

WORKSHOP

URBANIZATION *Beyond* THE CITY

The Making and Mobility of
Concepts from Southeast Asia

24-25 SEPTEMBER 2026

HYBRID FORMAT NUS AS8 & Online via Zoom

More details at <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/events/beyond-the-city/>



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Southeast Asia (SEA) has been, and remains, fertile ground for research that unsettles any neat dichotomy of city versus non-city, and association of urbanization only with the former. This has given rise to work on the urban beyond the city, most famously “desakota” (McGee, 1991). What other concepts, terms or ideas emerge from the region alongside (or perhaps in the shadow of) desakota? Where specifically have these terms emerged from and where (beyond as well as within the region) have they travelled to? How does Southeast Asia relate to the wider traffic in ideas around burgeoning literatures on planetary urbanization and planetary ruralization? These are the overarching questions that frame this urban/rural studies workshop on the making and mobility of concepts from Southeast Asia. Besides desakota, other longstanding concepts engaging urbanization beyond the territorial confines of the city include (but are not limited to) “agropolitan” (Friedmann and Douglass, 1978), “megapolitan” (Yunus, 2006), “mega-urban region” (Jones, 2002) and “thoroughgoing urbanization” (Jones, 1997). More recently, not only has desakota been reinvigorated and travelled intra-regionally (from Indonesia to the Philippines as “desakota 2.0” – Ortega, 2020), but “kampungkota” (Kusno, 2020) has been used to describe the dual development trajectory of “urban villages”, encompassing both long-established kampungs and those newly created through urban “commoning” mainly by the urban poor (Putri 2019). In unsettling conventional socio-spatial mappings of urban and rural, *kampungkota* is to the city and agglomerations what *desakota* has been for conceptualization of spatially extended landscapes of urbanization.

Planetary urbanization has not only revived interest in existing concepts from Southeast Asia and spurred their critical reworking but also given rise to new concepts in and beyond the region. Work on “geographies of ruralization” (Gillen et al., 2022), for example, critiques planetary urbanization theory’s conception of unidirectional flows of development towards achieving the state of being entirely urban, including by conceptualizing “extended ruralization” in SEA. A range of other work also considers the rural extending into ostensibly urban spaces, fomenting notions of an “extended agrarian question” (Batubara and Rachman, 2022). Such conceptual contributions of SEA provenance circulate amongst related concepts from elsewhere, notably “agrarian city-making” (Cowan, 2022) in India and the “urban agrarian question” (Jacobs, 2022) in South Africa.

The workshop presents scholars interested in (re)engaging urban/rural studies concepts that have emerged from SEA, mapping their mobility and uptake elsewhere [such as desakota in China (Xie et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2017)] or examining their relational reworking. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. SEA as a region of historical and ongoing efforts to conceptualize urbanization beyond the city or the rural in the city
2. How concepts derived from SEA have been taken up and developed in other regional contexts
3. Ways in which concepts from elsewhere are, in turn, drawn upon to conceptualize the urban beyond the city in SEA
4. Approaches to studying conceptualization from SEA in comparison or relation to elsewhere
5. Appraisal of conceptual resources and frontiers with respect to urbanization beyond the city, and future prospects

WORKSHOP CONVENORS

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24 SEPTEMBER 2026 • THURSDAY

09:45 – 10:00	WELCOME REMARKS TIM BUNNELL , National University of Singapore NICHOLAS A. PHELPS , The University of Melbourne BOSMAN BATUBARA , National University of Singapore
10:00 – 11:00	GUEST LECTURE <i>Chairperson</i> TIM BUNNELL , National University of Singapore 10:00 Metropolis, Agropolis, Minapolis, Rimbapolis: Settlement Mosaics for an Urbanization beyond the City STEPHEN CAIRNS , Monash University, Indonesia 10:40 Questions & Answers
11:00 – 11:30	MORNING TEA
11:30 – 13:00	PANEL 1 • KAMPUNGKOTA I <i>Chairperson</i> TIM BUNNELL , National University of Singapore 11:30 Kampungkota as Relational Care and Extended Ruralisation in Urban Singapore CHENG CHEN , National University of Singapore 11:50 Kampungkota and Tourism-Led Gentrification in Ubud, Bali I NYOMAN GEDE MAHA PUTRA , Warmadewa University 12:10 Kampungkota as Social Infrastructure: Urban Commoning, Collective Life, and the Politics of Settlement beyond the City LAUREN KULHANJIAN CONROW , University of Oxford 12:30 Questions & Answers
13:00 – 14:00	LUNCH
14:00 – 15:30	PANEL 2 • KAMPUNGKOTA II <i>Chairperson</i> NICHOLAS A. PHELPS , The University of Melbourne 14:00 In the Shadow of Malaysia's Tropical Peri-Urban Metropolis KYMBERLEY CHU , Princeton University, and Monash University Malaysia 14:20 <i>Kampungkota</i> and <i>Chengzhongcun</i> : Urban Village as Dialectical Space of Lived Hybridity JOYCE BINCHENG ZENG , National University of Singapore 14:40 Kampungkota as Uneven Urban Involution: The Case of Tambakrejo, Semarang BOSMAN BATUBARA , National University of Singapore TIM BUNNELL , National University of Singapore 15:00 Questions & Answers
15:30 – 16:00	AFTERNOON TEA
16:00 – 17:00	PANEL 3 • RURAL-URBAN <i>Chairperson</i> SIDH SINTUSINGHA , The University of Melbourne 16:00 When the Centre Remains: The Vietnamese Đình and the Disarticulation of Centrality THI THANH MAI BUI , Ton Duc Thang University 16:20 Reconciling the Rural-Urban Dichotomy with Farmer's Agency VANI SWARUPA MURALI , National University of Singapore 16:40 Questions & Answers
17:00 – 17:30	WALK TO FILM SCREENING VENUE SDE3, Level 4, Room LT427 Department of Architecture, College of Design and Engineering National University of Singapore

