*, *New Media & Society*, *Cultural Studies*, among others.

---

## **‘Small Failures’ in Automation: Everyday Encounters and Tolerated Glitches in Airport Digital Infrastructures**

**Naomi Irene VEENHOVEN**  
National University of Singapore  
n.i.veenhoven@u.nus.edu

**Weiqiang LIN**  
National University of Singapore  
weiqiang@nus.edu.sg

**Qi AI**  
Brunel University of London  
qi.ai@brunel.ac.uk

---

This research contributes to geographic debates on glitch politics in working with automation and other digitally enabled infrastructures. In recent years, scholars have sought to delineate how today’s technological projects, no matter how pervasive, are not immune to interruptions and attacks that could disrupt their normal operations. Yet, the preponderance of research has focused on failures that are clearly observable, if not catastrophic, missing out on a whole gamut of other more minor inconveniences that are perhaps more insignificant, and tolerated among workers. Integrating theories of digital geographies and science and technology studies, the paper examines different scenarios of what we call ‘small failures’ emerging from human-automation encounters in gradually digitalizing airport work. Drawing on 88 interviews with staff in Beijing’s Capital and Daxing Airports, we seek to understand how human bodies, skills, and feelings alter the experience of these digital infrastructures and degrade the efficacy of automation in the process. Like other more major glitches, ‘small failures’ in automation emerge from everyday situated encounters as well, but are often too diminutive to be repaired, and as a result more difficult to arrest. This paper aims to offer a more nuanced understanding of ‘glitching’ in digital work, and to contemplate the technological gaps that are daily absorbed and tolerated by contemporary workers.

**Naomi Irene Veenhoven** is a PhD candidate at the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. Drawing from anthropology and social and cultural geography, she is interested in the socio-technical entanglements of logistics and digital infrastructures. In her current research project, she looks at the ways datafication and digitalisation are (re)shaping management practices at Schiphol Airport (The Netherlands).

**Weiqiang Lin** is Associate Professor at the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. He is a cultural geographer who is interested in mobilities and infrastructures of moving. He has over twelve years of experience researching contemporary mobility issues (particularly in transport and migration). He sits on the editorial boards of *Dialogues in Human Geography*, *Digital Geography & Society*, and *Journal of Transport Geography, Mobilities, and Mobility Humanities*. He is also a section editor for *Transfers (Ideas in Motion)*. His most recent research examines labor and automation in four of Asia’s biggest international airports and extends to post-pandemic futures of work, citizenship, and mobilities.

**Qi Ai** is a senior lecturer in strategy and international business at Brunel Business School, Brunel University of London, UK. His research focuses on mergers and acquisitions, organizational legitimacy, and emerging market multinational enterprises. His work has been published in journals such as *Journal of World Business*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, *Development and Change*, *Management and Organization Review*, among others. He is a senior editor of *Management and Organization Review* and serves on the editorial boards of *Asia Pacific Journal of Management and Strategic Change*.

---

## **Riding into Debt: Filipino Returned Migrants and Ridesharing in Metro Manila, Philippines**

**Vanessa BANTA**

National University of Singapore

vl.banta@nus.edu.sg

---

In this presentation, I will explore the experiences of returned Filipino migrant workers turned rideshare (Grab) drivers in Metro Manila. In recent years, many Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who have returned to the Philippines after many years of working abroad have turned to Grab driving as another means of livelihood in the city. With the help of some savings from their work abroad, many of these drivers have been able to either purchase or secure a bank loan for an automobile. Preliminary research has shown that working for Grab and other platforms have not only provided a decent living for some returned OFWs, but it has also helped defer the prospect of future migration, enabling male migrants to stay home and be with their families. Nevertheless, several developments as of late have also put their jobs at risk. For instance, in addition to the worsening traffic conditions in the metro, competition from other platforms and the lack of transparent government regulations and protections for drivers have made it more difficult for drivers to stay on. Lastly, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to reverberate as drivers struggle to earn enough daily and pay off their car amortizations. Set against this context and building on growing literature on migrant workers in platforms (Altenreid, 2022; Lata et al., 2022; Van Doorn and Vijay, 2021) I ask the following questions: 1) How has working for Grab and other ridesharing platforms reshaped return migrants' practices within the city? 2) How has gig work such as in Grab altered male OFWs future migrant trajectories? and 3) How may looking at debt extend or build upon current understandings of migrant labor and platform work?

