

Annual Report
2025



Contents

1.0 VISION AND MISSION	04	Science, Technology and Society Project — Carbon Governance in Southeast Asia (CGSEA)
2.0 MANAGEMENT	06	Asian Peace Programme Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship in Arabia Asia Studies
Message from Chair of International Advisory Board		
Message from Chair of Management Board		
Director's Foreword		
International Advisory Board		
Management Board		
Steering Committee		
Administrative Staff		
3.0 ARI COMMITTEES	14	
4.0 RESEARCH PERSONNEL	16	
Director		
Deputy Director		
Research Leaders		
(Senior) Research Fellows		
Postdoctoral Fellows		
Other Joint Appointments		
Research Associates/Assistants		
Muhammad Alagil Chair in Arabia Asia Studies		
Distinguished Fellow		
NUS Fellow		
Visiting Senior Research Fellow		
5.0 RESEARCH PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES	24	
Asian Urbanisms		
Project — Capitals of the Future: Place, Power, and Possibility in Southeast Asia		
Food Politics and Society		
Inter-Asia Engagements		
Migration and Mobilities		
Project — SG-LEADS-CCF & XFAM		
Religion and Globalisation		
6.0 EVENTS	48	
Conferences and Workshops		
ARI Seminar Series		
Lectures		
7.0 COMMUNITY OUTREACH	68	
Media Coverage		
Digital and Social Connectivity		
ARIscope		
ARINews		
8.0 GRANTS AND PROJECTS	72	
9.0 PUBLICATIONS	74	
Books and Journal Special Issues		
Asian Population Studies		
Articles and Book Chapters		
10.0 ARI RECOGNITION	84	
Awards and Honours		
Keynotes and Plenaries		
11.0 SUPPORT FOR UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDIES	88	
Graduate and Other Teaching at NUS		
20th Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies		
Asian Graduate Fellows 2025		
12.0 EXTERNAL RELATIONS	96	
External Funding for Conferences & Workshops		



ARI's logo depicts rice grains in star-like formation. Rice has been the main staple food for many of Asia's peoples since the 4th century BCE. It forms the basis of communal bonds, an element of ritual in many Asian societies, and a common cultural thread across nations and societies. Rice cultivation, as one of the major agricultural activities in Asia, has implications for population, sustainability and ecology. In symbolic as well as material ways, rice touches upon many of the key socio-economic and cultural issues in Asia, and is a fitting emblem of the Asia Research Institute.



1.0 Vision and Mission

Vision

To be a world-leading hub for Asia-centred academic research

Mission

To support ambitious, scholarly research that advances understanding of Asia and its place in the world



2.0 Management

Message from Chair of International Advisory Board



PROFESSOR TAN TAI YONG
Chair
International Advisory Board

The International Advisory Board is very pleased to note that some of our recommendations from the 2024 report materialised fully in 2025 and were carried out with great success. In particular, the idea of Collaboratories, a flexible, integrative platform for incubating early-stage projects and partnerships in the study of Asia, offered a structured yet open mechanism for emerging research agendas, exploratory partnerships, and prospective institutional engagements to be tested and refined. Three such Collaboratories were awarded, with additional funding provided by NUS. The Global Indo-Pacific: Connecting Histories and Futures Collaboratory, led by James Sidaway and Tim Winter, built on a new grant from the Max Weber Foundation supporting a three-year, multi-institutional collaboration of the same name. Bringing together leading research institutes across Tokyo, London, Paris, Washington, Delhi, and Berlin, in partnership with ARI, the project runs from mid-2025 to mid-2027 with funding of just under €300,000.

The Digital Asia collaboratory, led by Naomi Hanakata, explores how digital platforms reshape urban space, governance, and citizenship across Asia. Bringing together an international team of scholars, the collaboratory examines the material and spatial implications of platform infrastructures—from data centres and distribution networks to everyday practices of platform use. Lastly, the Southeast Asia Civic Technology for Climate Action collaboratory, led by Chaewon Ahn and Jeff Hou, focuses on civic technology applications in Southeast Asian cities to understand how globally shared technology standards, such as DIY sensors, open-source software, and hacker cultures, can engage with diverse forms of political realities in these cities.

The idea of an externally funded Collaboratory is supported by the Henry Luce Foundation which funds the ARI–Luce Southeast Asian Studies Collaboratory, an intensive residential programme designed to support early-career scholars working on Southeast Asia. Building on ARI’s more than two decades of leadership in graduate and early-career training—most notably through the Asian Graduate Student Fellowship and the Singapore Graduate Forum—the Collaboratory responds to a critical developmental gap in the immediate post-PhD years. It provides protected writing time, structured mentorship, and sustained regional and international engagement at a formative stage of scholarly careers.

Finally, the Board wishes to thank Prof Tim Bunnell for successfully leading the Institute over the past six and a half years. His vision and dedication to expanding the grant appetite at ARI are commendable and have contributed greatly to another impactful year. The Board extends a warm welcome to Prof Vineeta Sinha, who will lead the Institute from January 2026 onward.

Message from Chair of Management Board



PROFESSOR LYNETTE J. CHUA
JERNAL SINGH KHOSA PROFESSOR
Chair
Management Board

I chaired my first Management Board meeting three months after stepping into the role, taking over from Prof Joanne Roberts in September 2025. Together with the Board members, I want to acknowledge and thank Joanne for her valuable contributions during her tenure as Chair, especially for making the leadership transition smooth and seamless.

ARI will welcome Prof Vineeta Sinha as the next Director in January 2026. No stranger to ARI, she has served on the Management Board since 2016. The Board is excited to be part of new initiatives at ARI and fully supports the direction and vision that Vineeta has outlined. At the same time, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to Prof Tim Bunnell, who served as the Director from 2019 to 2025. I am happy to see Tim remain the cluster leader of the Asian Urbanisms cluster and continue his work in mentoring and partnering with the next generation of scholars at ARI.

The Board was delighted with the outcomes of the two light-touch cluster reviews conducted in August and November. The Inter-Asia Engagements cluster, led by Tim Winter, showed how they have further expanded the range of historical and contemporary research connections over the years, while the Science, Technology and Society cluster, led by Jiat Hwee Chang, highlighted timely efforts to focus research themes at the intersections of STS and the environment.

Overall, 2025 was another successful year at ARI, marked by numerous workshops, conferences, and seminars. The output from these events have been translated into joint publications, grant applications, and meaningful collaborations. The Board and I look forward to celebrating ARI's 25th anniversary in 2026 with exceptional events that bring like-minded researchers together to work on cutting-edge topics in the social sciences and humanities, as well as to foster interdisciplinary research collaborations at ARI.

Director's Foreword



PROFESSOR TIM BUNNELL
Director
Asia Research Institute

It is notoriously difficult to encapsulate institutional performance within any neatly bounded 12-month timespan. Many of the accomplishments documented in this annual report began life in research and writing that commenced well before 2025; and many of the investments of energy and time made over the course of the year will only pay dividends in years to come. Nonetheless, the pages that follow show not only that ARI continues to be a very productive scholarly milieu—it has impressive inherited momentum building upon established strengths—but also that changes have been put in place for institutional renewal and for breaking new research ground in the future. My thanks to everyone who has contributed to this balance of continuity and change during 2025—administrative staff as well as academic colleagues, members of the Management Board and International Advisory Board.

In terms of continued success with respect to publication outputs, in 2025 ARI research staff published 2 authored books, 75 journal articles, 17 book chapters, 3 journal special issues/sections and 3 edited books. Beyond formal academic publication outputs, ARI continued to engage a much wider set of stakeholders and publics through the internet and social media as well as via more conventional media outlets including *Channel NewsAsia*, *Lianhe Zaobao* and *Sin Chew Daily*. *ARIscope*, the internet-based platform that showcases ongoing research at the Institute, featured 14 new contributions in 2025 with more than 10,000 active readers.

As far as the regular schedule of scholarly research events was concerned, ARI organised 20 international conferences/workshops during the course of 2025, involving some 2,200 attendees, as well as five special lectures and 39 seminars with more than 2,900 attendees in total. Mid-year, the Institute also once again hosted the Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies. The 20th iteration of this annual flagship regional capacity building initiative was held in a new format involving 49 graduate students from 14 Asian countries over two weeks. The first two weeks, one online and the other in person, focused on methodology masterclasses and skills-based sessions tailored to the needs of early career scholars, followed by three days of student presentations.

Among the special lectures organised by ARI in 2025 were several notable public-facing events. Those included lectures held at the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) under both the Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship in Arabia Asia Studies and the new Nalanda Professorship in India-China Studies. The latter is

an endowed professorship launched in April with the mission of promoting research and education on political, economic, historical and cultural interactions between India and China. This was made possible through a SGD 3 million gift from the Nalanda Library Fund Limited (NLFL) presented to ARI by former Foreign Minister Mr George Yeo in his capacity as NLFL Trustee.

If the Nalanda Professorship covers the endowments component of what I have termed a “Projects, Endowments and Partnerships” (or PEP) approach to external funding efforts, there are successes to report on research projects and partnerships too. Particularly noteworthy with respect to future research projects is a strand of work that Tim Winter has initiated on Heritage Diplomacy, which was awarded SGD 3.8 million by the Singapore Social Science Research Council. Meanwhile, with respect to international partnership arrangements, from July 2025 ARI began to host a Max Weber Foundation-funded research node on the “[Global Indo-Pacific: Connecting Histories and Futures](#)”. Building on an existing collaboration with the German Institute of Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo), the new three-year partnership places ARI in a research network also including, [GHI London](#), [MWF Delhi](#), [GHI Paris](#), [GHI Washington](#) and the [Institute for Asian and African Studies](#) (IAAW) at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Also in the realm of significant new research funding—a mixture of “project” and “partnership”—2025 saw the launch of a “Southeast Asian Studies Next Generation Postdoctoral Collaboratory” with funding from the US-based Henry Luce Foundation. Led by Maitrii Aung-Thwin, the Collaboratory will centre around a summer academy, career showcase and networking summit for early career researchers and senior scholars from Southeast Asia and North America.

Inevitably, as some projects, partnerships and other new research ventures were initiated in 2025, others were completed or wound down. That includes the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics (ISAC) which ARI has hosted since summer 2021. Under the leadership of Michel Chambon during that time, ISAC organised 11 workshops, 18 online roundtables, four podcast series, and established a book series, among many other achievements.

2025 also saw changes in Institute governance and leadership at various levels. Prof Joanne Roberts, Chair of the Management Board from July 2024 left NUS in mid-2025 to join Bates College as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, and Prof Lynette Chua took over as the new Chair. My thanks to both Joanne and Lynette for their support and wise counsel.

At the research cluster level, Asian Migration saw both a name change and a leadership change. This longstanding cluster, which has been remarkably productive and become internationally preeminent under the leadership of Brenda Yeoh, was renamed “Migration and Mobilities”, with Elaine Ho as its new leader. The new name encapsulates what the cluster has already been doing in recent years and I am confident that Elaine will take it in new directions while building on established strengths, reputation and networks.

Finally, 2025 saw the appointment of Vineeta Sinha from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology to serve as ARI Director from January 2026. I will continue to head the Institute’s Asian Urbanisms cluster and look forward to supporting Vineeta and Maitrii Aung-Thwin (who will continue as Deputy Director) as they lead ARI into an exciting new phase of development.

International Advisory Board

CHAIR

Prof Tan Tai Yong
President, Singapore University of Social Sciences

EX OFFICIO

Prof Tim Bunnell
Director, Asia Research Institute, NUS

BOARD MEMBERS

Prof Sunil Amrith
Renu and Anand Dhawan Professor of History, Yale University

Prof Jin Sato
Professor, Department of Pioneering Asian Studies
Institute for Advance Studies on Asia

Prof Kellee Sing Tsai
Dean, College of Social Sciences and Humanities
Northeastern University

Prof Steven Vertovec
Director, Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

Prof Yeoh Chee Yan
Chair, National Heritage Board

Management Board

CHAIR

Prof Lynette J. Chua FROM 1 SEP 2025
Jernal Singh Khosa Professor and Vice Dean (Research)
Faculty of Law, NUS

Prof Joanne Roberts UNTIL 30 JUN 2025
President, Yale-NUS College

EX OFFICIO

Prof Tim Bunnell
Director, Asia Research Institute, NUS

BOARD MEMBERS

Prof Noah Lim
Director, Global Asia Institute, NUS &
Provost’s Chair Professor, NUS Business School

Prof Vineeta Sinha
Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
NUS

Prof Tan Puay Kok
Dean’s Chair Professor,
Department of Architecture, NUS

Prof Teo Hock Hai
Director, Humanities and Social Sciences Research,
Office of the Deputy President
(Research and Technology), NUS

Prof Audrey Yue
Professor, Department of Communications
and New Media, NUS

Steering Committee

DIRECTOR

Prof Tim Bunnell

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Assoc Prof Maitrii Aung-Thwin

CLUSTER LEADERS

Prof Tim Bunnell
Asian Urbanisms Cluster

Assoc Prof Jiat Hwee Chang
Science, Technology and Society Cluster

Assoc Prof Jamie Davidson
Food Politics and Society Cluster

Prof Kenneth Dean
Religion and Globalisation Cluster

Prof Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho FROM 1 JUL 2025
Migration and Mobilities Cluster

Prof Tim Winter
Inter-Asia Engagements Cluster

Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh FBA UNTIL 30 JUN 2025
Asian Migration Cluster

RESEARCH FELLOW

Dr Kang Yu

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW

Dr Colum Graham

SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR (SECRETARY)

Ms Sharlene Anthony

Administrative Staff

SENIOR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Ms Sharlene Anthony

EVENTS & OUTREACH

Ms Valerie Yeo
Ms Minghua Tay
Ms Zi Qi Lim

GRANTS

Ms Sharon Ong
Ms Iole Soto

SECRETARY

Ms Aiza Hamid



Aerial view of beautiful tea crop terrace landscape
Location: China
Image sourced from Shutterstock.com



Members of ARI actively contribute to the running of the Institute in various ways, including through their participation in committees.

In the year 2025 the following committees took up responsibility for various aspects of work involved in the running of ARI as an Asian centre for research fellows and graduate student researchers from the region and around the world.

ARISCOPE

Dr Erica Larson CHAIR
Ms Clair Hurford COORDINATOR
Dr Kathleen Burke
Dr Michelle Miller
Dr Dhiraj Nainani

ASIAN GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE & GRADUATE STUDENTS FORUM

Assoc Prof Maitrii Aung-Thwin CHAIR
Dr Michel Chambon
Dr Jia Wen Hing
Dr Stefan Huebner
Assoc Prof Sumit Mandal
Dr Michelle Miller
Dr Emily Soh
Assoc Prof Titima Suthiwan
Ms Minghua Tay

CONFERENCE & RESEARCH GRANTS

Assoc Prof Maitrii Aung-Thwin CHAIR
Assoc Prof Jiat Hwee Chang
Prof Kenneth Dean
Prof Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho
Ms Sharlene Anthony
Ms Valerie Yeo

FIRE SAFETY

Ms Aiza Hamid
Ms Zi Qi Lim
Ms Sharon Ong
Ms Iole Soto
Ms Minghua Tay
Ms Valerie Yeo

SEMINAR

Assoc Prof Maitrii Aung-Thwin
Dr Michel Chambon
Ms Zi Qi Lim

SOCIAL & STAFF WELFARE

Dr Yingshan Lau CHAIR
Dr Kristel Acedera
Mr Hao Pei Chu
Dr Eva Samia Dinkelaker
Ms Aiza Hamid
Dr Priza Marendraputra
Mr Billy Quang Anh Tran
Dr Wei Yang

3.0 ARI Committees



4.0 Research Personnel

The Asia Research Institute aims to be the hub for high-quality social science and humanities research on Asia, and attracting high quality researchers is paramount to the success of the Institute.

Since 2005, ARI has brought to NUS a mix of well-established scholars and younger researchers from the region who wish to spend research time in the Institute and interact with the best in their fields. The research personnel in ARI are diverse; they vary in terms of research foci, nationalities, international experience, and duration of appointments. ARI further maintains a good balance between established scholars and those who are at the start of their promising careers.

The research personnel are led by cluster leaders, each heading a research cluster. Most of the cluster leaders are tenured faculty members, part-seconded on joint appointments from their home departments in NUS, while others have been recruited after extensive searches. The cluster leaders and senior research fellows provide the stability and experience necessary for implementing longer-term plans of the Institute, while other shorter-term members add agility and vibrancy to the ARI community.

Postdoctoral fellows are appointed through an annual international competition. They are promising young scholars in their research fields, with ARI providing them the space, time, and intellectual environment to build up their research and publication capacities in their early career development. Outstanding performers have gone on to secure tenure-track positions in NUS or other universities worldwide.

ARI's research staff are increasingly being funded by external programmes and projects. Most of the funding has been received from the Ministry of Education Academic Research Fund (Singapore) and Social Science Research Council Thematic Grant (SSRTG). ARI also hosts research staff who are self-funded, from foundations and other institutes of higher learning.