17:30 – 18:30	FILM SCREENING
<i>Chairperson</i>	BOSMAN BATUBARA , National University of Singapore
17:30	<i>This Will Be Something</i> by VICTORIA JANE MARSHALL and CARLOS G. GÓMEZ RONDEROS A generative multi-channel documentary combining observational video, cartography, and residents' voices, the piece reflects on how urban futures are being shaped by hybrid constellations of human and non-human forces, continually producing both intentional and accidental landscapes.
18:00	Post-Screening Presentation VICTORIA JANE MARSHALL, National University of Singapore CARLOS G. GÓMEZ RONDEROS, Filmmaker and Video Artist
18:15	Questions & Answers
18:30	END OF DAY 1
18:45 – 20:45	WORKSHOP DINNER (<i>For Presenters and Organisers Only</i>)

25 SEPTEMBER 2026 • FRIDAY

10:30 – 12:00	PANEL 4 • EXTENDED URBANIZATION
<i>Chairperson</i>	STEPHEN CAIRNS , Monash University, Indonesia
<i>10:30</i> <i>Online</i>	Relational Energy Landscapes: Renewable Energy Frontiers and Extended Urbanization in Southeast Asia NAOMI C. HANAKATA , National University of Singapore
<i>10:50</i>	From Extended Ruralization to Extended Urbanization: Unpacking Merauke's Metabolic Relations through Rural-Urban Transitions ISNU PUTRA PRATAMA , Bandung Institute of Technology
<i>11:10</i>	Extended Urbanization by Displacement: Australia's Extended Mining Landscapes NICHOLAS A. PHELPS , The University of Melbourne ANDREA ARRATIA-SOLAR , The University of Melbourne
<i>11:30</i>	Questions & Answers
12:00 – 13:00	LUNCH
13:00 – 14:30	PANEL 5 • DESAKOTA
<i>Chairperson</i>	ANDREA ARRATIA-SOLAR , The University of Melbourne
<i>13:00</i>	Beyond Desakota: Middling Landscape and the Coexistence of Kampung and Private Cities in the Hinterland of Jakarta DWIYANTI KUSUMANINGRUM , The University of Melbourne
<i>13:20</i>	In the Shadow of Desakota: Merantau as a Concept of Urbanization beyond the City IVAN HARRIS TANYAG , University of the Philippines – Diliman
<i>13:40</i>	Disciplining Bangkok's Desakota: The Superblock, Mass Transit, and the Reworking of Extended Urbanization SIDH SINTUSINGHA , The University of Melbourne
<i>14:00</i>	Questions & Answers
14:30 – 15:00	AFTERNOON TEA
15:00 – 16:30	PANEL 6 • HINTERLAND
<i>Chairperson</i>	BOSMAN BATUBARA , National University of Singapore
<i>15:00</i> <i>Online</i>	The Atmospheric Hinterland: Urbanization, Air Pollution, and Environmental Injustice in Thailand DANNY MARKS , Dublin City University
<i>15:20</i>	Singapore's Food Provisioning and its Extended Agrarian Landscapes JIAMIN HU , National University of Singapore
<i>15:40</i>	Solarizing the Hinterland: Understanding the Socio-Spatial Implications of Ground-Mounted Utility-Scale Solar Farms in Chhattisgarh, India REETU KUMARI , National University of Singapore
<i>16:00</i>	Questions & Answers
16:30 – 16:45	BREAK
16:45 – 17:15	CLOSING REMARKS ANDREA ARRATIA-SOLAR , The University of Melbourne
17:15 – 17:30	DISCUSSION BOSMAN BATUBARA , National University of Singapore TIM BUNNELL , National University of Singapore
17:30	END OF WORKSHOP

Metropolis, Agropolis, Minapolis, Rimbapolis: Settlement Mosaics for an Urbanization beyond the City

Stephen CAIRNS

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Generations of settlement practice across Southeast Asia have produced relations that urban theory has only begun to name. Urban futures everywhere depend on agrarian, marine and forest territories as much as on cities; in Southeast Asia their entanglement is especially difficult to overlook. Concepts must both interpret these relations and support anticipatory practice in design, planning, policy and the negotiation of what comes next. Taking *desakota* as a contemporary reference point, I examine how concepts change as they travel. I propose *rimbapolis* alongside metropolis, agropolis and minapolis as a deliberately uneven family.

Rimbapolis names forest as an inhabited and contested territory increasingly enrolled as a carbon store, conservation asset and source of green legitimacy. Its resistance to prospect- and ledger-based legibility is treated as an index of a spatiality known through inhabitation, movement and task. By introducing this spatiality into urban analysis, *rimbapolis* retroactively reorganises the four conditions as a settlement mosaic. The mosaic traces how metropolitan, agrarian, marine and forest conditions sustain, constrain and displace one another through flows of labour, materials, water, carbon and value, while attaching their consequences to particular territories and lives. Green grabbing is one configuration of this metabolism, not its definition.

A historical archive shows observers struggling to recognise extensive settlements embedded in vegetation and water as urban. I argue that conceptual mobility should be judged not by uptake alone but by a concept's capacity to land—to disclose relations on particular ground and be revised by the encounter. Two asymmetrical Indonesian landings test the framework. At Nusantara, a capital projected onto rainforest, *rimbapolis* exposes relations obscured by forest-city imagery and carbon accounting. In Banten, the mosaic reveals how railway reactivation and metropolitan speculation encounter sedimented station settlements, cultivation and everyday mobility. The framework asks how urbanization beyond the city might be composed without reducing cultivated land, sea and forest to the city's hinterland, scenery, externality or resource base.