**Vanessa Banta** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore. She held a postdoctoral research fellow position from the University of Toronto-Scarborough and obtained her PhD in Human Geography from the University of British Columbia. Her research interests cut across issues of Philippine migration, critical development and labour. Her work has been published in journals such as *Environment and Planning A: Economy & Space*, *Antipode*, *Geoforum*, and *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*.

---

## Producing the Future City through Urban Platform Work

### Connor GRAHAM

National University of Singapore  
rctccg@nus.edu.sg

### Chaewon AHN

National University of Singapore  
c.ahn@nus.edu.sg

### Faseehudeen

National University of Singapore  
fshdeen@nus.edu.sg

---

Urban spaces are increasingly designed and imagined through bespoke urban digital models such as digital twin models, bringing particular visions of the city into being. Such models are often described as platforms (e.g. Rapette et al., 2020) or are constituted by commercial platform technology (Fields et al., 2020). This alignment with platformisation not only means that “(meta)data, algorithm, protocol, interface, and default” (van Dijck, 2018:30) and particular content and users and usage are involved, but also brings particular ways of doing business, modes of governance and ownership. Yet exactly how platformisation affects urban design remains under-investigated. This presentation accesses the black box of platform urbanism (cf. Fields et al., 2020) and attends to the practices of making and use in order to better understand their effects. It reports on the direct research method of following the code and describing the work of particular users and usage of urban models technology: the urban modellers who create them. Two contextual interviews with urban modellers discussing their work show that urban model construction is deliberate and at times creative work. Urban modeller identity formed through a migration trajectory and the data, algorithms, interfaces and defaults comprising urban models were important preconditions for the construction of a model of the city, shaping future usage scenarios, model-city relations and visions. The interviews also demonstrate that urban models are in fact bespoke, limited, deliberate and often incomplete compositions of different platform technologies operating on global, digital and increasingly private infrastructure. The data, algorithms, interfaces and defaults of these compositions are intentionally assembled by urban modellers to create viable versions of the envisioned city. Through this attention to users, usage and technology, we show how the digital urban model is both shaped by individual modeller intention and politics and a specific architecture that can ‘lock in’ particular global and local renderings and visions of the city. Given its specialist nature, such bespoke technology is not neutral but has politics (Winner, 1980): it further configures and privileges future users, modes of participation and urban governance, potentially resulting in new exclusions.

**Connor Graham** is Senior Lecturer at Tembusu College and Associate of the Science, Technology and Society Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. With a background in information systems and studies of human-machine relations, his research interests span Artificial Intelligence in society, digital infrastructure and smart cities. His research focuses on the relationship between ‘smart’ technologies, practice, knowledge and imaginations with a particular interest in expectation and future formation and effect through a people-based approach. He has published two co-authored books, ten peer-reviewed special issues and over 30 peer-reviewed articles and seven book chapters with Routledge and Springer.

**Chaewon Ahn** is Assistant Professor at the Department of Architecture and Associate of the Science, Technology and Society Cluster in the Asia Research Institute, at the National University of Singapore. She is an urban researcher who visualizes urban data and develops participatory data collection methods to better understand cities and empower their citizens. Her research focuses on the generation and use of urban knowledge in urban development in the nexus of community, politics of urban development, smart cities, and urban models. Through her work, she questions how urban data become a system of power when omission from official databases leads to displacement and erasure in urban development. Her work builds on her background in architecture, urban planning, and urban information systems, and combines ethnographic, qualitative research on data systems with hands-on experiments in sensors and data visualization methods.

**Faseehudeen** is Research Assistant in the Institute of Policy Studies at the National University of Singapore (NUS). As a researcher of Singapore, he specialise in social issues and has been contributing to projects on vulnerable populations, social policy, identity negotiation and community formation. Previously, he has contributed to projects on transnational families, digital urban futures and social media masculinity. He graduated from NUS with a Bachelor's in Social Science, majoring in sociology and philosophy.