DIRECTOR

Bunnell, Tim

PROFESSOR

PhD (Nottingham), BA (Hons) (Nottingham)

Director since 1 Jul 2019 and Asian Urbanisms Cluster Leader since 1 Jul 2021; joint appointment with Department of Geography, FASS. Human geography of cities and regions; transnational urbanism; urban aspirations and futures in Southeast Asia.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Aung-Thwin, Mairii

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

PhD (Michigan), BA (Northern Illinois)

Deputy Director since 1 Jul 2019; joint appointment with Departments of History and Comparative Asian Studies, FASS. Myanmar/Southeast Asian history; social movements; knowledge production; community; sociallegal studies; development studies; Buddhist infrastructure in South and Southeast Asia.

RESEARCH LEADERS

Chang, Jiat Hwee

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

PhD (UC Berkeley), MArch (NUS), BA (Arch) (NUS)

Science, Technology, and Society Cluster Leader since 1 Jul 2022; joint appointment with Department of Architecture, NUS. Socio-cultural histories and techno-politics of air-conditioning and climate change in urban Asia; transnational histories of colonial and postcolonial built environment in Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Davidson, Jamie S.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

PhD (Washington), MA (London), BA (Penn)

Food Politics and Society Cluster Leader since 1 Aug 2023; joint appointment with Department of Political Science, FASS. Comparative politics of Southeast Asia; ethnic violence; infrastructure politics; rice politics; indigenous peoples movements.

Ho, Elaine Lynn-Ee

PhD (UCL), BA (Hons) (NUS)

Migration and Mobilities Cluster Leader since 1 Jul 2025; joint appointment with Department of Geography, FASS, as Professor; Vice-Dean, FASS Research Division; and Provost's Chair since 1 Jul 2023. Transnationalism, ageing and migration; diaspora engagement; citizenship geographies.

Dean, Kenneth

PROFESSOR

PhD (Stanford), MA (Stanford), BA (Brown)

Religion and Globalisation Cluster Leader since 1 Jan 2016; joint appointment with Department of Chinese Studies, FASS. Transnational trust and temple networks linking Singapore Chinese temples to Southeast China and Southeast Asia.

Winter, Tim

PROFESSOR

PhD (Manchester), MA (Lancaster)

Inter-Asia Engagements Cluster Leader since 1 Aug 2023. Critical heritage studies; Belt and Road Initiative; cultural internationalism; heritage diplomacy; Silk Road studies.

Yeoh, Brenda Saw Ai FBA

RAFFLES PROFESSOR OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

PhD (Oxford), MA (Cambridge), BA (Hons) (Cambridge)

Asian Migration Cluster Leader until 30 Jun 2025; joint appointment with Department of Geography, FASS. The politics of space in colonial and postcolonial cities; migration-led diversification, cosmopolitanism and spatial politics; human aspiration, care migration and social reproduction among migrant households in Southeast Asia; migration infrastructures and transnational mobility of migrant workers at various skill levels.

(SENIOR) RESEARCH FELLOWS

Batubara, Bosman

PhD (Amsterdam/IHE-Delft Institute for Water Education), MSc (VU Brussels/KU Leuven), BGeolEng (Gadjah Mada)

Research Fellow since 20 Jan 2025. Uneven relations of capitalism (and urbanisation) within and beyond the city, horizontally and vertically.

Chambon, Michel

PhD (Boston), MA (Institut Catholique de Paris),

BA (Institut Catholique de Paris)

Research Fellow since 8 Oct 2021. Christianity in Asia; materialisation of Christianity within Chinese households.

Cheng, Han

PhD (Cambridge), MPhil (Cambridge), BA (Renmin)

Max Weber Foundation Research Fellow from 10 Apr 2023 to 9 May 2025. Economic diplomacy; development finance; knowledge networks, South-South and triangular cooperation.

Huebner, Stefan

PhD (Special Distinction) (Jacobs), MA (JGU)

Senior Research Fellow since 14 Jul 2020. Colonialism; modernisation; development policy; impact of regional Asian sports events established by the American YMCA on the "Western civilising mission".

Lam, Choy Fong Theodora

PhD (NUS), MSocSci (NUS), BA (Hons) (NUS), BSocSci (Waikato)

Senior Research Fellow since 1 Apr 2022. Transnational migration; children's geographies; gender; geographical education.

Larson, Erica M.

PhD (Boston), BA (Carnegie Mellon)

Senior Research Fellow since 29 Jun 2025. Indonesian university students in Singapore and their use of digital media in navigating multiple aspirations.

Lau, Yingshan

PhD (NUS), MSc (Oxford), BIS (ANU)

Research Fellow since 3 Apr 2023. Traditional ecological knowledge; forests and agriculture; sustainable rural development in Southeast Asia.

Lee, Kris Hyesoo

DPhil (Oxford), MPhil (Cambridge),

BA (Ewha Women's University)

Research Fellow from 7 Nov 2022 to 15 Aug 2025. Transnationalism; inward and outward mobilities in Asia; international student mobility; critical approaches to migration.

Loh, Bernice

PhD (Monash), MA (Manchester), BA (Hons) (NTU)

Research Fellow from 31 May 2022 to 31 Oct 2025. Youth and youth identities; gender; transnational families; mixed marriages; social inequalities.

Miller, Michelle Ann

PhD (Charles Darwin), BA (Hons) (Northern Territory)

Senior Research Fellow since 1 Jan 2014. Autonomy/ decentralisation, democratisation and conflict management in Indonesian cities.

P.K.M., Abdul Jaleel

PhD (JNU), MA (Darul Huda Islamic University),

MA (IGNOU), BA (Calicut), BA (Darul Huda Islamic University)

Research Fellow since 1 Sep 2022. Historical, cultural, literary and intellectual traditions of Arab communities in South India in the larger context of Arabia Asia engagements.

Quevedo, Jay Mar D.

PhD (Tohoku), MS (Philippines-Diliman), BS (Visayas State)

Research Fellow since 2 May 2023. Environmental studies; climate change; blue carbon ecosystems; coastal resource management.

Rinck, Jacob

PhD (Yale), MPhil (Yale), MSc (SOAS, London)

Research Fellow since 1 Aug 2025. Global inequality; agrarian change; histories of economic thought.

Tan, Qian Hui

PhD (NUS), MSocSci (NUS), BSocSci (NUS)

Research Fellow since 15 Feb 2025. Intimate relationalities; embodiment; sustainability politics; critical feminist and queer theoretical perspectives.

Uda, Saritha Kittie

PhD (Wageningen University & Research),

MSc (Wageningen University & Research), BSc (Padjadjaran)

Research Fellow since 24 Feb 2025. Peatland and ecosystems; environmental sciences; biology education, and biology learning media.

Valenzuela, Ven Paolo B.

PhD (Tokyo), MSc (Tokyo), BA (Philippines Baguio)

Research Fellow from 25 Apr 2022 to 17 Jan 2025. Synergies between disaster risk and climate change in Asia and the Pacific, particularly in coastal urban areas.

Varigonda, Kesava Chandra

PhD (NUS), MSC (NTU), BEng (NUS)

Research Fellow since 17 Feb 2023. State-society relations; South Asian studies; geopolitics; energy studies.

Wang, Yang

PhD (NUS), MA (Peking), BEng (Zhejiang)

Research Fellow from 1 Jul 2022 to 30 Jun 2025. The intersection of information and communication technologies (ICTs); transnational householding; education migration in Asia.

Yu, Kang

DPhil (NUS), MSocSci (East China Normal),

BSocSci (East China Normal)

Research Fellow since 21 Feb 2025. Overseas Chinese; temple and trade networks; business history; social history of late imperial and modern China.

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

Allouache, Yannis-Adam

PhD (NUS), MA (Ottawa), BSocSci (Ottawa)

Since 12 Aug 2025. Visions of green urbanism within and across Singapore, the Gulf, and the Arabian Peninsula.

Burke, Kathleen

PhD (Toronto), MHist (King's College London/Humboldt)

From 22 Nov 2023 to 21 Nov 2025. Trans-imperial food cultures in Portuguese and Dutch empires in the Indian Ocean.

Chen, Xiaoling

DPhil (Colorado Boulder), MA (Colorado Denver),

MS (China Agricultural), BS (China Agricultural)

Since 1 Sep 2025. Infrastructure; urban politics; digital governance; collective trauma.

Cher, Hui Yun

DPhil (Inalco), MSocSc (Grenoble Alpes), LLB (Malaya)

Since 21 Nov 2024. STS and transnational environmental governance in Indonesia and Laos/Cambodia.

DePuy, Walker

PhD (Georgia), MS (Michigan), BA (Carleton College)

Since 15 Jan 2024. Politics of conservation in mosaic landscapes, focusing on environmental governance and justice.

Dinkelaker, Eva Samia

PhD (Osnabrück), MA (Freie Universität Berlin)

Since 1 Jul 2024. Lived experiences and agency of Indonesian migrant workers in various destinations.

Galka, Jonathan

PhD (Harvard), MA (Harvard), BA (Yale), BS (Yale)

Since 15 Apr 2025. The histories and futures of deep seawater technologies, especially ocean thermal energy conversion.

Graham, Colum Morris

PhD (ANU), MEMD (ANU), BA (ANU)

Since 16 Jul 2024. Agrarian transition in Indonesia and the region.

Hing, Jia Wen

PhD (NUS), MA (NUS & Peking), BA (NUS)

From 1 Dec 2023 to 30 Jun 2025. Southern Min dialects spoken in Singapore and Malaysia.

Ismah, Nor

PhD (Leiden IAS), MA (Hawai'i at Manoa), SS (UIN Sunan Kalijaga)

Since 2 Dec 2024. Female Islamic authority, Muslim women's movement, gender, Islamic studies.

Karib, Fathun

PhD (SUNY Binghamton), MA (SUNY Binghamton), MA (Passau) BSoc Sci (Indonesia)

Since 2 Jan 2024. Energy and environmental history, critical agrarian studies, political economy of disasters.

Lau, Justin Chun-Him

PhD (ANU), MSc (LSE), BA (Sussex)

Since 28 Feb 2025. Waste, circular economy, care, infrastructure, feminist STS.

Li, Shumeng

PhD (Cornell), MA (Cornell), BLaw Sociology (Wuhan)

From 12 Jul 2023 to 31 May 2025. Value chain in Chinese agriculture, food consumption and identities; knowledge production in agriculture.

Marendraputra, Priza

PhD (Wisconsin-Madison), MURP (Hawai'i at Manoa), BSc (IT Bandung)

Since 22 Aug 2023. Political ecology; urban forms, structures and changes; urban history; urban sociology.

Nainani, Dhiraj

PhD (Hong Kong), LLM (LSE), LLB (LSE)

Since 2 Jan 2024. Law and geography; law and the Asian city; asylum and migration; international law, climate change, and the urban.

Singh, Rani

PhD (Western Australia), MPhil (JNU), MA (JNU), BA (JNU)

Since 3 Jan 2025. Transnational cultural infrastructure in South Asia in the background of regional architectures of connectivity like China's Belt and Road Initiative and India's Project Mausam.

Soh, Emily

DPhil (Technion-Israel Institute of Technology), MSc (Polytechnic University of Milan), BSc (NUS)

Since 1 Dec 2023. Food system transitions; system transition theories; political ecology of food systems.

Willoughby, Emma L.

PhD (Michigan), MSc (LSE), BA (Mississippi)

Since 1 Sep 2025. Comparative political economy; global public health; food regulation; health security governance; Vietnamese studies.

Wiratri, Amorisa

PhD (Western Australia), MA (Flinders), SAnt (Gadjah Mada)

Since 10 Jun 2025. Migration; ethnicity; diaspora; citizenship; border studies.

Yang, Wei

PhD (NTU), MA (Chinese University of Hong Kong), BA (Lanzhou)

From 3 Apr 2023 to 2 Jul 2025. Labour migration from China to Singapore; temporary migration regimes in Asia; migrant subjectivity and intimacy.

Yang, Zezhou

PhD (SOAS, London), MA (SOAS, London), BA (BFSU)

Since 21 Jan 2025. Trans-Himalayan studies; global China and Nepal; inter-Asian, decolonising knowledge production; the Anthropocene and multimodality.

OTHER JOINT APPOINTMENTS**Clancey, Gregory Kevin**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

PhD (MIT), MA (Boston), BA (Hons) (Bates)

Joint appointment with Department of History, FASS from 1 Oct 2008 to 31 Dec 2025. History and anthropology of science and technology; architecture and cities; natural disaster; Japan.

Graham, Connor

PhD (Melbourne), BA (Nottingham)

Research Fellow from 17 Sep 2012 to 30 Jun 2025; joint appointment with Tembusu College, NUS, as Fellow and Director of Studies. Information systems; science, technology, and society; living and dying in the age of the Internet.

Ho, Elaine Lynn-Ee

PROFESSOR

PhD (UCL), BA (Hons) (NUS)

Senior Research Fellow from 1 Jun 2016 to 30 Jun 2025; joint appointment with Department of Geography, FASS, as Professor; Vice-Dean, FASS Research Division; and Provost's Chair since 1 Jul 2023. Transnationalism, ageing and migration; diaspora engagement; citizenship geographies.

Hue, Guan Thye

PhD (NTU), MA (NTU), BA (Peking)

Senior Research Fellow since 1 Sep 2021; joint appointment with Department of Chinese Studies, FASS. Buddhism, Taoism and Chinese popular religion in Singapore and Malaysia.

Kerr, Eric Thomson

PhD (Edinburgh), MLitt (Aberdeen), MA (Aberdeen), LLB (Aberdeen)

Research Fellow since 15 Jul 2016; joint appointment with Tembusu College, NUS, as Lecturer, Residential Fellow, and Director of Residential Life. Epistemologies of science and technology; digital culture.

Taylor, David Mark

PROFESSOR

DPhil (Ulster), MA Jo (Dublin)

Joint appointment with Department of Geography, FASS since 1 Jan 2023. Human dimensions of environmental change in Africa and Asia.

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES/ASSISTANTS**Abubakar, Saharah**

MA (NUS), BSocSci (Hons) (NUS)

Research Associate since 1 Jan 2012. Social networks and resilience of divorced Malay mothers in Singapore.

Acedera, Kristel Anne F.

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Research Associate from 1 Jan 2019 to 15 Sep 2025. The role of communication technologies on transnational familyhood and mediated intimacies.

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Research Associate from 17 May 2022 to 13 Feb 2025. Gender relations; Islamic feminism; antiracism.

Cheng, Yan Shu Belinda

BA (Yale-NUS)

Research Assistant from 18 Dec 2023 to 17 Dec 2025. Cultural traditions and values in policy making.

Chu, Hao Pei

BFA (NTU)

Research Assistant from 30 Jan 2023 to 31 Dec 2025. Chinese archival sources on Southeast Asia; socio-political impacts from contemporary translation(s) of historical events in Southeast Asia.

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Research Assistant from 1 Jul 2025 to 31 Dec 2025. Urban studies; political geography; migration studies.

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Research Associate since 22 Jan 2024. Chinese philosophy and culture; higher education learning and adult learning; effectiveness of social services.

Hurford, Clair Elizabeth

BA (ANU)

Research Associate since 25 May 2024. Communications and content management.

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Research Associate from 1 Jul 2024 to 31 Mar 2025. Economics and political economy in China and Southeast Asia.

Morais, Francesca Rose

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Research Associate from 1 Jul 2024 to 31 Jul 2025. Transnational relationships, family dynamics, mobility regimes and negotiations of citizenship across migration categories.

Prasetyo, Yoga

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Research Assistant since 15 Sep 2025. Temporary migration regimes; social integration; irregular migration; migration governance in ASEAN.

Rahadini, Immanuela Asa

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Research Assistant from 1 Jul 2022 to 30 Jun 2025. Transnationalism; diaspora politics; precarious labour, especially in Indonesia.

Sekaringrat, Annisa

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Research Associate since 25 Aug 2025. Labour migration; international student mobility; diaspora policy; migration diplomacy.

Shehryar, M.N.

BA (Hons) (Yale-NUS)

Research Assistant since 24 Nov 2023. Urban studies; infrastructure studies; climate governance; ethnography.

Tang, Kristen Tse Mei

MA (NUS), BSc (Hons) (NUS)

Research Associate since 13 Jul 2022. Role of critical theory in shaping public policy, focusing on the intersections between feminism, queer theory and mental health.

Tran, Billy Quang Anh

BA (Yale-NUS)

Research Assistant since 27 May 2025. Migration; mobility; diaspora; identity; education; international development; non-profits.

Tok, Jenne Jie Ying

BSc (Exeter)

Research Assistant from 18 Sep 2023 to 31 Dec 2025. Urban ecology; human-animal interactions; human-animal coexistence.

MUHAMMAD ALAGIL CHAIR IN ARABIA ASIA STUDIES

Mandal, Sumit K.

VISITING ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

PhD (Columbia)

Since 2 Jul 2024. Longstanding inter-cultural and inter-religious interaction in the Malay World and keramat (Muslim shrines) in the Indian Ocean.

