



# ARI NEWS

ARI  
ASIA RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
National University of Singapore





September 2025

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## **Director's Foreword** **Highlights & Transitions**

The past few months ARI have been a period of renewal and reflection—reminding us of the Institute's role as a hub for research collaboration and scholarly community as well as sustained research excellence.

### **Grants and Funding: Strengthening Our Research Foundations**

We were delighted to learn that Professor Tim Winter has been awarded SGD \$3.8 million by the Singapore Social Science Research Council for a project on Heritage Diplomacy. This new collaborative initiative consolidates ARI's strength in critical heritage studies and diplomacy in the region. Congratulations to Tim and the project team.

In addition, ARI has secured funding to invest in new research collaboratories this financial year. Following the Call for proposals three have been selected for funding: (i) Global Indo-Pacific; (ii) Civic Tech for Climate Action; (iii) Digital Platforms. All are very promising areas for collaborative research development.

### **Leadership Updates: Transitions and Continuity**

The ARI research community has entered a season of leadership transitions. Professor Joanne Roberts, Chair of the Management Board, left NUS in mid-2025 to join Bates College as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty. We extend our deepest thanks for her leadership and guidance as a member of the Board, especially during her tenure as Chair from July 2024. I'm happy to report that Professor Lynette Chua has been appointed as the new Chair and we look forward to her leadership and contributions in this role.

Now led by Professor Elaine Ho, the Asian Migration cluster will be renamed "Migration and Mobilities". To a large extent, the new name encapsulates what this remarkably

successful ARI cluster has already been doing in recent years under Professor Brenda Yeoh's leadership. I am confident that Elaine will be able to take the "M&M" cluster in new and exciting directions.

I am also pleased to share that Professor Vineeta Sinha from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology has been appointed to serve as Director of ARI from January 2026. My own directorship extends through to the end of 2025. Associate Professor Mairii Aung-Thwin will continue to serve as Deputy Director, though he will be on sabbatical until mid-2026.

These leadership changes reflect both the dynamism of ARI's scholarly community and a collective commitment to balancing that with careful stewardship and continuity.

### **Events and Forums: Engagement and Exchange**

Our annual [Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies](#) (16–27 June) marked its 20th year in 2025, bringing together a stellar cohort of graduate students from around the world. The forum continues to be one of ARI's most valued traditions, and I extend my thanks to the organizing committee and all those who helped mentor this year's participants.

In parallel, ARI has enjoyed a busy calendar of events, including workshops organized through our two endowed professorships:

- The [India-China Studies Workshop](#), co-hosted with the Centre on Asia and Globalisation, was convened by A/P Selina Ho and Professor Tansen Sen under the Nalanda Professorship. Two of the leading scholars who attended that workshop – Professors Max Deeg and Dorothy C. Wong – also spoke at a symposium on "[Xuanzang in History, Imagination, and Art](#)", co-organised with the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) and attended beyond capacity.
- [Connecting Imaginaries 2](#), convened by A/P Sumit K. Mandal as part of the Muhammad Alagil Professorship in Arabia Asia Studies, explored interregional networks across Arabia, Asia, and Africa within shifting national and geopolitical contexts.

### **Projects and Media: Making Research Public**

We continue to find new ways to share ARI's work with broader audiences:

- [FollowThePlastics.com](#) launched as a digital platform sharing insights from the project on Plastic Waste and Women's Household Practices in Asia and Australia. Led by Prof Brenda Yeoh and Dr Natalie Pang, the project critically examines gendered practices of environmental care across Singapore, Japan, and Australia.
- The [Asian Peace Talks podcast](#) released its 11th episode, featuring Ambassador Shivshankar Menon in conversation with Kishore Mahbubani, speaking on India's relations with the United States, China, Pakistan and ASEAN.

## In Memoriam: Remembering Professor Anthony Reid

Finally, we mark with great sadness the passing of Professor Anthony Reid (1939–2025), ARI's founding director. Professor Reid passed away in Canberra on 8 June. His pioneering work on Southeast Asian history and his vision for ARI from 2002 to 2007 continue to shape our institute's mission. Even after retiring from NUS in 2009, he remained a generous mentor and source of inspiration to many. We remember him with profound respect and gratitude.



**Tim Bunnell**  
Director

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### ARIscope

## Rethinking Labour Migration Regimes Through Embodied Experience—A Research Project Among Indonesian Migrant Workers in Taiwan



Centering migrant workers' embodied, everyday experiences reveals not only their exploitation and alienation within restrictive labour migration regimes—such as those in Taiwan—but also highlights their agency and demands a critical rethinking of how migrant labour is framed beyond sensationalist portrayals of modern slavery or trafficking. By Eva Samia Dinkelaker.

[Read More](#)

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## NUS News

### The ingredients of peacemaking in geopolitics: Insights from the Asian Peace Programme



Asian nations are becoming central to global affairs and must prioritise peace over rivalry, a theme highlighted during the launch of *Can Asians Think of Peace?*, a book co-edited by Kishore Mahbubani, Kesava Chandra Varigonda and Kristen Tang that compiles essays from the [Asian Peace Programme](#) on conflict management in Asia.

[Read More](#)

## In Conversation

### Q&A with Dr Myra Mentari Abubakar



"Movement across borders has always been at the heart of my work, not only translating between languages and cultures, but also learning to navigate different worlds."