---

## Knowing With (and Without) AI: Epistemic Questions for Design and Innovation

**Thijs WILLEMS**

Singapore University of Technology and Design  
thijs\_willems@sutd.edu.sg

**Qian HUANG (Cathy)**

Singapore University of Technology and Design  
qian\_huang@sutd.edu.sg

---

Debates about generative AI (GenAI) in education remain unsettled, oscillating between promises of efficiency and fears of dehumanisation. This paper shifts attention from GenAI as a technological artefact to its epistemic effects: how it reshapes what counts as innovation, how knowledge claims are produced and justified, and when refusal is warranted. Rather than asking whether AI merely automates or augments, we approach the problem as one of knowing with (and without) AI. We develop role-based epistemic selection (deliberately positioning AI as tool, teammate, or neither) and illustrate it with a semester-long foundation design course at SUTD. Student teams made AI's role explicit within the design thinking process and justified that choice in reflections and artefacts. Empirically, students reported expected efficiencies freeing up space for experimentation, alongside judgment-forward practices: cross-model checks, attribution of AI contributions as a team-member, and deliberate non-use during empathy-critical phases. Course scaffolds (role tagging, reflection requirements, and process-oriented assessment) made these decisions visible and discussable. We interpret these patterns as an emerging epistemic shift in design and innovation: attention moves from task execution to selecting and justifying how knowledge is produced, tested, or withheld. We argue that AI literacy is therefore best cultivated as epistemic selection and justification, not technique alone. Moreover, we suggest that, with appropriate scaffolds, the use of GenAI may support more critical and creative conceptions of design.

**Thijs Willems** is Research Fellow in the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities at the Singapore University of Technology and Design studying how AI reshapes work and learning. Trained as an organizational ethnographer, he examines digital mediation in practice across different domains such as manufacturing/engineering, trading, policymaking, and education. He traces how AI tools alter routines, expertise, and training. His research foregrounds embodied, interactional mastery and the reconfiguration of professional knowledge in AI-rich settings, informing pedagogy and workforce development. Thijs leads studies and teaches on smart urbanism's human dimensions, as well as methodology-oriented courses. He completed a PhD at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and collaborates on Singapore-focused, practice-based inquiry.

**Qian Huang (Cathy)** is Research Fellow in the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities at the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) studying how AI reshapes learning and work in higher education and early careers. Trained in engineering and education, she investigates educational technology, design education, and students' transitions into employment, using systematic reviews, design-based research, and field observation. Her recent projects include learning-from-failure interventions, workplace Gen-AI upskilling, and studies of GPT-assisted assessment and reflection. Qian earned her EdD from the University of Hong Kong in 2022. At SUTD, she partners with educators and industry to translate evidence into practical curriculum, assessment, and lifelong learning strategies.

---

## **Fixing Tech Talent in Place? Digital Nomads and Smart City Formation in Thailand**

**Orlando WOODS**

Singapore Management University

orlandowoods@smu.edu.sg

---

This paper considers how state actors attempt to harness globally mobile tech talent to promote smart city development in Thailand. By attempting to “fix” tech talent in place, a tension emerges between the desire for knowledge and skills transfer on the one hand, and the footloose nature of digital nomadic lifestyles on the other. Working through this tension, the paper considers the intersecting pulls of destination marketing, local visa and other mobility regimes, the (non-)fungibility of tech talent, and urban development pathways and imaginaries in Thailand. In doing so, it calls for more relational understandings of smart city development that recognise the city’s embeddedness within multi-layered processes of talent mobility, lifestyle engineering, and political structuring that can simultaneously open up, whilst also closing down, new pathways to smart city formation.

**Orlando Woods** is Professor of Geography and Associate Dean (Research and Postgraduate Programmes) at the College of Integrative Studies, Singapore Management University (SMU). Concurrently, he also serves as Inaugural Director of the SMU Urban Institute.

---

## **Community, Bromads and Digital Newbies: The Role of Social Infrastructure in Shaping the Mobility Pathways of Digital Nomads in Southeast Asia**

**Paul GREEN**

The University of Melbourne

pgreen@unimelb.edu.au

---

Increasing numbers of remote workers, entrepreneurs and freelancers have embraced a lifestyle of digital nomadism in recent years, combining work, leisure and hypermobile travel interests on a global scale. Based on findings of a multi-sited, longitudinal research project, I examine the role of social infrastructure in shaping and conditioning mobility pathways towards and across Southeast Asia. If an infrastructural turn in migration and mobility studies has positioned research away from mobile subjects and towards meso and macro levels of analysis, I ask how digital nomads make sense of a relationship between social infrastructure, mobility pathways and imaginings of place, on their own terms. From this ethnographic perspective, it becomes important to consider how a vague and unruly concept of community, devoid of solid grounding in actualised social relations, plays a central, discursive role in shaping mobility practices to some places in the region, yet not others. In this, we see how imaginings of community blend with and are often shaped by broader perceptions and dimensions of digital nomad infrastructure. A focus on digital nomad subjectivity, in turn, reveals an underlying tension in the notion of social infrastructure, whereby a yearning to meet like-minded individuals sits alongside recognition of difference 'within' community, in the guise of digital newbies, bromads and life coaches with no life experience. Such perceptions of difference illustrate how gendered and hierarchical dynamics of social infrastructure have the potential to both restrict mobility flows towards seemingly community-rich destinations and undermine and transform the perceived character and status over time of a digital nomad hub or hotspot.