DISTINGUISHED FELLOW

Mahbubani, Kishore

PhD (Dalhousie), MA (Dalhousie),

BA (Hons) (Singapore)

Since 1 Jul 2019. Resurgence of Asia; ASEAN; public policies in Singapore; global geo-politics and global governance.

Chang, Fanny

Since 1 Nov 2023.

ASSISTANT MANAGER AND PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO

KISHORE MAHBUBANI

NUS FELLOW

Abubakar, Myra Mentari, Dr

PhD (ANU), MEd (Canberra), SS (Medan)

From 9 Dec 2024 to 31 Dec 2025. The hero phenomenon across Indonesian and Southeast Asia.

VISITING SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW

Fölster, Max Jakob, Dr

DPhil (Hamburg), MA (Hamburg)

From 12 Jan 2024 to 11 Jan 2025. Manuscript studies; history of libraries and book-collecting in China; history of German Sinology.



Garuda Palace from Ceremony Plaza
Location: Indonesia
Image sourced from Shutterstock.com



Research Clusters

Each research cluster in ARI focuses on research and analysis of a particular feature of Asian society. The six clusters serve as platforms for bringing researchers together in a collective effort to produce useful interactions and outcomes. The Institute constantly explores multi-disciplinary areas of research, and innovative new potential areas of research.

Cluster renewal is actively conducted—every three years and five years, cluster leadership and research topics are reviewed and appraised. In 2025, the Asian Migration cluster was revamped into the Migration and Mobilities cluster, expanding its name to encapsulate the wider range of migration and mobilities research that has come to characterise its work.

In addition, cluster associates comprising scholars from other parts of NUS as well as other tertiary institutions in Singapore are engaged. They play an active role in the respective cluster workshops, conferences, and other research activities, and serve as resource persons for the Institute.

5.0 Research Programmes and Activities

ASIAN URBANISMS



CLUSTER LEADER

Prof Tim Bunnell

CLUSTER MEMBERS

Dr Myra Mentari Abubakar
Dr Yannis-Adam Allouache
Dr Bosman Batubara
Dr Xiaoling Chen
Dr Priza Marendraputra
Dr Dhiraj Nainani
Dr Rani Singh
Dr Ven Paolo Valenzuela
Dr Walker DePuy
Mr Zhan Jie How
Ms Reetu Kumari

The Asian Urbanisms cluster explores Asia's diverse urban experiences historically, contemporaneously, and toward the future. It seeks to contribute to research on city life and wider urban processes from local to global scales, in diverse contexts in Asia, and through comparative studies with other world regions. The cluster comprises three main strands of urban research:

1. *Urban heritage and the vernacular city*: built environment; intangible heritage; urban culture and ways of life
2. *Futures*: city plans, models and "solutions"; eco/green, inclusive and digital/smart urbanisms; the (post)pandemic city
3. *Global urban frontiers*: extended/planetary urbanisation; infrastructures of connectivity; new geographies of urban theory

Cluster members and associates organised two major international events in 2025. First, on 18–19 February, the workshop on "Law and Geography in Urban Asia" brought together more than 30 local, regional, and international scholars from across the disciplines of law, geography, sociology, anthropology, history, architecture, and urban studies to explore the interrelationship between the law and urban space in Asia. The first ever regional gathering on legal geographical scholarship, as well as the very first on Asian legal geography as a thematic focus, the event was centred around six panels concerning infrastructure, the "inner city", jurisdiction, land, capital, and cartography. In addition to laying a solid foundation for future academic collaboration, the workshop also reaffirmed the longstanding partnership between ARI and the NUS Faculty of Law. Six papers from the workshop will make up a special issue on the topic in the *Asian Journal of Law and Society* to be published in March 2026.

The cluster's second major event of the year was convened as part of the *Capitals of the Future* research project on 12–13 August. The "Cities as Sites and Techniques of Futuring" symposium assembled urban scholars and practitioners who examine cities as performative spaces and methodological testbeds where future-oriented imaginaries are curated, shaped, and communicated through design, immersive practices, pilot projects, and planning tools amid rapid urbanisation and climate adaptation. Featuring 19 papers organised across thematic panels, the symposium demonstrated how narratives, technologies, planning documents, and infrastructure interact over time to shape urban futures, influencing which visions are fast-tracked, sidelined, or reinstated within broader processes of capitalist urban development. Two journal special issues of papers presented at the symposium are being planned, including one in *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*.

Among the host of smaller-scale Asian Urbanisms cluster events during the course of the year was a roundtable discussion titled "Theorising Critical Urban Geology". This explored new geographies of urban theory by integrating geological perspectives and work on urban processes beyond the city, including through consideration of flows of rock from the sites of extraction to the site of city development. Bosman Batubara organised and spoke at the roundtable, alongside Adam Bobbette (Lecturer in Political Geology at the School of Geographical & Earth

Sciences, University of Glasgow) and Susan Herawati (Coordinator of The People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice Indonesia). In addition, on 25 November, the cluster hosted a discussion on urban policy learning in Southeast Asia. "Tensions in Policy Learning: Grounding Learning Practices in Urban Southeast Asia" explored how cities negotiate global best practices and local socio-political realities, revealing the contested, multi-scalar, and politically charged nature of urban policy learning in the region.

In terms of research grant activity, work continued on the cluster's Ministry of Education Academic Research Fund (Tier 2) project, *Capitals of the Future: Place, Power and Possibility in Southeast Asia*. See p. 28 for further details of that project.

As regards individual research progress and publications, Yannis-Adam Allouache published an article on migrant labour solidarity across Taiwan's urban peripheries, in *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography* and was invited to present his postdoctoral research at a workshop on Islam and decolonisation at Queen Mary University of London. Tim Bunnell's co-authored work in 2025 included two articles arising from a recently completed international collaborative project on smart cities funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) in *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*; and *Urban Geography*. He also co-authored an article on urban digital twin models in *Nature Cities* together with colleagues from the STS cluster.

Bosman Batubara published two articles during the course of the year. The first, a co-authored piece in *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, examines nature-based solutions to water crises in Semarang, Indonesia. The second, published in *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, analysed the site of Indonesia's new capital city in terms of extended urbanisation.

Chen Xiaoling, who joined the cluster in September 2025, submitted two manuscripts to international journals (*Big Data & Society* and *American Ethnologist*). Walker DePuy (who is co-appointed in the STS cluster) had a co-authored article on interdisciplinary collaboration published in *Conservation Biology*.

In addition to co-organising the "Tensions in Policy Learning" roundtable mentioned above, Priza Marendraputra published an article on transport-driven urbanism in Karawang, Indonesia in the *Journal of Urban Management*. Dhiraj Nainani co-organised the *Law and Geography in Urban Asia* conference at ARI, and also had research articles published in *Geographical Research*, *The Journal of Property, Planning, and Environmental Law*, and *Water Research*. Rani Singh submitted an article on cultural infrastructure to the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*.

CLUSTER ASSOCIATES

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Assoc Prof Daniel P.S. Goh
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Asst Prof Naomi Hanakata
Department of Architecture, NUS

Assoc Prof Kong Chong Ho
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Prof Jeffrey Hou
Department of Architecture, NUS
FROM 1 NOV 2025

Assoc Prof Kah-Wee Lee
Department of Architecture, NUS

Dr Ricardo Martinez
CIDOB-Barcelona Centre for International
Affairs, Spain

Assoc Prof Rita Padawangi
Singapore University of Social Sciences

Dr Ryan Gordon Tans
NUS College

Asst Prof Shaun Teo
Department of Geography, NUS

Asst Prof Echo Lei Wang
Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, PRC
UNTIL 30 JUN 2025

Asst Prof Allen Hai Xiao
Department of Geography, NUS

Dr Hae Young Yun
Jeonju Research Institute, South Korea
UNTIL 30 JUN 2025

CAPITALS OF THE FUTURE: PLACE, POWER, AND POSSIBILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

PROJECT MEMBERS

Principal Investigator

Assoc Prof Daniel P.S. Goh

Co-Principal Investigator

Prof Tim Bunnell

Co-Investigators

Assoc Prof Kah-Wee Lee

Asst Prof Nick R. Smith

Dr Priza Marendraputra

Mr Zhan Jie How

Phase 1 of this [project](#) funded by the Ministry of Education Academic Research Fund Tier 2 (Expert Panel 4) commenced in August 2023. Phase 2 officially began in September 2024, marking the second year of the collaborative, comparative research. The project team comprises NUS-based members and associates of the Asian Urbanisms cluster, alongside international collaborators Lim Seng Boon (Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia) and Testriono (Indonesia International Islamic University, Indonesia).

Throughout 2025, we remained committed to the core objectives of our research project: to examine the interactions between future imaginaries, urban planning discourses, and pathways of urban development. Drawing on geography, sociology, history, and planning studies, our study focuses on three key dimensions that shape future urban planning discourses: technological, environmental, and civilisational. The *technological* dimension explores how disruptive technologies are embraced as catalysts for industrial growth, and social reform. Future cities aim to integrate smart technologies to drive the next industrial revolution while prioritising digital connectivity and media literacy. The *environmental* dimension examines the evolving relationship between humans and nature, with an emphasis on sustainability and responses to the ongoing climate crisis. Lastly, the *civilisational* dimension considers how visions of past civilisations and cultural symbolism influence contemporary aspirations for global modernity and cosmopolitan social harmony.

The three city sites which form the focus for comparison are Nusantara, Putrajaya, and Singapore. Nusantara, initially planned as Indonesia's new capital, commenced construction in East Kalimantan during Joko Widodo's second term as President (2019–2024). The incorporation of both Putrajaya and Singapore means that the definition of "capitals of the future" in this research extends beyond traditional nation-state capital cities. Unlike plans for Nusantara in Indonesia, Putrajaya is not a national capital city, but merely the site of Malaysia's federal government administrative centre. We nonetheless understand both Putrajaya and Nusantara as capitals of the future, given the high-profile national discussions, debates, and deliberations that have been entailed in their planning, as well as the discursive power and imaginative influence associated with their development.

The city-state of Singapore is a capital of the future in a sense that is even further removed from conventional definitions of a nation-state capital city. Singapore is an established centre of planning innovation that has been widely referenced as a model for urban futures elsewhere, and that actively exports its urban expertise as futuristic "solutions". Our study, therefore, emphasises the significance of future-oriented urban planning in influencing the development and redevelopment of cities. It will also demonstrate how the economic rationalities of city planning and urban policy mobilities in Asia are affected by imagined futures, woven together by "truth-spots" that do the material and discursive work of stitching desires, hopes, promises, and expectations into persuasive possibilities. The city persuades, and the ways in which it does so shape the realities and fates of our future urban lives.

As part of Phase 2 of the project, data collection was extended and consolidated following the completion of Phase 1. The research team conducted over 30 semi-structured interviews on each of the three case-study cities, engaging a broad spectrum of informants, including government officials, urban design and planning professionals, civil society activists, and grassroots representatives. To complement the depth of individual interviews and to capture collective sense-making processes, focus group discussions (FGDs) were incorporated as a methodological supplement. FGDs enabled the exploration of shared narratives, points of contestation, and negotiated meanings that emerge through group interaction, thereby providing insights into social dynamics and divergent perspectives that may not surface in one-to-one interviews. In total, nine FGDs were conducted during the course of the year, comprising seven in Indonesia and two in Malaysia, with participants drawn from diverse institutional and professional backgrounds.

In addition to empirical data collection, we organised the *Cities as Sites and Techniques of Futuring Workshop* (12–13 August 2025) to strengthen conceptual understanding of how cities function as places where future visions are developed and tested, with particular attention to how design, presentation, immersive experiences, and pilot projects shape and give credibility to ideas about urban futures in the context of rapid urban growth and climate adaptation. The workshop brought together academics and practitioners from different regions and featured 19 papers examining Southeast Asian and international cases, addressing themes such as innovation and technology, cultural and spiritual narratives, the role of arts and aesthetics, environmental approaches, changing ideas of the good life, evolving forms of governance and social relations, and reflections on how past visions of the future influence those being imagined today.

Dissemination of preliminary findings constituted another major focus in 2025. Drawing on NVivo to systematically analyse and synthesise qualitative data, the research team has been actively developing publications that address both substantive urban development challenges and methodological reflections on conducting phased research. The team is pleased to report the forthcoming publication of two journal articles, one in *Urban Studies* and the other in *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*. Further manuscripts are either in preparation or are ready to be submitted. In addition, the team is in the process of curating two special journal issues derived from the workshop proceedings, aimed at consolidating and extending scholarly debates on cities, futuring practices, and urban imaginaries across comparative contexts.

FOOD POLITICS AND SOCIETY



CLUSTER LEADER

Assoc Prof Jamie Davidson

CLUSTER MEMBERS

Dr Kathleen Burke
Dr Colum Graham
Dr Shumeng Li
Dr Emily Soh
Dr Emma Willoughby

Food Politics and Society (FPS) is ARI's latest research cluster, forming in mid-2023. FPS investigates food in Asia and is open to various theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches and empirical work on food and food's impact on society. It encourages work at different levels of analysis, from international trade down to the village level.

The interdisciplinary food scholarship that this cluster will promote is an ideal medium to explore and expose how food embodies the imbalanced power relations, the vested interests, complex networks, and the contested meanings that permeate our past, present and future lives, in Asia and beyond. Assoc Prof Jamie Davidson of the Department of Political Science, NUS leads FPS. He was an ARI Postdoctoral Fellow from 2002–2003 and interim head of the Identities cluster from 2021–2023.

FPS's second full year in existence was eventful. Notably, the cluster held its annual conference titled *Crossing Boundaries: Food and Southeast Asia, 1500-present* in May. This two-day event convened 12 prominent scholars from Singapore and international institutions to explore the history of food, food trade, food transformations and how knowledge of food has been adapted by local communities in a region renowned for mixing and borrowing. This emphasis on transnational relations challenges with the dominant frameworks that have privileged the nation state as a unit of analysis. Debate over the category and meaning of "national foods" is rendered problematic when viewed through transnational lenses. Participants addressed such searing questions as what connections do these transnational, rather than national, framings allow us to see that were previously obscured, and what impact do these connections have on understanding Southeast Asian societies. Case studies included Filipino food in Hong Kong and Chinese soup in Java to Buddhist food traditions across the region and American food and drink in colonial Singapore. Articles based on the presentations will feature in a special issue, edited by the conference's primary organiser, Dr Kathleen Burke whose tenure with the FPS research cluster concluded in late 2025. The issue will aim to generate discussion on productive linkages between food studies and Southeast Asian studies, highlight relationships among different kinds of actors and their relationships to food production, preparation and consumption, and underscore the influence of cultural, social norms and knowledge in shaping food practices.

The FPS cluster in 2025 also organised two additional public events. In March, along with the Asian Migration cluster of ARI and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPS co-hosted a two-day workshop titled *Global Foodscapes: Transnational Foodways and Migration In and Out of Asia*. Six panels investigated the complex discourses, linkages, and practices of global foodscapes by critically addressing the multifaceted intersections between migration and food. Focused on three interconnected themes—food security, climate/environmental impact on food and migration, and the personal, social, and cultural significance of food for migrants—the 18 papers adopted a multidisciplinary lens, encompassing anthropology, geography, history, film, literature, and sociology. Discussions of hosting a reciprocal event in North Carolina are ongoing.

In May FPS also welcomed Assoc Prof Alberto Salvo of the NUS Economics and NUS Bezos Centre for Sustainable Protein. His talk, titled "Can Raising the Health-climate Literacy of Food Choices Contribute to Educating a New Cohort of Individual Climate Leaders?", addressed the persistence of significant knowledge gaps in individuals' awareness of the food sector's global impact on climate change and biodiversity loss. In Singapore, for example, surveys reveal that respondents often underestimate the emissions from animal proteins compared to cars (e.g., beef vs. car rides). Assoc Prof Salvo presented ongoing

research aimed at educating individuals about the health and climate co-benefits of dietary choices, utilising technology (personal devices) and positive messaging. Instead of focusing on immediate changes in food choices, which are deeply personal, his goal is to leverage daily routines to educate a new generation of individual climate leaders who will support climate policy in the coming decades.

In 2026, the FPS cluster looks forward to hosting an international conference at ARI organised by two of its associates, Dr W. Nathan Green of the NUS Geography and Dr Ting Hui Lau of NUS Sociology and Anthropology. Their workshop concerns contestation over land in Southeast Asia. It will draw a range of scholars from across the region, Europe, and North America. It will bring the conceptual framework of settler colonialism into closer conversation with studies of land conflict and dispossession in Southeast Asia, asking how this move can confirm, change, contest, or complicate our understanding of economic development, capitalism, and the well-being of diverse peoples in the region. The workshop will feature cutting-edge research about contemporary land struggles, emphasising the relationship between agriculture, food sovereignty, and environmental conservation. It will also advance scholarship through a comparative, yet relational, approach to these issues across the region. A special journal issue will showcase papers from the workshop.