[Read More](#)

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## Featured Event



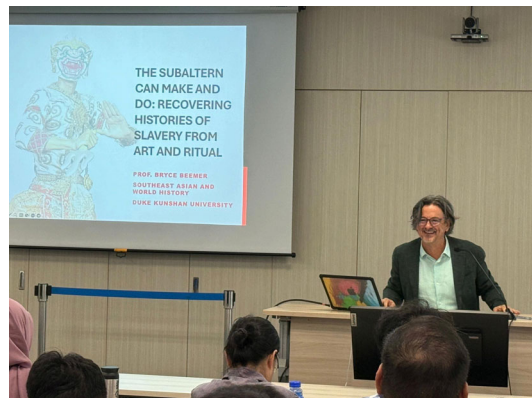
# The 20th Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies



The 20th Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies cohort.



Associate Professor Marvin Montefrio, National University of Singapore, gave the opening Keynote Address titled 'Between a Decent Meal and Debt: Negotiating Precarities and Uncertainties in the Age of Polycrisis.'



Asst. Prof Bryce Beemer from Duke Kunshan University gave the second Keynote Address titled, 'The Subaltern Can Make and Do: Recovering Histories of Slavery from Art and Ritual.'



Dr Robin Bush, Development Practitioner, gave the final Keynote Address titled 'From Area Studies to Development Practice: Reflections on a Career Bridging Research and Action in Southeast Asia.'



In his capacity as Chair of the forum, ARI Deputy Director A/P Mairii V. Aung-Thwin gave out certificates to participants at the farewell dinner.

Marking its 20th milestone session, ARI's flagship event—the Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies—was held over two weeks in June. Conceived as a training academy for PhD students across the region, the Forum aims to cultivate the next generation of Southeast Asian Studies scholars

The forum brought together a vibrant group of graduate students from around the world, offering them a valuable platform to share their research, engage in interdisciplinary dialogue, and grow as emerging scholars in the field of Southeast Asian studies.

From 25–27 June, the event opened to a broader audience for the main Graduate Forum, which featured keynote lectures by Associate Professor Marvin Montefrio (National University of Singapore), Assistant Professor Bryce Beemer (Duke Kunshan University), and Dr Robin Bush (Development Practitioner). Participants presented their work in thematically organised panels aligned with ARI's core research strengths—spanning religion, politics, economy, migration, identity, urbanism, and social change.

Through this milestone edition, ARI reaffirmed its commitment to fostering global scholarly exchange and nurturing the next generation of academic leaders in the field.

## Others

### Bulletin Board

#### 📌 Call for Papers Submission Deadlines:

- **12 September 2025** - [Exploring the Sacred: People, Place and Power in the Islamic Indian Ocean](#) (04-05 December 2025)
- **15 September 2025** - [New Dynamics in Asia's Migration Regimes: Global Labour Shortages and Rising Demand for Migrant Workers](#) (15-16 January 2026)
- **3 October 2025** - [The Future of Land in Asia: Decolonial Perspectives on Agriculture, Food Sovereignty, and Conservation](#) (23-24 April 2026)
- **24 October 2025** - [Doing Ocean Governance: Approaches in and from Singapore and Southeast Asia](#) (26-27 February 2026)

**Staff Changes:** ARI warmly welcomes [Ms Annisa Sekaringrat](#), [Dr Yannis-Adam Allouache](#), Associate Professor Francis Lim, Mr Yoga Prasetyo, Ms Emma L. Willoughby and [Dr Xiaoling Chen](#) to the institute.

We are also pleased to host Mrs Hou Yiting, Prof Elspeth Graham, Prof Francis Lim Khek Gee, and Dr Earvin Cabalquinto as visiting scholars this term.

At the same time, we bid farewell to Dr Kris Hyesoo Lee, Ms Kristel Anne Fernandez Acedera, Dr Wei Yang, Miss Franchesca Rose Morais, Miss Immanuela Asa Rahadini, Dr Connor Graham, Dr Yang Wang, Prof Gerasimos Tsourapas and Dr Hing Jian Wen as they conclude their time with us.

### Awards and Grants

- Dr Colum Graham has been awarded the 2024 [John Legge Prize](#) for his thesis 'Persisting Peasants? A Political Economy of Agrarian Transitions in Indonesia.'
- Dr Myra Mentari Abubakar has received an [ASAA Event Grant](#) for her project 'Gender and Urban Landscapes in Southeast Asia'.
- Dr Priza Marendraputra has been selected for the [Urban Studies Foundation 2025 Seminar Series Award](#) as a co-lead on the project 'Tensions in Policy Learning: Grounding Learning Practices in Urban Southeast Asia.'

### In the News

- NUS Emeritus Professor Chua Beng Huat's seminar, "[Housing and Citizenship in Postcolonial Nations: Singapore as a Paradigmatic Case](#)" featured on NUS LinkedIn
- Launch of "Can Asians Think of Peace? Essays on Managing Conflict in the Asian Century" [Lianhe Zaobao](#)
- [Mothership](#) - Commentary by George Yeo (Instagram)
- [Mothership](#) - Interview with Kishore Mahbubani (TikTok)
- ARI Associate Tom Ozden-Schilling provided commentary on critical minerals in an article entitled '[悉看大势：关键矿产抢夺战 大国博弈稀土换筹码 我国布局“无矿变有矿”](#)' in Singapore's *Lianhe Zaobao*.





Highlights from “Can Asians Think of Peace? Essays on Managing Conflict in the Asian Century” book launch.

## Connect with us!



Asia Research Institute  
AS8, 07-01  
10 Kent Ridge Crescent  
Singapore 119260  
+65 6516 3810  
[arisec@nus.edu.sg](mailto:arisec@nus.edu.sg)

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