**Paul Green** is a social anthropologist and senior lecturer in the School of Social and Political Sciences, at The University of Melbourne. During his time in Melbourne, he has been involved in two longitudinal, ethnographic research projects, based on the life experiences of international retirees and digital nomads, respectively, in and beyond Southeast Asia. His research can be found in numerous academic journals, including *Asian Studies Review*, *Ethnography*, *Medical Anthropology* and *Mobilities*. Green's research into digital nomadism has been funded by the Toyota Foundation in Japan and the subject of media focus and attention, in the form of interviews and contributions to *ABC News*, *Disrupt Radio*, *SBS The Feed* and *SBS World News*. He is currently developing and extending this research focus towards a specific life-course related concern with the life experiences and mobility practices of later-life or over 50-year-old digital nomads and remote workers.

---

## Maintaining Harmony in the Face of Change: Reflecting on the Role of Digital Work in a Sustainable Bali

**Michael TUORI**

Tsinghua Southeast Asia Center  
michael.tuori@tsea.asia

**Made Herry ERIKA**

Politeknik Internasional Bali (PIB College)  
erika.sedana@pib.ac.id

---

The post-Covid 19 era has seen a major influx of digital nomads and remote workers in Bali, creating a new dynamic at the intersection of labor and tourism, and bringing with it both new prospects and new tensions. At the same time, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a recession that hit Bali the hardest and lasted the longest due to the sudden halt in tourism activities on the island. In response, government policies and frameworks have been introduced to reinvent the island and its approach to tourism, with a focus on promoting quality tourism through green tourism and digital tourism efforts, while preserving and promoting the island's distinct cultural and religious values.

The questions posed by this presentation include: What is the role of digital nomads in the broader ecosystem and communities in Bali? To what extent does the digital nomad movement fit into this new era of Bali? Can traditional wisdoms such as Tri Hita Karana offer a framework for maintaining a harmonious environment that includes all stakeholders in the digital nomad landscape?

After briefly introducing the unique cultural and political context of Bali, I will invite reflection on what can be done to promote the sustainable advancement of technology, digital transformation, tourism, and economic growth on the island.

**Michael Tuori** is an educator and strategist specializing in city planning, urban logistics, and cross-sector innovation. As Academic Director of the Tsinghua Southeast Asia Center in Bali, he leads programs that explore the intersection of sustainable urban development, digital transformation, and inclusive governance in Southeast Asia. He holds a BA in Economics from the University of Michigan, and Masters in City Planning and Supply Chain Management from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He leads the development of interdisciplinary executive education programs on topics such as smart cities, entrepreneurship, and AI and healthcare that emphasize sustainability, happiness, and innovation. Michael has over a decade of experience in developing academic institutions in Indonesia and Southeast Asia: Including teaching, research, and curriculum development. His research and public engagements emphasize systems thinking and cross-cultural collaboration. He has been a speaker and moderator on international panels on future cities and AI, higher education, and sustainability, and has contributed to initiatives exploring digital infrastructure, green urbanism, and knowledge economies across Asia.

**Made Herry Erika** is currently Director of Partnership and Events at Politeknik Internasional Bali (PIB College), where she also lectures in the Event Management Study Program, teaching Entrepreneurship and Leadership in Event Management. She brings extensive industry experience from both the logistics and MICE sectors. Her career includes senior management roles at DHL Express and DHL Global Forwarding Indonesia, where she oversaw strategic operations in Bali, Medan, Balikpapan, and Batam, as well as national telesales and regional facilitation for Asia Pacific. Earlier in her career, she held key positions at PT Pacific World Nusantara, a leading Asia-Pacific destination management company. Beyond academia and industry, Erika has more than nineteen years of experience as a professional moderator, interpreter, and master of ceremonies at national and international events. She also hosted the English-language tourism program Balivision on TVRI Bali for twelve years. An active Rotarian, she is Past President of the Rotary Club of Bali Seminyak.