Stephen Cairns is an urban designer, writer, and teacher. He is Professor at Monash Indonesia, Titular Professor at ETH Zurich, and leads the Agropolitan Territories research group at Future Cities Lab in Singapore. He has held visiting professorships at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University and National University of Singapore (NUS). He co-authored *Buildings Must Die: A Perverse View of Architecture* (MIT Press 2017), co-edited the *Future Cities Laboratory: Indicia* series (Lars Müller Press with NUS Press 2017, 2019 and 2022) and designed *Expandable House* (awarded Living Space of Asia Pacific, 2020; nominated for 'Building of the Year', 2018 and 2020 *Archdaily*; and short-listed for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 2022 cycle).

Kampungkota as Relational Care and Extended Ruralisation in Urban Singapore

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This paper reinterprets the concept of *kampungkota* beyond its spatial framing as an “urban village,” proposing instead a care-based socio-design initiative that sustains relational life within hyper-urban contexts. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with *My Community*; a Singapore-based non-profit dedicated to ground-up cultural narrative and storytelling, this paper dives into the author’s observations of their participatory heritage walks, programme designs, and co-created exhibitions as sites where urban life is emotively charged, reimagined, and reassembled collectively.

The findings reveal that *kampungkota* is reworked through three essential practices: collective care, which actively resists the alienation of capitalist and individualistic urban structures by fostering an alternative network of care; participatory storytelling, which reactivates shared histories on urban-rural reimagination; and self-representation through musealisation, through which community museums are initialised to narrate their lived stories to challenge the hegemonic top-down narrative. Through these practices, urban–rural relations are reactualised not as territorial opposites but as coexisting modes of participation, where relationality, creative agency, and neighbourhood support are reproduced within the urban.

The paper implies that the dual development trajectory of “urban villages” suggested by *kampungkota* has turned into cultural reimagination practised by initiatives such as community heritage walks, filling the void of care, both bodily and affectively, due to the compartmentalised cities. By foregrounding a collective, resistive ethic of care practices, the study intends to share insights for the discussion on the mobility of Southeast Asians, navigating contemporary urban precarity beyond its spatial understanding.

Cheng Chen is a Singaporean, fourth year PhD candidate in Cultural Studies in Asia at the School of Communication and New Media at National University of Singapore. While teaching a core undergraduate course as an instructor for design thinking at the College of Design and Engineering. His research interests overlap with design cultures, and social participation and representations. Currently, he holds an MA in Museum Studies and Curatorial Practices and a BA in Spatial Architecture. He is a community artist and designer who has worked in the design industry and actively seeks to leverage his research and apply participatory approaches to foster multipolar communities with relational care. Besides academic research, he participates in community events as an artist and facilitator, such as the Singapore Passion Art Festival and Singapore Design Week 2024. For more information, please visit www.chencheng.co.

Kampungkota and Tourism-Led Gentrification in Ubud, Bali

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Ubud has experienced rapid transformation from a predominantly agrarian and cultural village into one of Bali's major tourism destinations. The expansion of tourism facilities, accommodation, commercial spaces, and supporting infrastructure has significantly altered land use patterns and spatial organization in the area. Nevertheless, despite increasing urban functions and global tourism integration, many village-based social structures, communal practices, and elements of rural life continue to persist within Ubud's evolving landscape. This paper examines the urban transformation of Ubud through the concept of kampungkota to explore how urban and rural characteristics coexist within a tourism-driven environment. Using qualitative observation, land use analysis, and review of local planning policies, the study investigates the interaction between tourism development, land conversion, and traditional village structures in Ubud. The paper argues that Ubud represents a hybrid socio-spatial formation in which urbanization does not fully replace rurality, but instead produces layered spaces where tourism economies, cultural identity, communal governance, and remnants of agrarian practices continue to intersect. The persistence of banjar institutions, traditional spatial organization, and community-based practices alongside increasing commercialization demonstrates the continuing relevance of kampung characteristics within an urbanizing tourism landscape. By situating Ubud within broader debates on urbanization beyond the city and Southeast Asian conceptualizations such as kampungkota, this paper contributes to discussions on the mobility and relevance of concepts emerging from the region. The study highlights how tourism urbanization in Bali challenges conventional distinctions between urban and rural space and illustrates the importance of Southeast Asian perspectives in understanding contemporary urban transformation.

I Nyoman Gede Maha Putra is an academic and researcher in architecture and urban studies at Warmadewa University, Bali. He earned his PhD in Architecture and Urban Design from Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom, and holds a Master's degree in Urban Planning from Erasmus University Rotterdam. His research focuses on urban transformation, place identity, vernacular architecture, tourism urbanization, and socio-spatial dynamics in Southeast Asia, particularly in Bali. His recent works explore themes such as hybrid urbanism, traditional settlements, and the impact of globalization on local spatial identity. He has been involved in several international research projects, including studies on endangered wooden architecture, low-emission urban design in Ubud, and vernacular settlement transformation. In addition to publishing journal articles and book chapters, he frequently presents at international conferences and seminars. His academic contributions emphasize the importance of Southeast Asian perspectives in understanding contemporary urban and architectural change.

Kampungkota as Social Infrastructure: Urban Commoning, Collective Life, and the Politics of Settlement beyond the City

Lauren Kulhanjian CONROW

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This paper examines kampungkota not simply as a spatial category of urban village, but as a form of social infrastructure: a lived arrangement through which residents produce proximity, care, livelihood, mutual aid, and collective governance beyond the formal city. While dominant urban theory often treats informality as a problem of incomplete planning, deficient infrastructure, or transitional development, kampungkota invites a different question: what forms of urban life become possible when settlement is understood as a collective practice rather than merely a built form?

Drawing on debates in Southeast Asian urbanism, social infrastructure, and urban commoning, the paper argues that kampungkota unsettles conventional distinctions between urban and rural, formal and informal, planned and unplanned. Its significance lies not only in hybridity, but in the everyday social labour through which residents make land, housing, livelihood, and belonging livable under conditions of insecurity. In this sense, kampungkota names a mode of city-making that is not outside urbanization, but foundational to it: a dense fabric of reciprocal relations, adaptive infrastructures, and situated forms of collective life.