In support of the 20th rendition of ARI's annual Singapore Graduate Student Forum on Southeast Asia Studies held in June 2025, members of the FPS cluster served as mentors to graduate students from Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Singapore. Interdisciplinary topics ranged from struggles of land formalisation programmes in Indonesia, the political economy of rice liberalisation policy in the Philippines and critical discourse analysis of ecological narrative in Javanese rice farming to adoption of smart agriculture technology in Vietnam and the critical approach of the aesthetics of hawker centres in Malaysia and Singapore. Mentors and mentees alike found the experience enriching and rewarding.

In 2025 the cluster welcomed postdoctoral fellow Dr Emma Willoughby, a recent PhD graduate from University of Michigan with a focus on food policy, markets, and regulation. Dr Willoughby is working on articles based on her dissertation while exploring collaborations for a potential research grant proposal. Her jointly authored paper on global food market regulations and public health risks has been accepted for publication. Dr Graham has also recently published a paper in the *Journal of Agrarian Change* titled "Distributive politics and class dynamics in rural Java". Toward the end of the year Dr Graham returned to Java to conduct follow-up research for his book on agrarian change in Indonesia based on his dissertation. Dr Soh co-authored and published an article "Normative facets of transitioning food systems" in *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, and a policy report titled "Towards Sustainable Food Systems for Israel – from Science to Policy". In a Tier II grant proposal, Dr Soh teamed up with Prof Jeffrey Hou, head of the Architecture Department of the NUS College of Design and Engineering, to continue her interest in sustainable food systems. Comparative in scope, the project intends to explore the "island economies" of Singapore, Israel and Taiwan and collaborates with local scholars from these countries. The submitted proposal encompasses two main work packages: "Emergent socio-ecological discourses and practices in agrifood system transitions in Asia", and "Socio-technological transitions in the agrifood systems of island economies."

A primary goal for the cluster during 2026 is to continue developing viable research ideas and teams that can be transformed into proposals that can be submitted to grant-making agencies in Singapore and elsewhere.

CLUSTER ASSOCIATES

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Universiti Brunei Darussalam

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Dr Veronica Gregorio
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Dr Lingli Huang
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Dr Hyejin Kim
Department of Political Science, NUS

Asst Prof Ting Hui Lau
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS
FROM 13 JAN 2025

Assoc Prof Seung-Joon Lee
Department of History, NUS

Asst Prof Anthony Medrano
Brown University
UNTIL 30 SEP 2025

Assoc Prof Marvin Joseph Montefrio
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Assoc Prof Jacob Ricks
Singapore Management University

Dr Andrew Schauf
Bogor Institute of Agriculture

Assoc Prof Shaohua Zhan
Nanyang Technological University

Assoc Prof Qian Forrest Zhang
Singapore Management University

INTER-ASIA ENGAGEMENTS



CLUSTER LEADER

Prof Tim Winter

CLUSTER MEMBERS

Assoc Prof Mairii Aung-Thwin

Dr Han Cheng

Prof Kenneth Dean

Dr Max Jakob Fölster

Dr Stefan Huebner

Dr Fathun Karib

Assoc Prof Sumit Mandal

Dr Abdul Jaleel P.K.M.

Dr Jacob Rinck

Dr Rani Singh

Dr Zezhou Yang

2025 saw a continuation of the overarching orientation of the Inter-Asia Engagements (IAE) cluster, and indeed a consolidation of the key areas of strength, namely: 1) Environments and Oceans; 2) Infrastructures of Connection and Integration; 3) Heritage Futures; and 4) Inequality, Development and Labour. Together these four domains examine Asia in terms of a range of historical and contemporary connections, and, simultaneously, uphold a geographically expansive focus on Arabia-Asia, the north-south links from Central and Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia, and the ocean-based spaces of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. To help deliver this ambitious research programme new members have been recruited to the cluster. Membership of the cluster remained healthy over the course of the year, with a number of new additions and the appointment of a postdoctoral fellow, Dr Kyueun Kim, who will take up her appointment in late 2026.

In the second quarter of 2025, ARI was awarded 300,000 Euros for the multi-institution collaboration *Global Indo-Pacific: Connecting Histories and Futures*, from the Max Weber Foundation. From ARI this was co-led by Profs James Sidaway and Tim Winter, and involves several members of the IAE cluster. This is phase 1 of a long-term project that will involve a larger application (c2.5 million Euros) to be submitted in March 2026. If funded, this initiative is likely to bring significant resources to the cluster, including funded research positions. In its current form, the project has three Modules: History, Heritage and Civilisation (co-led by Tim Winter); Knowledge, Networks, and Institutions (co-led by James Sidaway); Earth, Energy and Water (co-led by Stefan Huebner), each of which is directly connected to the work of the cluster. This means there will be workshops and other activities over the next three plus years that will benefit from the thematic thinking coming out of the cluster.

This project also nicely connects with the work of Alvin Lim, on *Archipelagic Mappings and Performance Routes, Routers, and Networks (1840-1940)*, which runs through to early 2028. This interdisciplinary initiative connects theatre studies, to maritime history and heritage, to digital methodologies. A workshop held in July titled *Archipelagic Performance Histories and Digital Methods* will lead to an edited collection to be published in 2026. On the back of this workshop, new associate members were encouraged to join the cluster.

In his role as President of the Society of Floating Solutions (Singapore), Stefan Huebner hosted an interdisciplinary webinar and public lecture series involving several NUS institutes. He is also co-organiser of the annual *World Conference on Floating Solutions* and the Deputy Chair of its International Scientific Committee, the last event having been held in September 2025 in Finland and the next one taking place in October 2026 at the Singapore Expo. This has developed into grant applications which were submitted in the latter part of the year.

Pursuing the goal of promoting cutting-edge research across diverse areas of Arabia Asia Studies, the Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship had a productive year, organising a wide range of academic activities. It launched the Muhammad Alagil Lecture Series, organised two conferences and one roundtable, prepared the mock-up of its revamped website, and submitted a book manuscript for review. More details on the project are given below.

IAE also aims to more explicitly build expertise in the area of critical heritage studies. The underlying orientations of the cluster mean this will provide distinct innovation in our understanding of the future of heritage in Asia. A SSRH-TG Tier 2 application *Heritage Diplomacy; Connecting Histories and Futures* was successfully awarded S\$3,825,000 in Q2. Led by Tim Winter, this five-year project involves several members of the cluster and focuses on heritage diplomacy futures, material culture histories of gifting in Asia and digital heritage futures as its core pillars. The project addresses the challenges facing Southeast Asia, as China, India, Turkey, and others take up civilisational, oceanic, and transcultural imaginaries of history to secure political influence in the region. The project involves a collaboration with the National Heritage Board, Department of Conservation and the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Dr Fathun Karib led the development of a workshop on *The Geological Turn in Asia: Empires, Geological Knowledge, and Geological Agencies*, which ran for two days in early September. A few weeks later Prof Chua Beng Huat organised with colleagues a two-day workshop titled *East Asian Pop Culture: 30 Years of Transformation*.

In early April, the cluster hosted a three-person delegation from the Center for European Studies, University of Warsaw. This involved a roundtable on Regions and Regionalisms in Asia and Europe, and a collaboration with the Asia Europe Foundation, Singapore for a half-day Forum on the Future of Europe-Asia cultural relations.

Through the year strong emphasis was placed on the sharing of writings in development for publication, via regular meetings. As with other ARI clusters, IAE continues to be inter- and multidisciplinary. This then speaks to the broader research goals of NUS, and the issues under investigation are all highly topical and thus amenable to external funding. Indeed, in line with ARI's institutional requirements for increasing research grant income, regular discussions have taken place regarding the importance of grant development initiatives that could be housed in the cluster.

CLUSTER ASSOCIATES

Dr Céline Coderey
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Dr Clay Eaton
Department of Japanese Studies, NUS

Asst Prof Sahana Ghosh
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Asst Prof Hannah Ming Yit Ho
Universiti Brunei Darussalam

Asst Prof Sabina Insebayeva
Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan

Dr Kyueun Kim
Department of English, Linguistics & Theatre Studies, NUS
FROM 1 AUG 2025

Asst Prof Ting Hui Lau
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS
FROM 1 MAR 2025

Asst Prof Eng Hui Alvin Lim
Department of English, Linguistics & Theatre Studies, NUS

Asst Prof Neena Mahadev
Duke University

Asst Prof Anthony Medrano
Brown University

Asst Prof Canay Özden-Schilling
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Asst Prof Matthew Reeder
Department of History, NUS

Assoc Prof Teresita Cruz-Del Rosario
NYU-Abu Dhabi

Prof Naoko Shimazu
University of Tokyo

Prof James D. Sidaway
Department of Geography, NUS

Dr Yang Yang
Department of Chinese Studies, NUS

Dr Roweena Yip
NUS College
FROM 1 AUG 2025

MIGRATION AND MOBILITIES



CLUSTER LEADER

Prof Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho

CLUSTER MEMBERS

Ms Kristel Anne Acedera
Dr Eva Samia Dinkelaker
Dr Theodora Lam
Dr Kris Hyesoo Lee
Dr Bernice Loh
Dr Qianhui Tan
Dr Yang Wang
Dr Wei Yang
Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh FBA
Ms Franchesca Rose Morais
Mr Yoga Prasetyo
Ms Asa Rahadini

The Migration and Mobilities (formerly Asian Migration) cluster encapsulates research in a broad range of human migrations, mobilities and interconnectivities within and beyond Asia. The cluster's research agenda is structured around four principal thematic priorities:

1. The first focuses on the material processes and discourses of globalisation and transnationalism as they intersect in Asian cities. This includes exploring new knowledge frameworks through which to understand the complex and diverse linkages between global change and transnational migration in cities of diversity.
2. The second research theme investigates the relationship between human aspiration, migration and development in Southeast Asia, with a focus on the development impact of migration in sending communities as well as the costs and risks of migration for the poor.
3. A third research theme highlights the organisation and constitution of transnational (im)mobility as a means of (re)conceptualising different mobile practices, temporalities and rationalities that characterise both human and non-human movement and flow. This theme gives weight to the role of migration brokerage and migration infrastructure in organising and facilitating human mobility, as well as the diverse mobility systems that structure the movement of people alongside material objects and ideas, thereby shaping social practices on the ground.
4. Our fourth theme examines the nexus between transnational migration, health and wellbeing, giving special consideration to how these mutually constitutive processes are experienced by migrants and non-migrants relationally in domains such as ageing, care work and food (in)security.

The cluster was actively involved in several wide-ranging research projects throughout the year. This includes newly awarded projects such as *Futures of Migration and Mobility* (FUTUREMIG); *South-South Migration and Migrant Food Insecurity: Interactions, Impacts, and Remedies* (MiFOOD); and *Tracing Nurse Trajectories: Multinational Migration Amid Global Competition* (NURSETRACS); as well as recently concluded ones such as *A Study on Cross-National Families in Singapore* (XFAM); *Belt and Road Initiative and Student-Mobilities in China-Southeast Asia* (BRISM); *Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia* (CHAMPSEA); *Plastic Waste and Women's Household Practices in Asia and Australia* (PLASTICS); and *Transnationalism and Diaspora*. The team continues to review the rich data and generate insights and publications from these recently concluded projects whilst embarking on preparatory work for new projects such as FUTUREMIG and NURSETRACS.

Each year, the cluster convenes a series of thematic workshops that foster collaboration among established and emerging international scholars, together with cluster members, to generate critical insights and contribute to the advancement of migration scholarship. This year, the cluster organised five workshops that reflect the broad spectrum of empirical and conceptual topics pursued by its members. In January 2025, the cluster jointly organised a workshop on *Recalibrating "Skill" in Changing Immigration Regimes: Skilled Migrants and the Nature of Work in Asia* with researchers from the project on Qualification and Skill in the Migration Process of Foreign Workers in Asia (QuaMaFa). Co-funded by ARI and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany, the workshop examined how structural shifts in the global economy and digitalisation are changing the working environment and subjectivities of skilled migrants in Asia. In March, the cluster co-organised a workshop with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on the topic of *Global Foodscapes: Transnational Pathways of*

Food and Migration In and Out of Asia. The workshop brought together papers that addressed migrant food security, food logistic chains and multicultural foodways.

In partnership with the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), the cluster's third workshop, titled *Theorising Migration and Social Mobility in Asia and Beyond*, took place in April 2025. Co-funded by the European Research Council, the event considered the interactions between multiple forms of migration and processes of social mobility. During the same month, the cluster organised another workshop with co-funding from the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation. Titled *Gender and New Educational Mobilities in Asia and Beyond*, this workshop foregrounded how gender both shapes and is shaped by migration, as well other intersectional identity axes.

The cluster's fourth workshop took place in August 2025, showcasing themes from the XFAM, BRISM and CHAMPSEA projects. Titled *Children and Youth in Asian Migration: Temporalities, Transitions, and Turbulence*, the event explored how migration shapes the life trajectories, identities and aspirations of children and youth, as well as intergenerational pathways. Members of the CHAMPSEA project held a project meeting on the third day, sharing findings from the third wave of the research and discussing future pathways for the longitudinal project. The last event of the year was co-organised with the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities at the Singapore University of Technology and Design. Addressing the topic of "Digital Work, Mobilities and Changing Cities in Asia", the workshop assembled a range of perspectives on how digital work impacts migration flows and migrants' embodied labour alongside new labour mobilities such as working remotely, digital nomadism and offshore jobs.

The cluster also had an active seminar schedule in 2025 with five international speakers presenting their work at ARI that year. In April 2025, Prof Fran Martin (University of Melbourne) shared about her research on "Unsettling: Chinese International Graduate Women Navigating (Im)mobility and Chrononormativity". This seminar was followed by Prof Tim Cresswell (University of Edinburgh) who spoke about the hierarchies of mobility titled "The Citizen and the Vagabond 2: On Speed". In August 2025, Dr Earvin Calbaquinto (Monash University) gave a seminar on "Socio-Technical Care Vortex: Older Migrants' Navigating the Paradoxes of Informal Support for Digital Inclusion in a Networked Home", in which he advocated for the digital inclusion of migrant older adults.

In September 2025, the cluster welcomed Prof Gerasimos Tsourapas (University of Birmingham) who gave a seminar on "Migration Power in International Politics: Origins, Evolution, and Future Directions". In the last seminar held in November 2025, Prof Elena Barabantseva (University of Manchester) shared about her newly published book, *Post-Soviet Brides in the China Dream: Migration, Marriage, and Geopolitics Across Borders*.

The cluster also organised informal sharing sessions for early career researchers at ARI. In the first session in August 2025 Dr Earvin Calbaquinto shared his expertise in using visual methods for migration research. The second session in September 2025 was by Prof Gerasimos Tsourapas, Editor-in-Chief of the journal, *Migration Studies*. Through this session, the early career participants deepened their knowledge of publishing in the field of migration studies.

CLUSTER ASSOCIATES

Asst Prof Vanessa L. Banta
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FROM 1 AUG 2025

Assoc Prof Lois Bastide
University of French Polynesia
FROM 1 FEB 2025

Dr Exequiel C. Cabanda
Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies, NUS
FROM 15 AUG 2025

Dr Yi 'En Cheng
NUS College

Asst Prof Sahana Ghosh
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Assoc Prof Kong Chong Ho
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Assoc Prof Zachary M. Howlett
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS
FROM 1 AUG 2025

Assoc Prof Weiqiang Lin
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Assoc Prof Yasmin Ortiga
Singapore Management University

Dr Bittiandra Chand Somaiah
NUS College

Assoc Prof Eric C. Thompson
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University Prof Gungwu Wang
Dean's Office, NUS

Assoc Prof Junjia Ye
Nanyang Technological University

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY ON CHILDREN GROWING UP IN CROSS-CULTURAL FAMILIES (SUB PROJECT OF BUILDING HUMAN CAPACITY IN SINGAPORE'S POPULATION [SG-LEADS-CCF]) AND A STUDY ON CROSS-NATIONAL FAMILIES IN SINGAPORE (XFAM)

PROJECT MEMBERS

Principal Investigator
Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh FBA

Co-Investigators
Emeritus Prof Shirlena Huang
Assoc Prof Esther Goh
Dr Theodora Lam

Research Fellow
Dr Bernice Loh

Postdoctoral Fellow
Dr Wei Yang

The everyday lives of cross-national families in Singapore across different family life-stages were studied in two recently concluded research projects, *Ethnographic Study on Children Growing Up in Cross-Cultural Families* (SG-LEADS-CCF) and *A Study on Cross-National Families in Singapore* (XFAM). Both qualitative studies offered complementary and intergenerational insights into **family formation, parenting practices, and citizenship trajectories that span foreign spouses' efforts to secure local citizenship and cross-national children's reflections on citizenship choice.**

Funded by an SSRTG grant, SG-LEADS-CCF conducted over two waves of in-depth qualitative interviews between 2018 and 2021 focused on cross-national married couples with young children aged seven and below residing in Singapore. The study explored how parents with young children navigated parenting, transnational constraints and opportunities, and **efforts to secure more stable residency status** during the early years of child-rearing in cross-national households. In Wave 1, 123 individuals were interviewed while Wave 2 followed up with 111 of these participants comprising Singaporean men and women married to foreign spouses. By centring on the spouses' perspectives, the project examined how features **of family life associated with a non-citizen spouse—spanning immigration policy, labour market insecurity, and caregiving responsibilities—shaped** everyday family concerns and cross-national family experiences. Findings from SG-LEADS-CCF have been published in leading journals including *Mobilities*, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, and *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, addressing themes such as pandemic-induced immobility, the affective dimensions of child-raising, and domains of integration among lower-income marriage migrants in Singapore.