---

## From Financial Analysts to Algorithm Stewards: Generative AI and the Reshaping of Finance Work in Singapore

**Gordon TAN**

Singapore University of Technology and Design  
kuosiong\_tan@sutd.edu.sg

---

Generative artificial intelligence (GAI) is accelerating structural change in finance, raising new questions about the skills required to sustain competitiveness in an AI-augmented economy. This paper introduces the concept of the AI premium to describe the skills-based advantage of finance workers who integrate AI literacy with higher-order human capabilities such as ethical reasoning, critical judgment, and interpersonal competence. The analysis draws on two data sources: (1) a survey of 55 Singapore-based finance professionals reporting the most important skills and tasks in their daily work, and (2) the SkillsFuture national jobs-skills taxonomy, which tracks evolving competency requirements across financial roles. The findings show that while GAI substitutes for routine analytical and drafting tasks, demand is increasing for cognitive, adaptive, and relational skills, with communication, problem-solving, and ethical culture emerging as central. These results align with the theory of Skill-Biased Technological Change but extend it by identifying hybrid human–AI capabilities as a new source of value creation. The paper concludes by outlining implications for workforce development, organizational design, and policy, emphasizing the need to revalue human work in the digital transformation of finance.

**Gordon Tan** is Assistant Professor at the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Department at the Singapore University of Technology and Design. He holds a PhD in Geography and an MBA from the University at Buffalo, State University of New York. Gordon's work examines how emerging financial technologies (FinTech) and digital platforms are reshaping the nature of finance work, particularly in global financial centres like Singapore. He is especially interested in how artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and other technological innovations are changing the skills required in the finance industry, giving rise to new forms of labour and transforming economies. This includes investigating the shifting boundaries between human and machine job roles and the implications for professional mobility and inequality. In parallel, Gordon studies how FinTech tools influence everyday financial behaviours, with a focus on younger demographics. His current project explores how the design and use of FinTech apps shape the financial habits and decisions of millennials and Gen-Z consumers. Through his work, Gordon contributes to broader debates on financialisation, digital labour, and the future of expertise in an increasingly automated world.

---

## Manufacturing Guru-ship: The Rise of Business Youtubers and Virtual Business Communities in Japan

**Shimpei MIYAGAWA**

Temple University, Japan Campus  
shimpei.miyagawa@tuj.temple.edu

---

This paper explores a new form of entrepreneurial leadership made visible online: the emergence of business-oriented YouTubers in Japan whose direct-to-camera discourse contrasts sharply with previous norms of opaque CEO leadership. Departing from Japan's reserved and scripted forms of corporate communication, a new generation of entrepreneurs is using YouTube to construct public-facing CEO personas that blend professional activities with their private lives. Through a mix of candid self-disclosure and staged storytelling, this new breed of online CEOs builds narratives that invite viewers into their everyday workspaces, decision-making processes, and personal routines.

I propose that this hybrid form of leadership — what I term “*guru-ship*” — involves the calculated display of professional competences in carefully calibrated, domain-specific identities (e.g. fitness-trainer, hairstylist, mechanic) as well as a sincere cause-célébres that advances material and ethical contributions on a critical public issue facing Japan (e.g. rural isolation, sustainability, well-being). This phenomenon represents a fundamental reimagining of (digital) CEO work as an ongoing performance that combines *narrated* identities, *performative* expertise and social-ethical concerns.

Using a qualitative, multi-case analysis of seven successful Japanese entrepreneurs with significant YouTube presence, this study examines over 100+ videos across a multi-year span in diverse industries ranging from enterprise software to used cars sales. The research aims to advance the literature on entrepreneurial identities and CEO leadership by showing how online presence blurs the line between executive/administrative performance and private/citizen interests, made-for-YouTube business pitches and habitual routines ranging from beauty tips to practicing individual hobbies. It also engages with broader debates about transparency and self-promotion in a cultural context in Japan where humility and discretion have long shaped public perceptions of accepted norms of business leadership. Findings are expected to reveal how these business YouTubers manage the tension between portrayals of parasocial intimacy, assertions of professional credibility and a call for grand societal transformations.