The paper further asks what happens when such practices become recognised by planning and development institutions. Recognition may bring resources, legitimacy, and protection, but it can also translate collective life into administratively legible categories: “community participation”, “upgrading”, “resilience”, or “affordability”. This process risks narrowing the political and social meanings of settlement by valuing what can be measured, scaled, or governed.

By reading kampungkota as social infrastructure, the paper contributes to broader efforts to theorise urbanization beyond the city from Southeast Asia. It suggests that the urban beyond the formal city is not merely an expanded spatial condition, but a political and relational field in which residents continually negotiate the terms of collective survival, autonomy, and belonging.

Lauren Kulhanjian Conrow is an urbanist and scholar working to mainstream communal perspectives within community development. She researches on sustainable urban development at the University of Oxford, focusing on social capital’s effect on community resilience. Her work emphasizes collective-housing, participatory design, and decolonial perspectives in spatial development.

Lauren is 2026-2027 Henry Luce Scholar, a prestigious recognition which funds her current work as Collective-Housing Fellow for Yayasan Arkom Indonesia, where she is based in Yogyakarta. Through this role, Lauren serves as a joint Housing, Land and Urban Resilience Expert, where she partners with Arkom and Her City (a UN-Habitat and Shared City Foundation jointly-managed initiative) to pilot a “Housing Her City” methodology in Indonesia. Lauren has served as project Co-Lead for the New Urban Agenda Write-shop series at UN-Habitat in Nairobi, Kenya, and as U.S. Peace Corps Community Economic Development Facilitator, co-developing a village-owned shopping center to improve rural-urban linkages.

In the Shadow of Malaysia's Tropical Peri-Urban Metropolis

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Since 2002, Malaysia has lost 3.1 million hectares of humid primary forest, making up 32% of its total tree cover loss, according to Global Forest Watch. Through juxtaposing horizontal and vertical modes of urbanism in land-use governance, this paper contests the dominant assumption in city planning that housing designs such as landed homes foster collective social life while vertical housing designs such as apartments inhibit it (Gaston Bachelard 1964, Jamie Wang 2024). Drawing upon 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork, I observed how housing security advocates in Kuala Lumpur and corporate scientists in Penang situated their local landscapes as competing cases of green connectivity management. In Kuala Lumpur, where large-scale development has already occurred, housing security advocates promote compact designs of vertical urbanism encouraging collective modes of dwelling such as mixed-use apartment complexes with urban parks and communal longhouse neighbourhoods. In contrast, Penang where redevelopment remains on the horizon, corporate-backed scientists speculate the socio-ecological damages of intensified urban sprawl (Creighton Connolly 2022). Thereby in Penang, scientists advocate preserving ideals of singular house ownership and individualized domestic spaces through horizontal urbanism planning. Participatory research designs such as canopy bridges and forest buffer zones I argue are distinct political interventions in complying with or defying the impacts of uneven development in Malaysia. Overall, this paper unsettles the dominant assumption that development operates on unidirectional logics of encompassing privatized land into affluent, urban-facing landscapes (James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta 2008).

Kymberley Chu is a PhD candidate in Anthropology at Princeton University and a visiting scholar at Monash University Malaysia. Her dissertation research has been funded by the Wenner-Gren Foundation (Gr. 11070), the Royal Anthropological Institute Emslie Horniman Fund, and Princeton High Meadows Institute. Drawing upon 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork, her dissertation project examines how the contemporary 'shock externalities' of uneven development such as land-use governance conflicts, housing insecurity, and human-primate conflict are broader reflections of Malaysia's New Economic Policy urban planning politics (1971-1991). More information about her is available at <https://anthropology.princeton.edu/people/kymberley-chu> and her Bluesky handle is @dialecticprimates.bsky.social.

Kampungkota and Chengzhongcun: **Urban Village as Dialectical Space of Lived Hybridity**

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Situated between tides of planetary urbanization (Brenner & Schmid, 2014) and ruralisation (Gillen et al., 2022) are urban-rural interfaces that remain ever-evolving, fluid, and hybrid. The “rural in the city”, or the so-called “urban village”, is precisely the interface of such kind, where the urban and rural maintain symbiotic relationship and create differentiated space of living. In Southeast Asian (SEA), the recent notion of “kampungkota” (Kusno, 2020) extends the regional concept of “desakota” landscape (McGee, 1991) into a dense, inner-city counterpart. Here, places undergo active, dialectical formations where urbanization and ruralisation occur in parallel. This socio-spatial process mirrors the dynamics in “chengzhongcun”, the “urban village” in Southern China’s mega-cities, where residents maintain, reshape, and mobilise “rural” practices, lifestyles, and social networks to navigate the hyper-urban environment in everyday lives. Despite divergent property and governance regimes, both forms share commonalities that worth to be conceptualised comparatively under a broader “rural in the city” framework.

While scholars have applied “desakota” lens to describe landscapes of rural industrialisation (or extended urbanization) in China (Xie et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2017), the “chengzhongcun” is predominantly examined through institutional and economic perspectives of property rights, urban governance, and informality. It is rarely framed from a relational urban-rural perspective, nor has it been studied comparatively with SEA cases. Recognising the potential of mutual uptake, this paper brings “kampungkota” and “chengzhongcun” into a bi-directional dialogue beyond SEA. It traces the conceptual lineages developed in both contexts, compares their structural similarities and differences, and analyses potential theoretical synergies. Moving beyond the urban-rural binary, this comparative review identifies crucial conceptual frontiers for future empirical investigations within the rapidly transforming landscapes of SEA. Ultimately, it contributes to a more balanced urban-rural theory that highlights the plural values and subjectivities of urban village as dialectical spaces of lived hybridity.