Building on the foundation laid by SG-LEADS-CCF, the **XFAM** project (2022–2024) extended the analytical lens to include the voices of the **children of cross-national families**. Externally funded, XFAM interviewed children and youth of mixed parentage aged 10 to 25 alongside their cross-national parents, capturing family dynamics across generations and life stages. In total, the study interviewed 65 households comprising 104 parent-participants and 65 young-participants. This intergenerational approach enabled the project to examine how children growing up in cross-national families understand identity formation, processes of integration, and citizenship decision-making, while situating these perspectives within broader family narratives.

Taken together, SG-LEADS-CCF and XFAM provide a longitudinal and intergenerational account of cross-national families in Singapore, tracing trajectories from early child-rearing to children's own reflections on identity and citizenship pathways. The most recent XFAM publication appeared in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, examining the strategic and affective considerations underpinning children's citizenship choices.

PUBLICATIONS, 2025

Loh, B., Yeoh, B.S.A., & Yeung, W.J. Pandemic-induced immobility and female marriage migrants in cross-national families in Singapore. *Mobilities*, online first. DOI: [10.1080/17450101.2025.2605057](https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2025.2605057).

Loh, B., Yeoh, B.S.A., Huang, S., & Yeung, W.J. The affective dimensions of child-raising in cross-national families in Singapore. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, online first. DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2025.2594854](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2594854).

Loh, B., Yeoh, B.S.A., Lam, T., & Yeung, W.J. Lower-income marriage migrants and domains of integration in Singapore. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 66, 85–94. DOI: [10.1111/apv.12439](https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12439).

Loh, B., Yeoh, B.S.A., Lam, T., & Goh, E.C.L. Citizenship pathways of children with cross-national parents: strategic and affective contemplations of citizenship choice. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 48(14), 2881–99. DOI: [10.1080/01419870.2024.2441908](https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2024.2441908).

Loh, B., Yeoh, B.S.A., Huang, S., & Yeung, W.J. Structural vulnerability and neoliberal subjectivities of low-income binational families in Singapore. *Women's Studies International Forum* 94, 102634. DOI: [10.1016/j.wsif.2022.102634](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2022.102634).

PRESENTATIONS, 2025

Yeoh, B.S.A. & Lam, T. (19–21 November). Pathways to permanence? Privilege and precarity in negotiating transnational citizenship in Singapore. *Theorizing Transience: Temporary Migrations in the Middle East and Asia-Pacific*. New York University Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Loh, B., Yeoh, B.S.A., Lam, T., & Goh, E.C.L. (11–12 Aug). Cross-national youth, aspirations and intergenerational ambivalence in Singapore. *Children and Youth in Asian Migration*. Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, Singapore.

Yeoh, B.S.A. (7–9 July). Migration and multicultural diversity in the context of rapid ageing in Asia [Keynote Address]. *The 2025 South East Asia Research Group (SEAREG) Summer Conference*. Mahidol University, Duke Sanford Centre for International Development and Henry Luce Foundation, Bangkok, Thailand.

Lam, T. & Yeoh, B.S.A. (1–4 July). Navigating co-ethnic and mixed-race identities among cross-national children in Singapore. *The 22nd IMISCOE Annual Conference*. Campus Condorcet, Aubervilliers, Paris, France.

Yang, W. & Yeoh, B.S.A. (3–4 April). Reconceptualising transnational marriage migration through the nexus of social-spatial mobility. *Theorizing Migration and Social Mobility in Asia and Beyond*. Asia Research Institute and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), National University of Singapore, Singapore.

RELIGION AND GLOBALISATION



CLUSTER LEADER

Prof Kenneth Dean

CLUSTER MEMBERS

Assoc Prof Mairii Aung-Thwin
Dr Michel Chambon
Dr Jia Wen Hing
Dr Guan Thye Hue
Dr Nor Ismah
Dr Erica Larson
Dr Amorisa Wiratri
Dr Kang Yu
Ms Chyen Yee Lee
Mr Quang Anh Tran, Billy
Ms Annisa Sekaringrat

The Religion and Globalisation cluster has continued its focus on heritage and digital humanities through several research projects and events held in 2025. From 27–28 November, Cluster Leader Prof Kenneth Dean and Research Fellow Yu Kang convened the workshop, *Digital Scholarship on Overseas Chinese Historical and Religious Documents: Collecting, Categorizing, Editing, Publishing*, focused on the sustainable preservation of historical sources in the region using digital humanities tools. The roundtable “One Village, One Temple: A Window into Early Everyday Life in Singapore” (April 2025) brought a spotlight to Singaporean heritage in this historical dive into *kampong* temple life and involved current and former cluster members. Earlier in the year (January 2025), the cluster hosted another event focused on the digital humanities, titled *New Directions for the South China School: Southeast Asia and Digital Humanities*.

In addition, the cluster has also continued its investigation of religion and mobility through a transnational lens. In January 2025, Research Fellow Michel Chambon convened the workshop *Framing Migration: The Role of Religious Actors in the Production of International Law*, funded by a Paris-NUS research collaboration. The workshop brought together scholars who considered how Catholic networks have shaped international legal frameworks on migration, with a focus on Euro-Asian Migrational Flows. The cluster also began research for the *PINDAH* project (*Perspectives on Identity, Nationality, Diasporic Affinities, and Home*), led by Principal Investigator Senior Research Fellow Erica M. Larson (with Co-PI Dr Bittiandra Chand Somaiah). The project is aimed at understanding the experience of religiously and ethnically diverse Indonesians as a diasporic group in Singapore. Postdoctoral Fellow Amorisa Wiratri, Research Associate Annisa Sekaringrat, and Research Assistant Quang Anh Tran all joined the cluster during the year to lend their expertise to this ongoing research.

In 2025, Research Fellow Michel Chambon oversaw the activities and institutional development of ISAC, *Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics*. In collaboration with colleagues across the region, ISAC hosted four workshops: one at ARI on migration; one in Indonesia on Catholicism and tourism; one online on Asian Catholicism and international relations; and one in Japan on Asian Catholic museums. Dr Chambon also organised ten small public talks at NUS related to Christian studies. After the death of Pope Francis, Dr Chambon provided extensive expertise to various media outlets on the Asian legacy of Pope Francis and the profiles of Asian cardinals. In addition to several shorter publications, he also authored a monograph in French on Christianity in Xi Jinping’s China (Éditions du Cerf) and edited a special issue of the *International Journal of Asian Christianity* on Asian Catholic materials and spaces. On 8 December, Dr Chambon and his ISAC colleagues announced that the research network had entered a dormant phase, formally concluding Phase I (four years hosted by ARI), with the intention of transitioning to a reconfigured Phase II in the future.

Senior Research Fellow Erica M. Larson collaborated with colleagues at Lund University during her visiting fellowship there in May 2025 to convene the conference *Religion and Value Education between Asia and Europe*. In addition, she was invited as a resource person for the International Consultation on “Artificial Intelligence and Posthumanism: Ethical and Theological Perspectives” held by the Christian Conference of Asia in Cyberjaya, Malaysia. Dr Larson also held a visiting fellowship at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta, Indonesia in November 2025 to facilitate collaborative projects and exchange. She published an article in a special issue on education in conjunction with social and spatial mobility, titled “Assessing value and questioning self-worth in educational migration: Indonesian university students in Singapore” in *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*.

In 2025, Research Fellow Kang Yu published a paper titled “Crossing two mountains: A road management practice for massive commercial use in early modern China” in *Journal of Asian History* (Vol 59: 217–246). Another paper “Financing for Singapore’s entrepôt trade: Chinese merchant Pek Sam Choon in the Sino-Southeast tea business, 1927–1936” has been accepted by *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. Other papers on topics such as embroidery trade, rice trade, and Chinese accounts books have been submitted to journals and are currently under review.

Postdoctoral Fellow Amorisa Wiratri was invited as speaker for an online seminar on Chinese Indonesian Food Culture and Heritage by Utrecht University in July 2025, under the *Diaspora Erfgoed in Beweging Project*. On 1 November 2025, Amorisa presented her research on Suriname Javanese Repatriates in West Sumatra at the *Indonesian Diaspora Symposium*. In late November 2025, she was also invited as a participant in the 49th Southeast Asia Seminar, hosted in Phnom Penh by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University. The seminar highlighted the importance of the transdisciplinary and area studies approach in understanding the phenomena in Southeast Asia.

In 2025, Postdoctoral Fellow Nor Ismah published two peer-reviewed articles: “Beyond the hashtag: The intersection of feminist ethics and social media in fostering safe spaces for women” in the journal *Indonesia*, and “Issuing justice: Women ulama, fatwas, and the ratification of Indonesia’s sexual violence crime bill” in the *African Journal of Gender and Religion*. In the same year, she published a book review of *The Cambridge Companion to Women and Islam* (ed. Masooda Bano) in *Islamic Studies Review*. Ismah’s major invited presentation were “Muslim Women’s Movements and the Decolonisation of Religious Authority in Indonesia” at the University of Münster, Germany, in September 2025, and “KUPI: A Transformation from Intellectual to Social Movement,” at the *Women, Religion, and Constitutional Participation Symposium* organised by Women Living Under Muslim Laws and partners in December 2025. She also served as guest co-editor of a special issue of the *African Journal of Gender and Religion* on the Congress of Indonesian Women Ulama, published in August 2025, and convened a related ARI public roundtable on “The Congress of Indonesian Women Ulama and the Future of Gender Justice in Muslim Southeast Asia and Beyond”, in November 2025.

CLUSTER ASSOCIATES

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Independent Researcher

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Zhejiang University

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY



CLUSTER LEADER

Assoc Prof Jiat Hwee Chang

CLUSTER MEMBERS

Dr Hui Yun Cher
Assoc Prof Gregory Clancey
Dr Walker DePuy
Dr Jonathan Galka
Dr Connor Graham
Dr Fathun Karib
Dr Eric Kerr
Dr Justin Chun-Him Lau
Dr Yingshan Lau
Dr Michelle Miller
Dr Jay Mar Quevedo
Dr Saritha Kittie Uda
Ms Belinda Cheng
Mr Hao Pei Chu
M.N. Shehryar
Ms Jenne Jie Ying Tok

The Science, Technology and Society (STS) Cluster had a typically busy and productive year in 2025. The two main research projects hosted by the cluster were *Climate Governance of Nature-based Carbon Sinks in Southeast Asia* funded by a Singapore Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Thematic Grant and *History and Sustainability of Animal-Based Drugs in Asian Traditional Medicines* funded by a Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) Tier 2 grant.

The first project led by Principal Investigator Prof David Taylor places social science scholarship at the centre of climate governance strategies involving Nature-based Carbon Sinks (NCS) in Southeast Asia. It aims to bridge natural and social sciences by examining the governance of NCS across various spatial and administrative scales, addressing the socio-spatial, economic, and land use factors that affect the long-term effectiveness of NCS in mitigating climate change and contributing to low-carbon initiatives in the region. The project completed the third year of the five-year funding period.

The second project, led by Assoc Prof Gregory Clancey, investigates the expansion in the use and trade of animal-based Traditional Medicine products in East and Southeast Asia from the 1950s until today, and questions the sustainability of the practice. The project was completed in late 2025. With its completion, the project's team—Principal Investigator Assoc Prof Clancey and research assistants Mr Chu, Ms Cheng, and Ms Tok—ended their appointments with ARI and the cluster.

In addition to the main research project, the cluster also completed a Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Seed Fund project in late 2025. Titled *(De)Carbonizing Asia: Histories and Futures of Energy, Space, and Infrastructure*, the project seeks to understand the current transition toward renewable energy and a low carbon future by studying past transitions into the current dependency on fossil fuels. The project understands energy transitions as complex sociotechnical and technopolitical issues with their lock-in effects and path dependencies. Led by Assoc Prof Jiat Hwee Chang, it seeks to understand the complexities of energy transitions in the transnational contexts of Singapore and Asia from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century. After organising a workshop in late 2024, the group conducted further archival and field research and embarked on preparing three journal articles for publication. Furthermore, the group also organised a closed-door workshop *Concrete Dis/assemblages* in the *Asian Anthropocene* with Dr Eli Elinoff on 30 September 2025 to develop ideas for a MOE Tier 2 grant proposal, which we plan to submit in mid-2026.

The cluster organised two workshops and a symposium in 2025. The first was *Natural Climate Solutions in Southeast Asia: Positioning Local Carbon Transitions within Global Frameworks*, 8–9 May 2025, held as part of the *Climate Governance of Nature-based Carbon Sinks in Southeast Asia* project. The second, *Bytes and Biomes: Navigating the Digital-Environment Nexus across Southeast Asia*, 16–17 October 2025, was jointly organised by Dr Walker Depuy with Assoc Prof Birgit Bräuchler and Dr Lukas Fort of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Copenhagen. The final event is *"Medicinal Animals" in Crisis: A Three-Part Symposium*, 9 October 2025, organised as the concluding event of the MOE Tier 2 grant *History and Sustainability of Animal-Based Drugs in Asian Traditional Medicines*.

The cluster also organised and co-organised a number of seminars in 2025. These include *Environmental Turn in Southeast Asian Studies – A Discussion with the 2025 Harry J. Benda Prize Co-winners*, 4 February 2025, a seminar featuring Dr Faizah Zakaria and Dr Adam Bobbette, the joint winners of the prestigious Harry J. Benda Prize; *The Social Properties of Concrete*, 30 September 2025; a roundtable discussion featuring Dr Eli Elinoff, Dr Joshua Comaroff, Dr Saptarshi Sanyal, and Dr Dorothy Tang; *Buddhist Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence: From Ontology to Ethics*, 10 October 2025 featuring Prof Rethy Chhem.

In 2025, we welcomed Postdoctoral Fellows Dr Justin Lau and Dr Saritha Kittie Uda and five new cluster associates.

CLUSTER ASSOCIATES

Asst Prof Chaewon Ahn
Department of Architecture, NUS

Dr Robert Cole
WWF Greater Mekong, Thailand

Dr Connor Graham
Tembusu College, NUS
FROM 1 JUL 2025

Asst Prof Naomi Hanakata
Department of Architecture, NUS

Asst Prof Robin H. Honggare
Department of Architecture, NUS
FROM 15 AUG 2025

Dr Kathryn Lynn Muyskens
Centre for Biomedical Ethics, NUS

Asst Prof Canay Özden-Schilling
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Asst Prof Tom Özden-Schilling
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Asst Prof Elliott Prasse-Freeman
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, NUS

Asst Prof Saptarshi Sanyal
Department of Architecture, NUS
FROM 15 AUG 2025

Prof Gerald Sim
Florida Atlantic University
FROM 1 AUG 2025 TO 30 DEC 2025

Asst Prof Dorothy Tang
Department of Architecture, NUS

Prof David Taylor
Department of Geography, NUS

Prof Petra Tschakert
Department of Geography, NUS
FROM 1 AUG 2025

Assoc Prof Helena Muhamad Varkkey
Universiti Malaya

Prof Fiona Williamson
Singapore Management University

Asst Prof Faizah Zakaria
Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS
FROM 15 AUG 2025

Assoc Prof Taomo Zhou
Department of Chinese Studies, NUS
FROM 15 AUG 2025

CARBON GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (CGSEA)



PROGRAMME MEMBERS

Principal Investigators

Prof David Taylor (PI)

Prof Lian Pin Koh (Co-PI)

Senior Research Fellow

Dr Michelle Miller

Research Fellows

Dr Yingshan Lau

Dr Jay Mar Quevedo

Dr Saritha Kittie Uda

Research Assistant

M. N. Shehryar

NUS Collaborators

Ms Melissa Low

Assoc Prof Massimo Lupascu

Ms Yustina Octifanny

Ms Yunrui Ren

Assoc Prof Alberto Salvo

Assoc Prof Darren Yeo

Launched in October 2022, the five-year *Carbon Governance in Southeast Asia* (CGSEA) research project is funded by the Social Sciences Research Council Singapore (SSRTG Type B: MOE2021-SSRTG-021; 2022 – 2027). Based at ARI, the CGSEA project builds upon, and further expands, the successful five-year SSRTG project on *Sustainable Governance of Transboundary Environmental Commons in Southeast Asia* (MOE2016-SSRTG-068: 2017–2021). CGSEA places social sciences scholarship at the core of climate governance strategies centred on nature-based carbon sinks, defined as ecosystems that absorb and store more carbon than they release. Geographically, the project focuses on Southeast Asia, a region rich in carbon sequestration potential where the socio-spatial relations, economic realities and land use regimes that underpin the medium to long-term effectiveness of carbon sinks in mitigating climate change remain understudied. The project aims to strengthen linkages between the natural and social sciences by assessing the optimal arrangements for governing carbon sinks at and across a range of spatial and administrative scales. With its focus on the governance of different types of carbon sinks found in terrestrial and mangrove forests, peatlands and agricultural soils and seagrass meadows, the project locates technologies of nature-based governance within the socio-spatial contexts, power asymmetries and institutional cultures that shape their success or failure. In these ways, this policy relevant research contributes to ongoing efforts by Singapore and other ASEAN member countries to adapt and build resilience to climate change challenges by developing low-carbon initiatives with social, economic and environmental co-benefits.