This research offers practical insights for business professionals interested in the complexity of public-facing leadership with changing norms around themes of legitimacy, visibility and authenticity in an era of increasingly digital business environments.

**Shimpei Miyagawa** is an ethnographer specializing in Japanese craft and rural communities. During the past decade, his work has explored the cultural and economic peripheries of modern Japanese society. His current research focuses on emerging forms of entrepreneurship in Japan, particularly on how new business practices are reshaping traditional social and economic landscapes.

---

## The Social Life of Digital Work: AI, Legitimacy, and the Reconfiguration of Work Cultures

**Nilanjan RAGHUNATH**

Singapore University of Technology and Design  
nilanjan@sutd.edu.sg

---

The workplace is being transformed not merely by automation and AI, but by the deeper sociological processes through which technology mediates meaning, power, and legitimacy. Digital work today spans a wide spectrum, from platform-based gig labour to hybrid professional and creative practices in corporate and academic settings each illustrating how labour is increasingly embedded in digital infrastructures and algorithmic systems of coordination. This talk draws on insights from my book *Shaping the Futures of Work: Proactive Governance and Millennials* (McGill–Queen’s University Press, 2021) and ongoing research on *AI and Social Capital* to analyse how institutions, generations, and technologies co-produce new moral economies of work.

From a sociological standpoint, digital work is not a single phenomenon but a field of social relations that is a dynamic arena in which norms of expertise, trust, and recognition are continuously negotiated. The rise of algorithmic management, data-driven evaluation, and AI-mediated decision-making has altered the ways in which credibility and authority are constituted within organizations. These shifts reveal a broader transformation in how social capital operates: traditional markers of competence and professional standing are being replaced or augmented by digital proxies of visibility, connectivity, and responsiveness.

Generational expectations play a central role in this transformation. Millennials and Gen Z, socialized in digital ecosystems, approach work as an expression of identity and ethics rather than as a fixed occupational role. They demand purpose, transparency, and flexibility, compelling corporations, and public institutions to restructure governance systems around participatory, human-centric, and sustainable principles. Through this lens, digital work becomes both a site of tension and innovation—where technological change collides with cultural expectations and institutional inertia.

I argue that the legitimacy of contemporary organizations will increasingly depend on their ability to act as proactive shapers of work culture by balancing automation with inclusion, efficiency with empathy, and technological innovation with social responsibility. Understanding digital work, therefore, requires a sociological reframing: one that situates AI not simply as a tool of productivity, but as a *cultural and institutional actor* that redistributes power, redefines expertise, and reconfigures the moral foundations of work itself.

**Nilanjan Raghunath** (Nina) is a sociologist specializing in the future of work, organizations, and technology. She is the author of *Shaping the Futures of Work: Proactive Governance and Millennials* and a forthcoming book on AI, social capital, and power. A Fulbright Scholar at Columbia University and Visiting Fellow at Oxford, she works with industry and academia worldwide on workforce transformation, corporate responsibility, and innovation ecosystems of AI.

---

## Parasitical Resistance and Pluriversalism: How Artistic Practice Disrupts and Reclaims AI

**Jasmin PFEFFERKORN**

The University of Melbourne  
jasmin.pfefferkorn@unimelb.edu.au

---

This paper offers an account of technological reclamation and human agency by tracing connections made by artists between the wider geopolitical context and the local context. To do so, it takes a focus on artistic strategies in response to ‘artificial intelligence’ (AI) at two different, yet intersecting, scales. The first scale highlights the ways in which artists engage with AI as a geo-political phenomenon. This often occurs via the creative misuse and critical interrogation of AI, making visible the systems of dominance and exploitation that unfold alongside the technology. Aligned with the adversarial AI practice of ‘parasitical resistance’ (Salvaggio 2025), it is a way in which artists attempt to navigate making ethical art with unethical technologies. Further, this approach highlights how artists creatively misuse the commercial AI tools that are nominally designed to support creative practice – showing how hegemonic affordances of the tools’ architectural and algorithmic parameters delimits creativity. The second scale explores how artists utilise emergent machine learning (ML) technologies to engage with more localised environments and issues. This takes a situated approach, with a primary point of focus on artistic works that engage in the regions of east Asia and Oceania. It contends that artists working with and in response to AI and ML assert crucial pluriversal perspectives – perspectives that run counter to the dominant, universalising narrative of Big Tech globalisation.