Joyce Bincheng Zeng is a PhD student in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore (NUS). Trained as an urban geographer, her research focuses on urban-rural relations and urbanization/ruralization in Southeast Asia and China. She has extensive research experience in rural studies, urban planning, and financial geography. Her previous work investigated the changing social representations of rurality in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta (PRD) cities in China. She holds a bachelor’s in urban studies and an MPhil in geography from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Prior to joining NUS, she worked as an urban planner at the Urban Planning and Design Institute of Shenzhen. Her research topic aims to situate the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone within an urban-rural framework of transformation. Her recent publications include papers in *Tropical Geography* and international conferences, and book chapters.

Kampungkota as Uneven Urban Involution: The Case of Tambakrejo, Semarang

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We propose “uneven urban involution” to advance theorization of kampungkota with respect to an urban poor settlement in Indonesia. Meaning “rural in the city”, the term kampungkota is now widely used in Indonesia, both by academics and urban-based activists, but encompasses two heuristically distinct types: (i) where an old or preexisting kampung (rural settlement) has become surrounded by the city’s spatial expansion; (ii) where typically new(er) spaces of settlement are developed through land occupation by the urban poor, usually more in the central areas of the existing city. Seeking to understand the socio-spatial dynamics of the latter type of kampungkota in particular, which geographically is located within the administrative boundaries of the city but beyond the city’s formal planning, we are inspired by a long-established concept of “urban involution” that sought to account for how the informal economy absorbs the urban poor and dampens their energy for revolution. The concept of urban involution was inspired by the thesis of “agricultural involution,” which explains “shared poverty” in a town in East Java, Indonesia. That work has been criticized for not being sensitive to agrarian unevenness, such as class differentiation. We draw on two different sources of data, fieldwork and NGOs’ documentations, and apply “uneven urban involution” to the case of Tambakrejo, Semarang – a sinking coastal city profoundly affected by sea level rise and climate change. We understand uneven-ness in three senses: first, in terms of the development of Tambakrejo as a kampungkota through processes of uneven development; second, in terms of the relationship between the *kampung* and the *kota*, where the former is subordinate to the latter; and third, in terms of internal socio-economic differentiation among kampung residents.

Bosman Batubara is Research Fellow in the Asian Urbanisms Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. His research interests are uneven and speculative relations of capitalism (and urbanization) within and beyond the city, in horizontal and vertical direction, involving human and non-human, above and below ground, and encompassing the time dimension.

Tim Bunnell is Professor of Geography at the National University of Singapore where he also leads the research cluster on Asian urbanisms within the Asia Research Institute. Since the 1990s he has examined—and sought to theorize from—social and spatial transformation in Southeast Asia, as well as interurban connections between that region and elsewhere.

When the Centre Remains: The Vietnamese Đình and the Disarticulation of Centrality

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A building can survive even as the relations that once made it central no longer hold together. This paper returns to *In Dialogue with Đình*, a research and exhibition project that I curated in 2012–13, to examine how artists gave perceptible form to changes in the spatial, sensory, ritual, and mnemonic life of the Vietnamese communal house (đình). The centrality of the đình is understood here as arising not only from architectural fabric and ritual authority but also from open ground, access, recurrent gathering, movement, and shared knowledge. Drawing on the project publication, film and photographic documentation, artworks, and my curatorial archive, the paper examines three related forms of divergence across sites in the Red River Delta and central Hanoi, and the ways artists mediated them: material survival amid spatial contraction; ritual persistence amid altered sensory and mnemonic conditions; and situations in which institutional survival itself becomes difficult to establish through publicly legible evidence. The artworks do not simply represent heritage in transition; they reveal a widening divergence between the continued presence of the đình and the weakening relations through which it had functioned as a communal centre. Nguyễn Thế Sơn's project on communal houses in Hanoi, with a particular focus on the Old Quarter, marks a limit case in which institutional survival must itself be established through acts of locating, entering, recognising, and verifying. Rather than treating these conditions simply as heritage continuity, decline, urban transformation, or spatial reconfiguration, the paper argues that capacities once brought together in a communal centre may persist while ceasing to reinforce one another. From these site-specific project materials and curatorial records, the paper develops the concept of the disarticulation of centrality. Offered as a heuristic for comparison rather than a universal explanatory model, the concept extends debates on *desakota* and the urban–rural continuum by shifting attention from heterogeneous territories to the internal differentiation of inherited institutions.

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Reconciling the Rural-Urban Dichotomy with Farmer's Agency

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While significant terminological variations persist on the definition of 'urban' and 'city', the in-between spaces between urban and rural often "have an ambivalent character". This space has since emerged as a site of in-betweenness, characterised by the friction between enduring rural livelihoods and encroaching urban futures. While different disciplines have conventionally conceptualised such transitional spaces through frameworks of 'borders', 'margins', 'frontiers', 'periphery', 'peri-urban', etc., current scholarship often inadequately captures the specific agrarian dynamics embedded within these liminal spaces. This is especially crucial as the effect of being in this in-between space is most felt by farmers practicing rural livelihoods in an area that is on the cusp of urbanity. By conceptualising these spaces as arenas of active social transformation, we gain a more nuanced understanding of why city expansions result in divergent trajectories of capital accumulation that allow some farmers to benefit from the process while others are on the cusp of being edged out.

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Relational Energy Landscapes: Renewable Energy Frontiers and Extended Urbanization in Southeast Asia

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Renewable energy transitions are often narrated as technological substitutions or extensions: fossil fuels are replaced by solar panels, wind farms, cables, batteries, and grids. Yet, they are also producing socio-spatial changes that can be understood as one way, in which urban peripheries and resource frontiers are further folded into an intensifying and expanding urban metabolism sustaining contemporary urban life. This paper develops the concept of relational energy landscapes to examine how renewable energy infrastructures materialise urbanization beyond the city.

Focusing on large solar farms in Southeast Asia, this paper discusses material manifestations, regulatory practices, and everyday encounters that are mediated within relational energy landscapes. Rather than treating these as external resource peripheries, I argue that they are constitutive elements of an extended urban condition: landscapes through which urban demand, financial power, expertise, ecological transformation, and everyday livelihoods are made interdependent.