In the grant's third year, NUS-based CGSEA researchers continued making progress on the grant's deliverables. ARI Senior Research Fellow Dr Michelle Miller co-led grant activities and Work Package 4 (on the Systems, Technologies and Social Relations of Nature-based Carbon Sinks), together with Principal Investigator Prof David Taylor. ARI Research Fellows Drs Yingshan Lau and Jay Mar Quevedo coordinated research activities for Work Packages 1 (Forests) and 2 (Blue and Teal Carbon) respectively. 2025 marked the end of ARI Research Fellow Dr Wayne Rice's term with the CGSEA grant, and the commencement of Dr Saritha Kittie Uda's Research Fellowship in Work Package 3 (Peatlands and Agricultural Soils). Two grant-funded PhD students, Ms Yunrui Ren (Work Package 1) and Ms Yustina Octifanny (Work Package 3), passed the qualifying exams for their PhD candidature in March and April 2025 respectively. One PhD student funded by the grant, Mr Mark Chong (Work Package 2), chose to terminate his grant-funded PhD scholarship and, thus, his PhD studies, in April 2025. The project's Research Assistant, M. N. Shehryar, continued coordinating the grant's administrative activities in addition to providing research support.

2025 proved to be a fruitful year for field research in multiple sites across Southeast Asia. CGSEA collaborators undertook mangrove and peatland governance research in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. They also conducted research in Luang Prabang, Laos (on gendered carbon dynamics, developments in jurisdiction-based conservation strategies, and private sector interventions in forest carbon governance), and Krabi, Thailand (on gendered carbon dynamics and seagrass and mangrove governance). Additionally, Ms Octifanny and Ms Ren commenced field research for their PhD theses in West Kalimantan, Indonesia, and in various sites across Laos, respectively. In Laos, Ms Ren was joined by Ms Shakura Bashir, a PhD candidate affiliate of the CGSEA grant based at NUS Centre for Nature-based Solutions. CGSEA researchers used a combination of semi-structured interviews, surveys, focus group discussions, GIS analysis and participant observation methods in their field-based research.

CGSEA collaborators continued to publish their findings in high-impact academic journals. In 2025, CGSEA researchers collectively published seven journal articles, including in *Ambio*, *Carbon Balance and Management*, *City and Environment Interactions*, *Global Environmental Change*, *Local Environment*, *Regional Studies in Marine Science*, and *WIREs Climate Change*. In addition, Dr Miller and Prof Taylor successfully proposed and are editing a special issue titled "Natural Climate Solutions in the Tropics" for *Environment Policy and Governance*, comprising a combination of invited contributions and an open call for papers.

The grant's project-wide workshop, *Natural Climate Solutions in Southeast Asia: Positioning Local Carbon Transitions within Global Frameworks*, was convened at ARI, NUS, from 8 - 9 May 2025. It explored the potential for, and implementation of, Natural Climate Solutions as strategies for facilitating local carbon transitions in local communities across Southeast Asia. The two-day event featured presentations from CGSEA's international research team, as well as scholars and practitioners from academic, governmental, and policy institutions that work on aligned topics in the region. CGSEA researchers also convened two themed panels for Work Packages 1 and 4 at the *AAS-in-Asia 2026* conference, held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 2 June 2025. These panels brought together members from the project's international research team and grant-funded PhD students to present their ongoing research.

In pursuit of disseminating key findings to wider audiences, CGSEA researchers participated in 14 conferences and workshops in 2025. Prof Taylor delivered a keynote speech at the *2025 Maritime Silk Road International Conference* in Kunming, China (12 October), and university seminars titled "Tropical Wetlands: Solutions for or Drivers of Climate Change" at Lanzhou University, China (20 October) and Trinity College, University of Dublin, Ireland (13 November). Dr Miller was an invited speaker at the *7th EnvironmentAsia International Conference 2025*, Bangkok, Thailand (5 September), and delivered an invited seminar at Singapore Management University (21 October). Prof Dan Friess was invited to speak for the *World Ocean Summit*, Tokyo, Japan (12 March) and delivered a keynote speech at the *Hainan International Blue Carbon Forum*, Hainan, China (18 July). Dr Lau presented on her work conducting participatory research on forest carbon governance in Laos online for a webinar (5 March), and in Harbin, China (22 July). Dr Quevedo was a resource speaker for *Mangrove Blue Carbon Roadmap to 2030 and Beyond* in Manila, the Philippines (18 June). CGSEA external collaborators Prof Dixon Gevaña and Assoc Prof Helena Varkkey also presented research related to the project, as an invited speaker for *Peatlands Futures: Integrating Data and Community Governance for Nature-Based Climate and Haze Solutions*, Singapore (24 November), and as an invited plenary speaker for the *3rd International Conference on Biodiversity and Sustainable Development 2025* in Langkawi, Malaysia (28 November). NUS-based collaborator Ms Melissa Low was this year's keynote speaker for the *SR Nathan Young Leaders Seminar*, Singapore (25 February). Ms Bashir shared insights from her collaborative fieldwork in Laos for *Getting Ahead of the Carbon Curve*, Singapore (15 October) and in her presentation at *AlterCOP30*, Singapore (17 November).

Throughout 2025, CGSEA members continued to earn prominent public recognition for their work, securing appointments to international climate initiatives and making contributions to the Singapore government's capacity-building efforts. Principal Investigator David Taylor and Dr Miller showcased the project's work in NUS' *Ignite Magazine* (Issue 2), Dr Lau was interviewed about her lead-authored review paper in *WIREs Climate Change* by *Mongabay*, and Assoc Prof Varkkey spoke about the causes, effects, and regulation of transboundary haze in Southeast Asia for a segment hosted by *State of Global Air*. CGSEA external collaborators Danny Marks and Janice Lee were appointed Lead Authors for Working Group II (Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Seventh Assessment Report (AR7). They will contribute to chapter 8 (Asia) and chapter 14 (Terrestrial, freshwater and cryospheric biodiversity, ecosystems and their services) of the AR7, respectively. Dr Lau and Mr Shehryar co-developed an outdoor learning journey on Carbon Project Development and Measuring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) as part of a larger, week-long workshop on Article 6 Implementation Capacity Building for African nations organised by NUS Sustainability Academy on behalf of Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry and Singapore Cooperation Enterprise. The session also included observers from Singapore's Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment, and South Pole.

Full details of all CGSEA publications, news and events are available on the project's regularly updated website: www.cgsea.org.

International Collaborators

Dr Robert Cole

Mekong Region Land Governance Project,
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Prof Daniel Friess

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Dr Andrew Jackson

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Dr Miles Kenney-Lazar

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Assoc Prof Helena Varkkey

University of Malaya, Malaysia

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KEY PUBLICATIONS, 2025

Dang, T.K., Le, H.G., Tran, T.L., & Lau, Y. [Seeking carbon justice through grassroots-led forest carbon measurement: Learning-by-doing in Vietnam's HEPA farmers field school](#). *Local Environment* 31 (2), 206–213.

Lau, Y., Kenney-Lazar, M., Bashir, S.N., et al. [Challenges in forest carbon governance: Insights from Southeast Asia](#). *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 16 (5), e70018.

Miller, M.A. [Carbon territoriality at the land-water interface](#). *Global Environmental Change* 90, 102954.

Miller, M.A. & Taylor, D. [Special Issue] Natural climate solutions in Southeast Asia: Positioning local carbon transitions within global frameworks. *Environmental Policy and Governance*. Status: Proposal accepted.

Quevedo, J.M.D., Miller, M.A., Gevaña, D.T., Marks, D., Friess, D.A., Tonoto, P., & Taylor, D. [Perceptions of coastal vegetated ecosystems: A systematic review across geographical and sectoral dimensions](#). *Ambio* 54, 1563–80.

Rice, W.S., Chan, S.H.M. & Pui, C. [Building 'soil-darity': Identifying personal priorities to facilitate greater participation in community composting initiatives to enhance urban resilience in Singapore](#). *City and Environment Interactions* 27, 100205.

Sofue, Y., Quevedo, J.M.D., Lukman, K.M., & Kohsaka, R. [Identifying changes in mangrove landscapes in the Philippines and Indonesia using remote sensing and community perceptions: Towards ecosystem services management](#). *Regional Studies in Marine Science* 82, 104023.

Zhou, Y., Lau, Y., Tan, Z.D., Tang, H., & Taylor, D. [Transparency, robustness, and consistency in aboveground forest carbon quantification methodologies used for tropical forest carbon projects: A review in Southeast Asia](#). *Carbon Balance and Management* 20, article no. 60.

ASIAN PEACE PROGRAMME



PROGRAMME MEMBERS

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Prof Kishore Mahbubani

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Amb. York Chor Tan

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Assistant Manager and Personal
Assistant to Programme Coordinator
Ms Fanny Chang

Administrative Director
Dr Kesava Chandra Varigonda

The [Asian Peace Programme](#) (APP) was launched on 1 July 2020 as a programme housed within the Asia Research Institute (ARI). The APP aims to generate pragmatic and implementable ideas that can help ameliorate and manage conflict in various parts of Asia.

In 2025, APP published 17 [Policy Essays](#), written by prominent scholars and policy practitioners worldwide. Our January 2025 essay set the tone for how the US-China relationship progressed over the year. Written by a prominent US-China scholar, Prof. Zhiquan Zhu of Bucknell University, the essay counselled the US to "view China's development and challenges objectively, and politicians should stop the senseless game of competing with one another over who is tougher on China. Instead of knee-jerk reactions of blindly blaming China for every single problem, a more reasoned response and search for mutually beneficial outcomes are a better way forward." Our October 2025 essay argued for charting a new course among the intellectuals and leaders of India and Pakistan, to better manage their fragile relations. Our essays also looked beyond the headlines towards the structural causes for lasting peace: how building and sustaining relations between the people of China and the United States is crucial; how China and Southeast Asia should intensify their economic and supply chain integration as a guarantor of peace; or why nuclear deterrence is so important for US-China relations.

Between July 2020 and December 2025, APP published altogether 79 policy essays, most of which have also been re-published in prominent newspapers and magazines, including *Foreign Policy*, *The Diplomat*, *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) and *The Straits Times*.

[APP Policy Briefs](#), of around 3,000–4,000 words each, are academic papers that take a deep dive into various aspects of conflict and peace in Asia. They are written by scholars and policymakers working on various aspects of conflict resolution in Asia and are peer reviewed by two external reviewers engaged by APP, prior to publication. Our three policy briefs of 2025 took a deep dive into how long-term peace and cooperation can be sustained between the US and China and between China and India. As the US and China look to re-calibrate their economic cooperation, our APP policy brief (written by the Washington DC-based Dr Yuhan Zhang, a major expert on US-China economic relations) will remain an important reference.

Finally, we also released 4 episodes of our [Asian Peace Talks](#) podcast series. These episodes covered the fraught relations among South Asian countries, among East Asian countries, as well as nuclear disarmament.

In July 2025, APP launched an open-access volume of essays titled, [Can Asians Think of Peace?](#). George Yeo graciously agreed to be the Guest-of-Honour at the book launch. The publisher, Springer Nature, stated that such open access volumes should aim for 20,000 downloads. Instead, in a space of six months, 295,000 copies have been downloaded in all corners of the world.

The APP is founded and helmed by Kishore Mahbubani, a Distinguished Fellow at ARI. Mr Mahbubani was also Founding Dean of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy from 2004 to 2017. Before that, he was with the Singapore Foreign Service for 33 years, from 1971 to 2004, where he served twice as Singapore's Ambassador to the United Nations and as Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Ministry from 1993–1998. Mr Mahbubani is the author of ten books, including his latest, *Living the Asian Century: An Undiplomatic Memoir*, published in 2024. The APP team also includes Senior Affiliated Fellow Mr York Chor Tan, who is a former Singapore Ambassador to France, and two researchers, Dr Kesava Chandra Varigonda and Kristen Tse Mei Tang. The APP is strongly supported by Ms Fanny Chang (Assistant Manager), personal assistant to Mr Mahbubani.

MUHAMMAD ALAGIL DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN ARABIA ASIA STUDIES

PROGRAMME MEMBERS

Chair

Assoc Prof Sumit Mandal

Research Fellow

Dr Abdul Jaleel P.K.M.

The first event of the [Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship Arabia Asia Studies](#) programme was the roundtable on the centenary of the Indonesian novelist, essayist and historian Pramoedya Ananta Toer on 6 February 2025. Sumit Mandal, Nor Ismah, and Fathun Karib from ARI presented and Taomo Zhou from Chinese Studies moderated the session. The event drew 25 in-person and 76 online attendees and generated fruitful discussion on the narratives and conceptual foundations of Pramoedya's work and their contemporary significance. A recording of the [event](#) is available on ARI's YouTube channel and has drawn a good number of viewers.

The second event was the workshop titled *Connecting Imaginaries 2: Mapping Interconnectedness in a Time of the Rescripting of Nation-States*, held on 30–31 July. This iteration of *Connecting Imaginaries* was the second in a series of three workshops that began in November 2024 and will conclude in March 2026. The series builds on interdisciplinary research on Arabia-Asia-Africa and draws primarily but not exclusively on the community of scholars at NUS. Its mission is to advance sustained, interdisciplinary conversations on transregional studies and publish significant work.

The workshop's scope, Arabia-Asia-Africa, provided an expansive geography that allowed for meaningful interaction between scholars working on different areas who collectively offered insights on a planetary scale. Contributors considered how their work helps us better understand transregional interconnectedness and its architectures in a time of the rewriting of national histories through forms of reterritorialisation based on ethno-religious claims to space. The purpose was to map the state of research on the topic and contribute to the larger conversation on global and planetary interdependence.

Fifteen short discussion papers were presented by members of ARI, the South Asian Studies Programme and four departments at NUS: Geography; Sociology and Anthropology; English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies; and Chinese Studies. The papers focused on a particular scale or multiple scales—from the transregional to the local—and considered interconnectedness beyond national and regional boundaries in Arabia-Asia-Africa. Presenters asked historical and contemporary questions on a broad range of topics, including Islamic feminism, Arabness, heritage diplomacy, gender in Malay literary archives, Arabia-Asia literary connections, circulation of food, transportation infrastructures, anthropology of astrology, geocultural imaginaries, a geological conceptualisation of Southeast Asia, Nepal-China connections, minorities through Indian literature, Hui (Chinese) Muslims, historical labour migration and politics, and contestations in transnational labour agreements.

During the closing discussion, presenters recognised that the world was going through a crisis if not a seismic political change. They acknowledged that it was insufficient to produce a critique alone but instead map interconnectedness as interdependence. Twentieth-century nationalisms eventually achieved international peace and the United Nations, but interdependence was not sufficiently recognised. With the climate crisis especially, interdependence is firmly on the table.

The workshop achieved its aim of building a network of scholars at NUS whose research is interdisciplinary and transregional in scope and the papers presented will be revised for publication following the third iteration of "Connecting Imaginaries" on 5–6 March 2026. Alternatives to the traditional academic journal or edited volume will be prioritised. Peter Schoppert from NUS Press who served as a discussant at the workshop provided helpful advice during the closing discussion about relevant and meaningful ways of publishing the papers, including online options.

The third and fourth events were the international conference and a lecture on 4–5 December 2025. *Exploring the Sacred: People, Place and Power in the Islamic Indian Ocean* was the eighth conference in a series begun in 2014 and opened novel themes and revised our thinking on key topics. Sufi textual, performative, and devotional work was a major theme that presenters explored anew by focusing on transregional sacred sites, rituals, health care, and wellbeing. Presenters also upended prevailing views about sovereignty, authority, and flows of Islamic knowledge, among other things, by showing how debates that arose in the seventeenth-century Malay world influenced scholarly production in Mecca and Egypt. Sixteen presenters based in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, India, Singapore, Indonesia, United Kingdom, France, United States and Canada came together to form a lively intellectual community with plans for ongoing collaboration. Plans are underway to submit the revised contributions for two separate journal special issues.

A mockup of the Professorship's website was shown to the conference attendees to provide an idea of the developing programme in Arabia Asia Studies, including its searchable archive of digitised manuscripts that is expected to open pathways to significant original research.

On the first evening of the conference, Assoc Prof Ismail Alatas of New York University gave the inaugural Muhammad Alagil Lecture in Arabia Asia Studies titled *The Sacred is in Relatedness: Arabia-Asia as a Geography of Friendship*. He spoke on transregional relationships of affect and kinship over and above the flow of goods, people, and ideas. Framed around the Bā-'Alawī, whose beginnings lie in Yemen, Alatas put forth an Arabia Asia Studies agenda that moves geographies of friendship from the periphery to the centre of our attention. Dr Harini Kumar of Yale University provided a critical reflection of the lecture.