**Jasmin Pfefferkorn** is Melbourne Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the School of Culture and Communication at The University of Melbourne. She is currently researching the impact of generative technologies on museums’ practice. Her research is at the intersection of critical AI and museum studies, with an emphasis on the relation between technics and culture in emerging socio-cultural milieus. She also has expertise in affect theory, assemblage systems theory, media studies, aesthetic theory, and visual culture. Jasmin is on the steering committee for the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Ethics’ Art, AI and Digital Ethics research collective, and is the co-founder and director of the research group CODED AESTHETICS. Jasmin is the author of the monograph *Museums as Assemblage* (Routledge, 2023), as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters. She recently co-edited the volume *Decentring Ethics: AI Art as Method* (Open Humanities Press, 2025).

---

## Building AI Literacy through Visual Communication of Complex Concepts

**Juan P. HINESTROZA**

Cornell University

jh433@cornell.edu

---

This talk presents a case study from the Department of Human Centered Design at Cornell University, where senior undergraduate students explored the use of generative AI to support visual communication in a team project context. Implemented in the Fall 2023, the course FSAD4660: Textiles, Apparel, and Innovation integrated platforms such as Midjourney and DALL-E to teach students how to create high-quality images illustrating advanced concepts. Traditionally, poster assignments in this course relied on team members with strong illustration skills. By introducing AI image generation, the course made visual expression more accessible, allowing all students to contribute regardless of drawing ability.

Students engaged in weekly blog reflections, a midterm presentation, and a final poster project in which they revisited and reimagined past student work using AI tools. This iterative process developed not only technical proficiency in prompting and refining AI images, but also critical awareness of the tools' limitations, such as challenges in rendering anatomy and text, and broader ethical implications on the use of AI tools.

The team project emphasized experimentation, problem-based learning, and peer exchange. Students noted that working with AI expanded their creativity, supported collaborative teamwork, and deepened their understanding of visual storytelling in scientific communication. Instructors and students also observed how rapid advances in generative AI throughout the semester enhanced the quality and relevance of the outputs.

This talk will discuss the pedagogical strategies used to implement AI tools in the curriculum, the challenges of access and tool maturity, and the potential for cross-disciplinary applications in other fields where visual communication plays a central role. By fostering AI literacy through hands-on engagement and reflection, this course prepared students to thoughtfully integrate emerging AI technologies into their future Human-Centered Design careers.

**Juan P. Hinestroza** is Rebecca Q. Morgan '60 Chair Professor in Fiber Science and Apparel Design at Cornell University. He directs the Textiles Nanotechnology Laboratory, exploring the design of advanced fibers and smart textiles through nanoscale engineering. A US Fulbright Scholar and certified Project Management Professional, he has led research across academia, industry, military, and government institutions. He holds a PhD in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering from Tulane University and a BSc in Chemical Engineering from Universidad Industrial de Santander. Before entering the academia, he worked as a process control engineer at The Dow Chemical Company. A globally recognized expert in fiber nanotechnology, he is the inventor of more than 60 international patents and has published over 115 peer-reviewed papers and multiple book chapters. His work has enabled the creation of three multimillion start-ups and has been featured in *Nature Nanotechnology*, *National Geographic*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times* among many other media. A passionate educator and advocate for inclusive STEM education, he has received numerous awards, including the NSF CAREER Award and the 2024 Cornell Teaching Innovation Award for his pioneering use of generative AI in design education.

---

## ABOUT THE ORGANISERS & CHAIRPERSONS

**Allen Xiao** is Assistant Professor of Geography at the National University of Singapore. As an urban and cultural geographer, he has been doing ethnographic research on urban lives in African megacities as well as on African diasporic lives in Asia. His research interests broadly involve how urban subjectivity is shaped at the nexus of identification processes, mobility experiences, and transnational and regional linkages. Currently, he is developing new research on urbanism that bridges Southeast Asia and Africa.

E | [allenhx@nus.edu.sg](mailto:allenhx@nus.edu.sg)

**Brenda S.A. Yeoh FBA** is Distinguished Professor at the National University of Singapore (NUS) and a member of the Migration and Mobilities Cluster in the Asia Research Institute at NUS. She was awarded the Vautrin Lud Prize for outstanding achievements in geography in 2021 for her contributions to migration and transnationalism studies. Her research interests in Asian migrations span themes including social reproduction and care migration, skilled migration and cosmopolitanism, and marriage migrants and cultural politics.