Southeast Asia provides a particularly salient context. Singapore's energy security relies on externalised resource frontiers, while countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Laos with lower per capita energy demand but abundant land and renewable energy potential emerge as sites of large-scale solar, hydro, and wind developments. These configurations are relational rather than merely comparative: they are constituted through cross-border flows of capital, governance, labour and energy. The subsequent asymmetries raise pressing questions around resource sovereignty, territorial justice, and accountability.

Using relational energy landscapes as an analytical lens, the paper understands landscapes for renewable energy production not just as material artefacts or sites of territorial transformation, but as dynamic actors that are actively shaping and are being shaped in the processes of extended urbanization.

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Dr Hanakata earned her doctoral degree from ETH Zurich and studied at ETH Zurich, the University of Tokyo, and the London School of Economics. Her research sits at the intersection of spatial planning and critical urban studies, with a geographic emphasis on Asia. She investigates the forces and consequences of urban transitions in a planetary context, particularly socio-technical transformations and their influence on the physical fabric of cities.

Her recent work explores the expanding role of digital technologies and platformisation in urban governance, planning, and lived experience, highlighting the spatially uneven impacts of digital transformation. She also examines the socio-spatial dimensions of the energy transition, focusing on the implications of renewable energy production and decarbonisation. Central to her research are questions of resource distribution, access and control, adaptation, and systemic uncertainty—aimed at generating insights to support sustainable transitions and foster equitable urban development.

From Extended Ruralization to Extended Urbanization: Unpacking Merauke's Metabolic Relations through Rural-Urban Transitions

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Extended urbanization is conventionally traced through the appropriation of non-city natures, whether minerals, timber, water or land converted into estates and corridors. While the operationalization falls on the moment of socio-spatial appropriation, rural space enters these accounts already available for industrial activities, and the rural is thereby returned to a residual position. Drawing on the Merauke regional development trajectory in South Papua, Indonesia, this article argues that extended urbanization proceeded upon an extended ruralization. The population (trans)migration policy from Java installed an agrarian system, a repertoire of wet rice practice, and the agrarian market relations that reproduce the rural spaces, and these constituted the endowment upon which the operational landscape was afterwards built. The rural remains the historical starting point, in the sense that it supplies the conditions of operability and not the passive terrain alone. The article shows that agro-industrial urbanization depends upon rural programmes whose conditions of reproduction it simultaneously erodes, a relation the rural-urban binary cannot register. This intellectual intervention affords a more nuanced and productive account of how rural and urban processes are mutually constituted, especially in addressing the contemporary issues of agrarian change and agro-industrial restructuring within various regions.

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Extended Urbanization by Displacement: Australia's Extended Mining Landscapes

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Australia's cities are some of the most sprawling in the world. This urban extension is partly the product of the displacement of erstwhile industrialization and urbanization from mining towns and camps to metropolitan capital city regions and even beyond. In this presentation, we explore some of the dimensions, causes, examples, and consequences of this displaced urbanization. The organized retreat from the company mining town model, the growth of fly-in-fly-out arrangements, the lack of redistribution of royalties and income flows to mining towns, and mining company procurement policies all have influenced displacement processes. Examples of displaced urbanization include: main residence and additional suburban residential speculation in; relocation of institutions and economic activities to; the establishment of new techno-mediated forms of mining-related activities in Australia's metropolitan regions and beyond. The paper draws on desk-based research and on fieldwork interviews conducted in Roxby Downs, South Australia (August 2026) and Karratha and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia (April 2022- July 2023). Some of the consequences are measured in the poor condition and sustainability of remaining mining towns as well as the costs of 'distantiated' social relations (Giddens, 1990).

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Beyond Desakota: Middling Landscape and the Coexistence of Kampung and Private Cities in the Hinterland of Jakarta

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This paper aims to revisit Terry McGee's concept of the *desakota* spatial system by investigating urban processes through new town development in Tangerang, the western hinterland of Jakarta, the largest city in Southeast Asia. In contemporary urban Indonesia, 'urbanization beyond the city' can be seen in private-led large-scale new town development that encroaches on agricultural areas and rural settlements, such as found in Tangerang. The *desakota* landscape is now no longer a co-existence of wet-rice agriculture and manufacture as captured by McGee, but a co-existence of urban spectacles built by the private developers and the *kampung*. The private city-making process has disrupted and triggered transformation of *kampung* socio-spatial system on the pre-existing rural landscape. By using historical geography as approach, this paper will reconstruct past geographies to understand how Tangerang has gradually urbanised, resulting in a new urban system characterised by the coexistence of *kampung* and private cities. This study uses multitemporal GIS analysis, in-depth interviews, archival analysis, field and digital observations to investigate urban processes in the middling landscape, the in-between city and countryside, which is now highly connected to the contemporary global urban economy. The existence of gentrifying urban forms such as world-class universities, golf courses, hospitals, and ubiquitous consumption places highlights the urbanising landscape of Tangerang which polarise pre-existing centralities and collective sense of place of the *kampung* dwellers. The *kampung* dwellers now call their hometown '*desa rasa kota*', or a village that feels like a city. This study calls for new conceptualisation of the unprecedented scale, connectivity, and morphology of contemporary urban processes in the contemporary *desakota*. It highlights the limit of *desakota* framework and argues that the hinterlands in 21st century Southeast Asia have become the new frontier of a globalised urban system.