Of the research and writing by members, the highlight was the completion by Dr Abdul Jaleel P.K.M. of his book manuscript following nearly two years of sustained work. In December 2025, Dr Abdul Jaleel submitted his manuscript "Sacred Sailors: Islam in the Sufi Cosmopolis of the Indian Ocean" for review with the Asian Connections Series of Cambridge University Press.



6.0 Events

Conferences and Workshops

ARI has been a place of encounters between the region and the world through the workshops, conferences and seminars it hosts, where ideas are generated and exchanged. Our events also engage with field practitioners, policymakers and the public.

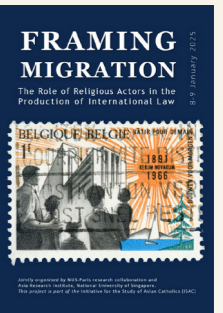
In 2025 the Institute organised 20 conferences, workshops and our annual graduate forum. These events were convened and hosted by ARI's research fellows and postdoctoral scholars. Event participants came from diverse academic communities in Singapore and throughout the world.

Framing Migration: The Role of Religious Actors in the Production of International Law

8–9 January 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenor: Dr Michel Chambon

Fully funded by the Paris-NUS research collaboration grant; part of the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics (ISAC) hosted by the Asia Research Institute at NUS



This workshop was part of a collaborative research grant jointly sponsored by NUS and Sciences Po Paris, designed to foster research collaboration between Asia and Europe. The grant, titled "Framing Migration" (2023-2025), is part of the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics (ISAC), hosted by the Asia Research Institute (ARI) at NUS. This collaborative project began in the fall of 2023 and will continue until September 2025. Initially formed with a small team of historians and scholars specialising in Asian Catholicism, the project focuses on the transnational history of Catholicism and Euro-Asian migration. Since October 2023, the team has met online on several occasions, and key members met in person in Paris in June 2024. This workshop at ARI was designed to gather the entire team, present work-in-progress papers and foster stronger collaboration. It brought together 18 scholars who presented and discussed 12 research papers, aiming to explore the role of Catholic actors in the formation of international norms concerning human migration and refugees. The workshop played an essential role in collectively identifying core themes, defining additional research steps, and developing plans for publications. The team has drafted a detailed Conference Report and a proposal for a special issue. Bryan Goh (NUS) has begun conducting Zoom interviews with members of the team to prepare a new ISAC Podcast Series, consisting of 17 episodes, based on this research collaboration.

Recalibrating “Skill” in Changing Immigration Regimes: Skilled Migrants and the Nature of Work in Asia

16–17 January 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Dr Wang Yang, Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh, Dr Helena Hof and Dr Aimi Muranaka

Jointly organised with Qualification and Skill in the Migration Process of Foreign Workers in Asia (QuaMaFA) project funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany (BMBF)

This workshop was convened to interrogate the shifting meanings of “skill” and the changing labour market environments encountered by skilled migrants in contemporary Asia. Against a backdrop of structural shifts—including tightening immigration regimes, the rise of digitalisation, geopolitical turbulence, and the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic—the event sought to advance comparative and conceptual insights into how notions of skill are being redefined, contested, and lived in practice. Scholars from diverse disciplinary and geographical backgrounds examined the intersections between new working styles, evolving labour market demands, and migrants’ subjective experiences of work and life. Across six panels, presenters offered empirically grounded and theoretically informed analyses that spanned contexts including Singapore, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the UAE, and the Persian Gulf. Presentations highlighted how shifting workplace arrangements—from digital entrepreneurship to remote work—reshape migrants’ professional identities and integration experiences. Papers revealed how transnational entrepreneurship and new workplace arrangements simultaneously create opportunities and exacerbate challenges of social inclusion in host societies. Discussions also underscored how changing visa systems and labour market conditions destabilise once-secure professional pathways. A central theme that emerged was the instability of “skill” as a category: while states and employers wield it as a gatekeeping mechanism, migrants continually recalibrate their professional and personal strategies in response.

New Directions for the South China School: Southeast Asia and Digital Humanities

13–14 February 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Prof Kenneth Dean and Assoc Prof Zheng Li

Jointly organised with Wan Boo Sow Research Centre at the Department of Chinese Studies, NUS

The South China School of Chinese History (Huanan xuepai) combines historical research methods with the anthropology of ritual forms and everyday life still found in rural villages in Fujian and Guangdong. Through the discovery of local historical materials beyond traditional archives, this group of scholars has raised new questions about local identity and the reach of the state. The publications of the Huanan xuepai are numerous and influential, and the methodology proposed by the school members pioneered in Chinese studies has had a lasting impact on the understanding of Chinese history and culture. In the past few years, major collections of local materials have been published, including the voluminous Yongtai materials in Fujian edited by Zheng Zhenman and the survey materials on Guangdong villages collected by the South China Rural Research Center of Sun Yat-sen University. This workshop reflected on the achievements and ongoing promise of 40 years of research of the Huanan (and beyond) school of historical anthropology. It explored ways its unique methods and questions could open up the study of the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia. Discussions included alternative modes of storing historical documents and data in digital platforms, as well as the continuing challenges and limitations of digital humanities.



Law and Geography in Urban Asia

18–19 February 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Dr Dhiraj Nainani, Assoc Prof Mairii Aung-Thwin and Assoc Prof Kah-Wee Lee

This workshop sought to discover how urban Asia can be a site of material and visual collision between Western systems of law and Asian practices, traditions, customs, and understandings, and how this helps understand both law and space in the region. It hosted a total of 18 thematically rich and extensively researched papers that sought to examine the co-imbriation of law and Asian urban space through six panels: infrastructure and governance, the inner city, jurisdiction and territory, waters and islands, capital mobility and bordering, and the visual. The discussions covered sites in India, Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Hong Kong. Scholars who presented—as well as selected discussants—came from multiple disciplines (law, geography, sociology, anthropology, criminology, architecture, migration studies, cultural studies, China studies, and disaster studies) and from a range of institutions both in Singapore and abroad (University of Melbourne, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Indonesian National Research and Innovation Agency, University of the Philippines, University of Hong Kong, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, and Ateneo de Manila University). There was also strong attendance from non-participants both in-person and online, as the event had been advertised across a range of critical legal and geographical scholarship networks as well as ARI’s own publication channels.

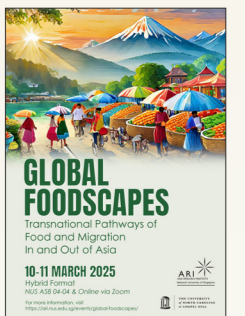
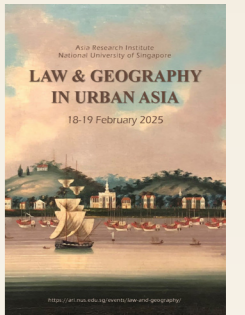
Global Foodscapes: Transnational Pathways of Food and Migration In and Out of Asia

10–11 March 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh, Assoc Prof Ji-Yeon O. Jo, Dr Bittindra Chand Somaiah, Dr Theodora Lam, Dr Kathleen Burke, Ms Kristel Acedera, Assoc Prof Christian Lentz, and Prof Conghe Song

Jointly organised with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

This workshop emerged as a response to understanding how the glocal and global foodscapes in post-pandemic Asia were being shaped by different levels of food insecurity and its relationships to changing migration flows and practices. We were interested in looking at how migrants were embedded within food production, distribution, and consumption networks as they accomplish food security away from home. Scholars from within and outside Asia created a fertile discussion centred on the dynamic relationship between migration and food practices, and how this related to the narratives and practices of addressing food insecurity in different scales (from the micro-level of food work and consumption within the family to the macro-level of food production and environmental changes). The papers presented represented a wide and varied geographical scope in Asia, portraying the richness and complexities of the different global foodscapes from Philippines, Cambodia, Nepal, Kerala, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Hong Kong, among others. Selected papers will be put together in a special issue proposal to *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, revolving around two interrelated themes focusing on two scales of migration and food security: (1) the micro-level of migrants’ food consumption practices and (2) the macro-level of sociopolitical, environmental, and agricultural changes that shape food production and mobilities.



Theorising Migration and Social Mobility in Asia and Beyond

3–4 April 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Dr Wei Yang, Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Dr Marta Bivand Erdal

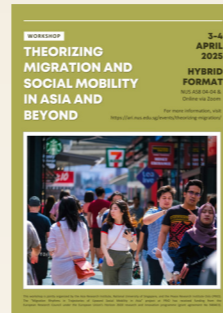
Upward social mobility in Asia today, whether aspirational or actual, predominantly refers to becoming middle class, with dramatic leaps increasingly being made into middle-classness. The expanding Asian middle class is empirically observable in its various manifestations: housing developments, shopping malls, and the proliferation of coffee joints, to mention just a few. While the lower bounds of the middle classes in Asia continue to confront varying degrees of precarity, for increasing proportions of populations across Asia, partaking in middle-class lifestyles is becoming aspirational if not occasionally within reach. Taking this as our point of departure for this workshop, we sought to draw links between these observable realities of social mobility, with the equally salient trend of migration in Asia and beyond. Focusing on the Asian context, the workshop sought to explore the interactions between multiple forms of migrations and the processes of social mobility, whether upward, downward, or sideways. Themes of interest linking social and spatial mobility included: the role of migration in the emergence of the new middle classes in Asia, for example, how upward mobility affects migration aspirations while also generating increasing demand for personal/domestic services provided by migrants; migration-citizenship regimes, opportunity structures and obstacles to social mobility; education, occupation, entrepreneurship, and property ownership as key factors in shaping the migration-social mobility nexus.

Crossing Boundaries: Food and Southeast Asia, 1500-Present

16–17 April 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Dr Kathleen Burke and Assoc Prof Jamie S. Davidson

The workshop brought together a diverse group of scholars—ranging from early career researchers to senior academics—from Southeast Asia and beyond. The event focused on exploring transnational and global methodologies in the study of food within a Southeast Asian context, addressing the relative absence of global frameworks in the region's food studies literature, which often emphasises national cuisines and culinary nationalism. Participants presented research highlighting the mobility, exchange, and transformation of foods, recipes, and food knowledge across borders. The panels encompassed a wide range of topics, including the historical trajectories of dishes such as Javanese *saoto* soup and Kari Kapitan, diasporic foodways among Southeast Asians abroad, culinary symbolism and religion, and the negotiation of national culinary claims. Scholars engaged with diverse methodological approaches, drawing on archival research, ethnography, historiography, literary studies, and heritage. Panel discussions emphasised how food can illuminate broader social, cultural, and historical processes, including trade, migration, identity formation, and the circulation of knowledge. The workshop successfully fostered dialogue between Southeast Asian studies and food studies, highlighting the potential for interdisciplinary and transnational approaches to enrich both fields. Participants noted that examining food beyond the nation-state framework opens new avenues for understanding historical and contemporary processes of cultural negotiation, exchange, and identity formation across the region.



Gender and New Educational Mobilities in Asia and Beyond

24–25 April 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Assoc Prof Zachary M. Howlett, Dr Kris Hyesoo Lee and Dr Yi'En Cheng

Funded by the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation Grant (IG22-SG007) on "Diligent Daughters: Chinese Women's Educational Revolution"

This workshop positions gender as a core analytical lens, drawing from feminist geopolitics, intersectionality, and queer studies to explore how gender both shapes and is shaped by migration flows, intertwined with race, class, nationality, sexuality, ability, and generation. It brought together international, regional, and local scholars to reflect on how emergent educational mobilities are produced, experienced, and governed through the lens of gender. The workshop featured nine panels and 24 papers, covering diverse geographical areas across Asia and beyond, including China, India, Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore), the UK, and Australia. Discussions spanned diverse themes, from the subjective experiences of safety and newfound freedom for female students in locations like Singapore to the challenging renegotiation of traditional gender roles by migrant couples and queer women in new host countries. Presenters also addressed how structural inequalities and familial expectations heavily influence mobility decisions, particularly for women from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds. Overall, the papers as a collective underscore how gender shapes educational mobilities through multi-scalar flows, state policies, and personal experiences, including migrant navigation of gender roles, patriarchal zones, and the impact of structural inequalities on migration pathways. The workshop emphasised gender as a core analytical lens for understanding both ongoing and emergent brain circulation, higher education financing, and geopolitical shifts in the post-pandemic era.

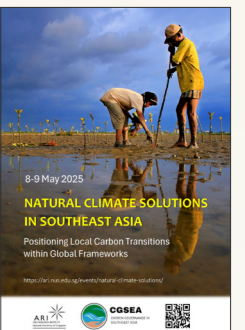
Natural Climate Solutions in Southeast Asia: Positioning Local Carbon Transitions within Global Frameworks

8–9 May 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Dr Michelle Miller and Prof David Taylor

Organised by the research project on Climate Governance of Nature-based Carbon Sinks in Southeast Asia; funded by Singapore's Social Science Research Council Thematic Grant (MOE2021-SSRTG-021)

Natural Climate Solutions (NCS) are key to international climate policy goals to limit global warming to below two degrees Celsius. Defined as a suite of actions to conserve, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified systems with societal co-benefits (IUCN, 2020), NCS have become integrated into environmental governance regimes across Southeast Asia in partial fulfilment of individual countries' Nationally Determined Contributions to the 2015 Paris Agreement. Climate change mitigation has become an important reason for protecting, restoring and enhancing ecosystems that are assumed to absorb and store more carbon than they release, otherwise known as natural or nature-based carbon sinks. These include terrestrial and mangrove forests, peatlands, agricultural soils and seagrass meadows, all of which are being transformed by the promise of affordable and scalable NCS. At the same time, growth-driven agendas pose serious challenges for NCS. The great majority of ecosystems in Southeast Asia that are effective carbon sinks are imminently vulnerable to degradation, driven by growing demands for commodities and land to support population growth, industrialisation and human settlement. This workshop featured 16 presentations exploring NCS policies, actions and arrangements in Southeast Asia within global climate frameworks and agendas. Scholars and practitioners presented theoretical and empirical research conducted in seven Southeast Asian countries (Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, and Myanmar) across six themes. The workshop brought together experts from a range of disciplines from universities in Singapore and abroad.



New Histories of Capitalism in Southeast Asia

7–8 Jul 2025, ARI, NUS

Organised by the Department of History, with support from the Journal of Southeast Asian Studies and ARI

This workshop was convened to bring to conclusion a series of dialogues among historians on the historiography of global capitalism from a regional standpoint. Two keynote lectures and 10 papers charted the continuities and discontinuities of economic institutions, ideologies and governance in twentieth century Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines within the context of modernisation and decolonisation debates during and after the Cold War. The workshop also considered the questions of race, gender and labor in relation to the emergence of creole and indigenous business sectors in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. We also examined the ecological impact of capitalistic development during the long twentieth century, paying particular attention to the conversion of forest landscapes to plantations and to the infusion of capital into brackish marine ecosystems. Apart from one from the United States and another from Europe, participants were all historians based in Singapore and around the region. The workshop aims to produce a special issue on the topic for the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. This will be the first substantive contribution to the global historical study of capitalism from Southeast Asia. The special issue is slated to appear in the journal sometime mid-2027.



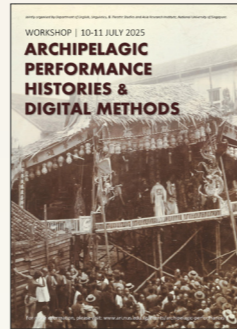
Archipelagic Performance Histories and Digital Methods

10–11 July 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Dr Alvin Lim Eng Hui, Dr Hedren Sum, Dr Kyueun Kim and Prof Tim Winter

Jointly organised with the Department of English, Linguistics, and Theatre Studies, NUS; funded by MOE-Social Science and Humanities Research Fellowship

The workshop explored the historical connections and flows of performance-making and travel across Asian regions, archipelagos, seas, straits, and beyond, focusing on developing research into cultural heritage and past intercultural engagements. It sought to identify maritime and land routes and geographical nodes that were part of performance networks, touring, diasporic exchanges, and migration of practitioners and troupes from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. Contributors worked on regional case studies that uncovered the histories and genealogies of travelling performers and troupes. In sum, the workshop featured studies that combine digital methods, historical GIS, and visualisations with archival research and data collection across archives and digital collections. 14 papers have been selected for an edited volume that would propose new ways to think about the relationship between mobility and performance as well as between the archive and memory. The chapters will uncover patterns of movement across nodes and geographical islands and consider the archives and traces of knowledge transmission that performing bodies left behind, and how they have been reimagined and reanimated in the present. Some participants were also invited to contribute historical data and short essays to an online performance database. This is a work-in-progress, and the database will be made available to the public in July 2026. Through this workshop, the convenors aimed to establish a network of performance scholars who will contribute to the study of archipelagic performance histories.