E | [geoysa@nus.edu.sg](mailto:geoysa@nus.edu.sg)

**Connor Graham** is Senior Lecturer at Tembusu College and Associate of the Science, Technology and Society Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. With a background in information systems and studies of human-machine relations, his research interests span Artificial Intelligence in society, digital infrastructure and smart cities. His research focuses on the relationship between 'smart' technologies, practice, knowledge and imaginations with a particular interest in expectation and future formation and effect through a people-based approach. He has published two co-authored books, ten peer-reviewed special issues and over 30 peer-reviewed articles and seven book chapters with Routledge and Springer.

E | [rctccg@nus.edu.sg](mailto:rctccg@nus.edu.sg)

**Dylan Brady** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore. He is a human geographer whose research examines politics and culture through the lenses of materiality, practice and infrastructure. His research examines how geopolitical abstractions like "nation" and "state" emerge through and manifest within the mundane things and banal infrastructures of everyday life. Previous projects examined rail infrastructure, health code apps, and airport interfaces in China. His current project examines the digital payment platforms in Singapore and Southeast Asia. For some, the 'frictionless' flows they enable are unexpectedly turbulent, and 'transparent' interfaces are turn out to be strikingly impermeable. This project sheds light on how these national-scale, account-to-account platforms and their emerging cross-border linkages are reshaping relations between state, space, and people.

E | [d.brady@nus.edu.sg](mailto:d.brady@nus.edu.sg)

**Eric Kerr** is Senior Lecturer and Director at Tembusu College and Research Fellow in the Science, Technology, and Society Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Having originally trained as a lawyer in Scotland (LLB, Aberdeen), Eric moved into philosophy (PhD, Edinburgh) and now writes on knowledge production in science, technology, and society. He is Editor-in-Chief of *Social Epistemology*.

E | [eric.kerr@nus.edu.sg](mailto:eric.kerr@nus.edu.sg)

**Thijs Willems** is Research Fellow in the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities at the Singapore University of Technology and Design studying how AI reshapes work and learning. Trained as an organizational ethnographer, he examines digital mediation in practice across different domains such as manufacturing/engineering, trading, policymaking, and education. He traces how AI tools alter routines, expertise, and training. His research foregrounds embodied, interactional mastery and the reconfiguration of professional knowledge in AI-rich settings, informing pedagogy and workforce development. Thijs leads studies and teaches on smart urbanism's human dimensions, as well as methodology-oriented courses. He completed a PhD at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and collaborates on Singapore-focused, practice-based inquiry.

E | [thijs\\_willems@sutd.edu.sg](mailto:thijs_willems@sutd.edu.sg)

**Vanessa Banta** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore. She held a postdoctoral research fellow position from the University of Toronto-Scarborough and obtained her PhD in Human Geography from the University of British Columbia. Her research interests cut across issues of Philippine migration, critical development and labour. Her work has been published in journals such as *Environment and Planning A: Economy & Space*, *Antipode*, *Geoforum*, and *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*.

E | vl.banta@nus.edu.sg

**Walker DePuy** is Postdoctoral Fellow in the Asian Urbanisms and Science, Technology, and Society Research Clusters at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Walker's work centres on the politics of conservation in mosaic landscapes with an emphasis on environmental governance and justice. His geographical focal regions include Indonesia and Kenya. He is currently working on an ongoing research programme with partners from Cornell University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Universitas Mulawarman, and local area communities to study Indonesia's relocation of its national capital from Jakarta to East Kalimantan through multi-sited ethnography, collaborative science, and Indigenous soundscapes.

E | wdepuy@nus.edu.sg

**Weiqiang Lin** is Associate Professor at the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. He is a cultural geographer who is interested in mobilities and infrastructures of moving. He has over twelve years of experience researching contemporary mobility issues (particularly in transport and migration). He sits on the editorial boards of *Dialogues in Human Geography*, *Digital Geography & Society*, and *Journal of Transport Geography, Mobilities, and Mobility Humanities*. He is also a section editor for *Transfers (Ideas in Motion)*. His most recent research examines labor and automation in four of Asia's biggest international airports and extends to post-pandemic futures of work, citizenship, and mobilities.

E | weiqiang@nus.edu.sg

*Secretariat*

**Ms Minghua TAY**

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

E | [minghua.tay@nus.edu.sg](mailto:minghua.tay@nus.edu.sg)