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In the Shadow of Desakota: Merantau as a Concept of Urbanization beyond the City

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The conceptual vocabulary of ‘urbanization beyond the city’ in Southeast Asia has developed through two main traditions. The first tradition is spatial. It examines how urban and rural forms coexist within the same landscape. Concepts such as *desakota*, *kampungkota*, and the mega-urban region developed from this approach. The second comes from agrarian political economy. It examines how ruralization, agrarian restructuring, and capitalist expansion connect urban growth to transformations in the countryside. Although both traditions challenge the idea of the city as a bounded territorial unit, they offer limited language for explaining how urban and rural places remain connected across a person’s life. Within this debate, the paper introduces *merantau* as a trajectory-centred concept. In its Minangkabau context, *merantau* describes a socially recognized departure from home through which work, learning, and social standing acquired elsewhere remain connected to obligations in the *nagari* or *kampung asal*. Urban labour and village reproduction therefore form part of the same distributed process. The paper reconstructs *merantau* as a middle-range concept whose analytical value comes from historically specific social relations. It then explains why *merantau* remained largely an ethnographic object while *desakota* gained wider influence in international urban theory, showing how planning and urban research have favoured concepts that can be represented through zones, landscapes, and administrative categories. Building on this argument, the paper develops a *merantau* circuit of distributed urbanization that connects life-course analysis with translocal householding, social reproduction, and agrarian political economy. Its comparative reach is examined through *quê hương* attachments in Vietnam, remittance-based village reproduction in the Philippines, *laojia* and *hukou*-mediated mobility in China, and urban-rural relations in sub-Saharan Africa. These comparisons identify the institutional conditions under which the concept can travel without losing its specificity. In dialogue with planetary urbanization and planetary ruralization, the paper argues that apparent rural persistence may result from the continuing reproduction of village life through urban labour. *Merantau* therefore complements *desakota* by shifting the unit of analysis from a hybrid spatial formation to a life organized across places, while treating the village as an active outcome of urbanization.

Ivan Harris Tanyag is a graduate researcher at the School of Urban and Regional Planning, University of the Philippines Diliman. He currently serves as Transportation Development Officer at the Department of Transportation (Philippines), where he leads the Subic-Clark-Manila-Batangas Freight Railway Project. He has previously worked as a policy consultant for the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities on the implementation of tactical urbanism in Metro Manila, in collaboration with the local governments of Quezon City and Pasig City. His published work includes chapters in *Socioeconomic Impacts of High-Speed Rail Systems* (Springer Nature, forthcoming 2026) and *The Routledge Handbook of Anti-Corruption Research and Practice* (Routledge, 2025). His research interests span urban planning, transportation economics, spatial analysis, and the built and natural environment.

Disciplining Bangkok's Desakota: The Superblock, Mass Transit, and the Reworking of Extended Urbanization

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The May 16 fatal collision between a Laem Chabang freight train and a public bus at Bangkok's congested Asoke crossing, alongside subsequent administrative impulses to restrict on-grade urban rail access, exposed profound socio-spatial frictions. This immediate policy response disproportionately penalises the peri-urban poor who rely on subsidised commuter trains from Chachoengsao Province to transport agricultural produce into central markets such as at Makkasan station.

In effect, this tragic incident represents a structural collision between the automobile-centric city and the desakota landscape that parallel and intersect one another. While the historic rail network is earmarked for modernisation through level separation, such state-led interventions risk further alienating rural-urban commuters from the urban core.

To redress the externalities of this car-city, planning authorities are deploying an extensive mass-transit network. This multi-scalar infrastructure aims to enforce a model of "decentralised-concentration", attempting to consolidate extended urbanization into nodes utilising Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs) and land readjustment instruments. The State Railway of Thailand (SRT) Eastern Line corridor—stretching through the expansive outer superblocks of Lat Krabang toward Chachoengsao—serves as the primary case study where these networks intersect the suburban fringe. However, this transition is structurally contested; while the state seeks to re-engineer regional morphology, the exurban fabric simultaneously reproduces older patterns of market-driven sprawl along expanding road corridors and wriggling, dead-end soi interiors. Ultimately, this paper contextualises these dynamics within Bangkok's long-term morphogenetic transition from a water-based deltaic city to a land-based territory. Tracing these emerging rail nodes allows infrastructure to be conceptualized beyond a mobility tool, to operate as a renewed mechanism of spatial discipline restructuring the contemporary desakota.

This paper revisits Bangkok's structural evolution to critique contemporary shifts in planetary urbanization and extended ruralisation, asking: what follows the desakota and the superblock?

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The Atmospheric Hinterland: Urbanization, Air Pollution, and Environmental Injustice in Thailand

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Debates on urbanization beyond the city in Southeast Asia have centred on the blurring of urban and rural boundaries from *desakota* (McGee, 1991) to extended ruralisation (Gillen et al., 2022). This paper proposes the concept of the atmospheric hinterland to capture a neglected dimension of urbanization: air pollution linking sites of agrarian and industrial production, energy generation, and urban consumption through flows of particulate matter that constitute urban atmospheric experience while defying jurisdictional and conceptual containment. Extending earlier work on transboundary air pollution governance in Thailand (Marks and Miller, 2022), this paper examines the urbanization processes which produce atmospheric hinterlands. Drawing on political ecology and environmental justice, the volumetric turn in human geography, and interviews conducted from 2020-2025, the paper develops this concept through three cases. First, the Mae Moh coal plant in Lampang Province, built to power Thailand's urbanization and industrial growth, generates pollution reaching Chiang Mai while communities in Lampang suffer the most. Second, maize and sugarcane supply chains in northern and central Thailand, which extend to Laos and Myanmar, produce seasonal burning whose haze affects Bangkok and northern cities. Upland farmers and communities bear these health costs the most while urban-based corporations and consumers reap the benefits. Third, industrial estates in the Extended Bangkok Metropolitan Region, geared mostly toward export markets, produce pollutants disproportionately burden factory workers while the benefits are reaped by corporations and overseas consumers. In all three cases, the atmospheric hinterland is a zone of environmental injustice where marginalised rural populations suffer the health consequences of urbanization processes from which they are largely excluded. This concept contributes to urban and rural studies from Southeast Asia by treating the atmospheric as a volumetric dimension of urbanization which existing frameworks have yet to adequately theorise.

Danny Marks is Assistant Professor in the School of Law and Government at Dublin City University, Ireland, where he specialises in environmental politics and governance in Southeast Asia. His research focuses on air pollution, flood governance, and environmental justice in Thailand and the wider region, with particular attention to the political economy of agrarian change and its atmospheric consequences. He has published on transboundary air pollution governance in Thailand, Bangkok's traffic congestion and vehicular emissions, and the maize supply chains driving seasonal haze in northern Thailand and Laos. He is an advisor to the Thai Clean Air Network and has contributed policy-relevant research to civil society campaigns for clean air legislation in Thailand. He is also IPCC AR7 Lead Author. His fieldwork is based primarily in Thailand, with comparative research across mainland Southeast Asia.

Singapore's Food Provisioning and its Extended Agrarian Landscapes

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With limited land and agricultural capacity, Singapore depends heavily on food imports while continuing to support local production as part of its food-security strategy. Food provisioning therefore connects Singapore not only to its remaining agricultural areas but also to farming and distribution networks across the border in Malaysia. This paper asks how these provisioning practices contribute to shaping differentiated agrarian landscapes across Singapore and Johor. It examines Singapore's food-security strategies, cross-border planning agendas with Malaysia, and the infrastructures and actors involved in vegetable production and distribution. Agrarian landscapes are understood here not simply as places where food is grown, but as territories shaped by policies, technologies, infrastructure, environmental conditions, and everyday practices. The paper adopts multi-sited and multi-scale approaches, drawing on academic literature, government documents, newspaper reports, and fieldwork. It shows that Singapore's local agrarian landscape is increasingly organised around technological farming, productivity, and resilience, while Johor's agricultural landscape is selectively connected to Singapore through farms, wholesale centres, logistics networks, and emerging investment. These findings suggest that vegetable provisioning produces different forms of connection and dependency across local and regional landscapes, revealing differentiated centre-periphery relations between Singapore and Malaysia.

Jiamin Hu is a PhD candidate in the Department of Architecture at the National University of Singapore, where she began her doctoral studies in 2024. She holds a Master's degree in Landscape Urbanism from the Architectural Association School of Architecture in the United Kingdom and a Bachelor's degree in Landscape Gardening from Beijing Forestry University. Her research interests include planetary urbanization, centre-periphery relations, agrarian landscapes, and food provisioning with a focus on Singapore.

Solarizing the Hinterland: Understanding the Socio-Spatial Implications of Ground-Mounted Utility-Scale Solar Farms in Chhattisgarh, India

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The rapid expansion of Ground-Mounted Utility-Scale Solar Farm (GMUSSF) across India is reshaping hinterlands through new forms of land transformation, infrastructural integration, and territorial governance. Rather than functioning as isolated technical installations, these infrastructures reorganise socio-spatial relations by transforming land-use patterns, livelihoods, ecological interactions, and governance arrangements in response to energy demands, state incentives, and private capital. Intersecting with farmlands, village settlements, industrial zones, and wastelands, GMUSSFs generate uneven socio-environmental outcomes. In this context, my research examines how socio-spatial transformations are produced through GMUSSF development in Chhattisgarh, India, and explores their broader implications.

I explore how the urgency surrounding climate mitigation and Renewable Energy (RE) targets has accelerated large-scale solar deployment through policy support and market incentives. While framed as sustainable and green, these mechanisms simultaneously facilitate capital accumulation and market expansion. Peripheral landscapes are increasingly operationalised as energy-producing territories, often marginalising existing land relations, agrarian livelihoods, ecological conditions, and everyday social practices. Consequently, it risks reproducing uneven development and new forms of socio-spatial inequality under the legitimising framework of sustainability.

Drawing on theories of socio-spatial dialectics, planetary urbanization, extended urbanization, and the political ecology of infrastructure, the study conceptualises solar farms as socio-spatial assemblages embedded within broader processes of capitalist development and infrastructural expansion. Focusing on the industry-heavy regional market and governance dynamic of Chhattisgarh, I interrogate an industrial captive-use GMUSSF in the Rajnandgaon district. The research adopts a mixed-methods framework integrating qualitative interviews, policy analysis, GIS, remote sensing, and spatial analysis to examine institutional processes, land transformations, and lived experiences.

Preliminary findings indicate disjunctions between national RE ambitions, state-level governance frameworks, and local socio-spatial realities. GMUSSF expansion appears to unfold through market-mediated agricultural land conversion, fragmented spatial regulation, and uneven territorial incorporation, wherein peripheral hinterlands are increasingly reorganised to sustain distant industrial energy demands, suggesting an extended urbanization.

Reetu Kumari is a PhD student in the Department of Architecture at the National University of Singapore, focusing on spatial, social, and environmental implications of energy transition in India. With a background in architecture and urban planning, she effectively integrates the built environment and landscape systems to examine how energy infrastructures reshape vulnerable communities and ecologies. She has four years of professional experience in research and physical land use planning, which provides a strong foundation for understanding the intersections of development, displacement, and environmental change. Her passion for sustainable and inclusive planning remains at the heart of her academic work. Her research interests include energy transition, socio-spatial transformations, planetary urbanization, and extended urbanization in the fulcrum of urgency and sustainability.

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Carlos G. Gómez Ronderos is a filmmaker from Bogotá, Colombia, with extensive experience in documentary projects and participatory methodologies. After studying film and video at Columbia College Chicago, he has collaborated on productions shown at festivals and international broadcasters, including the Berlinale, ImagineNATIVE, IDFA, NHK, ARTE, ZDF, Sundance Channel, and Al Jazeera. He has led video and photography workshops in Chicago, New York, and Havana, as well as in rural communities in Ecuador, Nepal, and India, among others. He is the founder and director of Cineminga, a community-based filmmaking organization dedicated to bringing cinema closer to local communities and projecting their peoples' vision to the world.

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