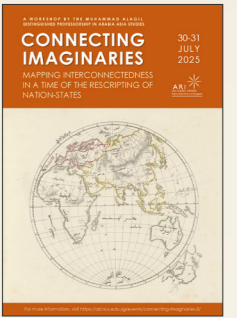
Connecting Imaginaries 2: Mapping Interconnectedness in a Time of the Rescripting of Nation-States

30–31 July 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenor: Assoc Prof Sumit Mandal

Organised by the Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship in Arabia Asia Studies, ARI

The workshop's scope, Arabia-Asia-Africa, provided an expansive geography that allowed for meaningful interaction between scholars working on different areas who collectively offered insights on a planetary scale. Contributors considered how their work helps us better understand transregional interconnectedness and its architectures in a time of the rewriting of national histories through forms of reterritorialisation based on ethno-religious claims to space. The purpose was to map the state of research on the topic and contribute to the larger conversation on global and planetary interdependence. Fifteen short discussion papers focused on a particular scale or multiple scales—from the transregional to the local—and considered interconnectedness beyond national and regional boundaries in Arabia-Asia-Africa. Presenters asked historical and contemporary questions on a broad range of topics, including Islamic feminism, Arabness, heritage diplomacy, gender in Malay literary archives, Arabia-Asia literary connections, circulation of food, transportation infrastructures, anthropology of astrology, geocultural imaginaries, a geological conceptualisation of Southeast Asia, Nepal-China connections, minorities through Indian literature, Hui (Chinese) Muslims, historical labour migration and politics, and contestations in transnational labour agreements. During the closing discussion, presenters recognised that the world was going through a crisis if not a seismic political change. They acknowledged that it was insufficient to produce a critique alone but instead map interconnectedness as interdependence. Twentieth-century nationalisms eventually achieved a framework for international peace through the United Nations, but interdependence was not sufficiently recognised. With the climate crisis especially, interdependence is firmly on the table.



Children and Youth in Asian Migration: Temporalities, Transitions, and Turbulence

11–12 August 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Dr Theodora Lam, Dr Bernice Loh, Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Dr Kris Hyesoo Lee

Partially supported by the Asian Metacentre Endowment, which is funded through the Wellcome Trust

This workshop brought together 17 papers that offered a more advanced and nuanced understanding of young people in migration, particularly in relation to their shifting and often unpredictable futures. The papers were organised into six thematic panels that collectively spanned a wide range of contexts, including intra-Asian migration, youth educational migration to Australia and China, and the experiences of second-generation youth in the Gulf. The papers also examined young people from a range of social backgrounds—from those migrating from less-developed regions in Asia, to others navigating cosmopolitan pathways, and to young migrant men who were more susceptible to precarious and hazardous forms of labour in receiving countries. Together, the papers moved beyond the more familiar framework of youth agency to examine how young people are positioned—and position themselves—in relation to the opportunities of migration and mobility, and how “youthfulness” is also a condition of migration decisions. Several papers in this workshop highlighted that youth migration aspirations cannot be detached from the family. Young people's migration and aspirational futures often intersect with, and are informed by, family-led migration, parental hopes and dreams, and intergenerational migration histories. The contributions to this workshop reveal how youth aspirations today are not only deeply entangled with migration, but also continually reworked—imagined, negotiated, and at times deferred—through the enduring influence of family and wider migration regimes that shape their opportunities and constraints.



Cities as Sites and Techniques of Futuring

19–20 August 2025, ARI, Singapore

Convenors: Assoc Prof Daniel PS Goh, Prof Tim Bunnell, Assoc Prof Kah Wee Lee, Dr Priza Marendraputra and Mr Zhan Jie How

Funded by the Singapore Ministry of Education Academic Research Fund Tier 2 grant (MOE-T2EP40222-0001) on Capitals of the Future: Place, Power and Possibility in Southeast Asia

Anchored in the *Capitals of the Future* research project, with its focus on Nusantara, Putrajaya, and key Singaporean districts, the symposium moved the discussion comparatively with futuring cities in Asia, such as Neom, Songdo, and Xiong'an. Participants critically examined how concepts such as smartness, innovation, spirituality, aesthetics, ecology, and governance are mobilised to legitimise particular visions of the future, often reworking ideas of the good life, social contracts, and human–nature relations. The symposium underscored the need to theorise futuring practices now, as these urban experiments increasingly shape lived realities, redistribute power, and foreclose or enable alternative futures in an era defined by climate uncertainty and rapid urban transformation. The symposium brought together 25 urban scholars worldwide under the thematic panels of futuring politics, smart city as method, worlding futuring, eco-futuring, utopian marginalities, and futuring strategies. The concluding discussion led by Dr Bosman Batubara grouped the rich discussions were seen into four interrelated clusters, revealing how temporal urbanism is actively produced through different tools and practices, including narratives, technologies, planning documents, and infrastructure and spatial production. The four clusters of discussion provided a more explicit and systematic engagement with time as a central dimension of capitalist urbanisation, particularly how speed, anticipation, and turnover shape both the production of urban space and the politics of whose futures are realised or foreclosed.



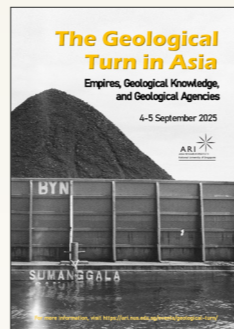
The Geological Turn in Asia: Empires, Geological Knowledge and Geological Agencies

4–5 September 2025, ARI, Singapore

Convenors: Dr Fathun Karib, Dr Faizah Zakaria and Prof Tim Winter

Jointly organised with the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS

This workshop sought to offer a comprehensive view into how area studies in Asia can be reshaped by geology as an earth science and social force as well as how it might be envisioned through more inclusive, decolonial perspectives. It brought together an incisive collection of working papers that examined how various Asian countries developed geological knowledge, the roles that political and economic interests play in advancing geology as a science, the interpretations of geological forces in indigenous cosmologies, diverse faiths and traditional philosophies as well as the need to mitigate geological disruptions, including the slow violence of toxic waste. Accommodating a total of 24 papers presented by scholars from multiple disciplines, the workshop promoted a stimulating, inter-disciplinary conversation with interlocutors who are based in various institutions all over the world, including NUS, NTU, University of Tokyo, University of Cambridge, Murdoch University, University of London, University of Warwick, University of Southern California, Mae Fah Luang University, and Airlangga University. A closing discussion allowed the convenors to suggest options for following up on these academic conversations to produce publishable work that will set a new geological agenda for Asian Studies in the near future. A special issue of selected papers is being planned. It will explore how toxicity in our environment is intimately related to geological materials, whether as raw inputs or finished products.



East Asian Pop Culture: 30 Years of Transformation

18–19 September 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Prof Chua Beng Huat, Asst Prof Eunbi Lee, Dr Bertha Chin and Dr Soh Kai Ruo

Organised with the Cultural Studies in Asia Programme in the Department of Communications and New Media, NUS, in collaboration with the William Lim Siew Wai Fellowship Fund

The event brought scholars from across Asia and beyond to discuss the evolving landscape of popular culture in East Asia. The workshop provided an interdisciplinary platform to explore the intersections between media, technology, fandom, and identity formation in transnational contexts. Through a combination of keynote speech, panel presentations, and discussions, the event examined how cultural products such as K-pop, anime, webtoons, social media, and streaming dramas shape the cultural and economic dynamics of the region. The primary objective of the workshop was to foster critical dialogue on the contemporary forms and circulations of East Asian popular media. The event sought to deepen scholarly understanding of how popular culture functions as a site of cultural creativity and negotiation, particularly in the age of digital globalisation. The event attracted scholars, postgraduate students, and practitioners from Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Australia, and the United States. Their engagement contributed to the dynamic exchange of ideas and the creation of a collegial research community. The workshop successfully achieved its aims of fostering academic dialogue and advancing the study of East Asian popular culture. By connecting diverse research perspectives and promoting collaboration among regional and international scholars, the event reaffirmed NUS's position as a leading centre for critical and transnational media studies in Asia.



Bytes and Biomes: Navigating the Digital-Environment Nexus across Southeast Asia

16–17 October 2025, ARI, Singapore

Convenors: Assoc Prof Birgit Bräuchler, Dr Lukas Fort and Dr Walker DePuy

Jointly organised with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Copenhagen; funded by the DIGINEX project, supported by the Independent Research Fund Denmark

Rapid digitalisation is reshaping how societies understand and engage with both ecosystems and environmental problems, transforming not only governance and activism but also everyday socio-ecological relations. Against this backdrop, the workshop provided a critical, multidisciplinary space to examine the digital-environment nexus in Southeast Asia. The discussions foregrounded the region's paradoxical position at the intersection of rapid digitalisation, high biodiversity, urbanisation, and extractive frontier capitalism, while highlighting shared concerns around data justice, environmental sensing, digital communication, and the uneven social and environmental impacts of digital infrastructures. 14 presentations by scholars, journalists, and NGO and government practitioners from institutions across maritime and mainland Southeast and East Asia drew on case studies from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Singapore, alongside comparative analyses of regionally shared policy initiatives such as circular economy strategies, energy transitions, and eco-industrial estates. Through cross-disciplinary exchange, participants identified key tensions between technological solutions and questions of equity, sovereignty, and scale, as well as methodological challenges in researching digital-environment interactions across disciplines. A series of closed-door sessions synthesised these insights into initial directions for future collaboration, policy engagement, and knowledge dissemination. Scholarly, public-facing, and local media publications are being developed based on this workshop for a diverse range of audiences. The workshop aims to produce multiple deliverables in the form of a semi-scholarly article on our workshop's foundational argument and findings, a review article and feature pieces for Indonesian mainstream and environmental media outlets on key insights and topics of importance.



Digital Work, Mobilities and Changing Cities in Asia

30–31 October 2025, ARI, Singapore

Convenors: Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh, Assoc Prof Weiqiang Lin, Dr Connor Graham, Dr Thijs Willems and Dr Eric Kerr

Jointly organised with the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities at the Singapore University of Technology and Design

This workshop took a closer look at the practical effects of AI and other digital technologies, in this instance of capitalist reconfiguration, to strike a middle ground between “hype” and “fear” narratives. It acknowledged the emergence of certain new infrastructures that have allowed AI to creep into economic domains once thought to be the preserve of human relations and ingenuity and also recognised how, even in cases of successful penetration, workers and entrepreneurs have been able to adapt, compete and find new niches for themselves. Some of the papers assumed a more global vantage point to survey and critique some of the newest developments in AI, while others sought to theorise new phenomena happening “at work” in (sub)urban Asia. The discussions yielded highly diverse, if sometimes contradictory, insights on the future of labour and migration, framing both the opportunities and challenges faced by workers in Asia-Pacific countries including Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore in fine-grained and nuanced tones. They furthermore featured a strong urban flavour (as digital infrastructures tend to be concentrated in cities) and pointed to the changing professionalisation and simultaneously precarisation of work in the city. At times, this has encouraged new forms of mobility and remote work, but at others, set up barriers to both physical and social mobility.

In all, the workshop painted a more complex picture about digital work than anticipated, raising not only issues of digital work’s different effects and outcomes on different industries, but also questions of class, gender and, to a lesser extent, race.

Digital Scholarship on Overseas Chinese Historical and Religious Documents: Collecting, Categorising, Editing, Publishing

27–28 November 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenors: Prof Kenneth Dean and Dr Kang Yu

This workshop sought to conceptualise the interconnections between collection practices, documentary systems, and digital scholarship. As historical research increasingly operates across both material archives and digital infrastructures, an adequate understanding of overseas Chinese history must interrogate how documents move between physical sites, digital databases, and analytical frameworks. We brought together scholars from history, religious studies, business studies, theatre studies, and digital humanities to explore these questions from inter- and multidisciplinary perspectives. Case studies spanned Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China, enabling comparative discussions on both local specificities and transregional patterns. Across panels, participants examined how different genres of documents—epigraphy, account books, ritual texts, divination slips, private correspondence, and administrative records—encode institutional structures, social relations, and historical change. Taken together, the workshop moved beyond technical demonstrations to engage with broader conceptual questions. It highlighted the need to rethink digital scholarship as an integrated practice that links material archives, digital infrastructures, and historical interpretation, and that foregrounds collaboration across regions, institutions, and disciplines. Workshop participants plan to pursue collaborative research initiatives and co-develop new projects. These efforts will include the preparation of joint grant applications aimed at advancing digital infrastructures for overseas Chinese historical and religious studies, as well as fostering sustained interdisciplinary and inter-institutional cooperation. Another deliverable will be the publication of a set of local historical materials of a Hakka cemetery association in Singapore.



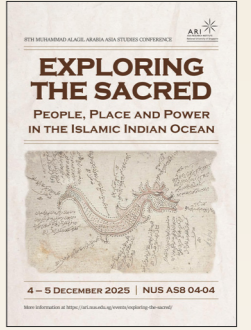
Exploring the Sacred: People, Place and Power in the Islamic Indian Ocean

4–5 December 2025, ARI, NUS

Convenor: Assoc Prof Sumit Mandal

Organised by the Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship in Arabia Asia Studies, ARI

This was the eighth instalment in the Muhammad Alagil Arabia Asia Studies conference series begun in 2014. It approached the sacred as a lens of analysis to offer fresh perspectives on the historical and contemporary interconnectedness, complexities, and shared experiences of Islam across the Indian Ocean. It addressed different devotional infrastructures, including but not limited to Sufism, through which the nature of the sacred is shaped, its scope delimited, its spatial dimensions understood, and how it might be mobilised by different actors. It opened novel themes and revised our thinking on key areas related to the Islamic Indian Ocean across six panels—geographies of piety, politics and sovereignty; Sufi texts, authority and hierarchy; infrastructures of ritual care and the occult; producing and transforming the sacred; contestations and reconfigurations of the sacred; and the possibilities of reconceptualising the sacred as an active force in shaping connectivity and cosmopolitanism in the Islamic Indian Ocean. The workshop also included a public lecture titled “The Sacred is in Relatedness: Arabia-Asia as a Geography of Friendship”. This inaugural Muhammad Alagil Lecture in Arabia Asia Studies was delivered by Assoc Prof Ismail Fajrie Alatas of New York University who highlighted transregional relationships of affect and kinship beyond the circulation of goods, people, and ideas. The lecture series makes available the work of leading scholars in the field to interested audiences in Singapore beyond the NUS campus. This lecture and the Muhammad Alagil Chair’s activities were featured in [Arab News](#).



ARI Seminar Series

The Asia Research Institute Seminar Series features seminars that vary in scope and are able to appeal across various academic disciplines. Seminars may also be on topics related to the different clusters' work. They bring together NUS scholars—faculty members and ARI researchers—working on particular areas or themes. This is a listing of the seminars organised in 2025.

22 JAN 2025

FOO HAI SEMINAR SERIES IN BUDDHIST STUDIES – Book Discussion on “Karma and Grace: Religious Difference in Millennial Sri Lanka”

Asst Prof Neena Mahadev

Yale-NUS College, Singapore

Assoc Prof Angie Heo

University of Chicago, USA

Assoc Prof Alastair Gornall

Singapore University of Technology and Design

Organised with GL Louis Religious Pluralism Research Cluster in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, with funding support from Foo Hai Ch'an Monastery Fellowship in Buddhist Studies, Singapore

4 FEB 2025

Korean Neighbourhoods beyond Korea: Localities, Social Networks and Identities in Seoul, Kyoto and Hanoi

Assoc Prof Blaž Križnik

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Assoc Prof Nataša Visočnik Gerželj

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Assoc Prof Kong Chong Ho

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, NUS

6 FEB 2025

ARABIA ASIA TRANSREGIONAL STUDIES ROUNDTABLE SERIES – Pramoedya Ananta Toer: Revisiting the Indonesian Author's Work on the Centenary of His Birth

Assoc Prof Sumit Mandal

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Dr Fathun Karib

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Dr Nor Ismah

Asia Research Institute, NUS

12 FEB 2025

FOO HAI SEMINAR SERIES IN BUDDHIST STUDIES – Anātman: A Buddhist Philosophy Zine

Dr Sherice Ngaserin

Yale-NUS College, Singapore

Mr Mark Jun Hao Tan

Yale-NUS College, Singapore

Ms Tesha Sengupta

Yale-NUS College, Singapore

Mr Siddharth Chintalacheruvu

Yale-NUS College, Singapore

Ryan Yeo

Yale-NUS College, Singapore

Funded by Foo Hai Ch'an Monastery Fellowship in Buddhist Studies, Singapore

25 FEB 2025

Domestic Nationalism: Muslim Women, Health, and Modernity in Indonesia

Prof Chiara Formichi

Cornell University, USA

Asst Prof Guo-Quan Seng

Department of History, NUS

Dr Nor Ismah

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Assoc Prof Taomo Zhou

Department of Chinese Studies, NUS

5 MAR 2025

FOO HAI SEMINAR SERIES IN BUDDHIST STUDIES – Ritual Efficacy, Communalism, and Monastic Guidance: Reconsidering the Category of Modern Buddhism through the Case Study of the Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA)

Asst Prof Jens Reinkel

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands

Funded by Foo Hai Ch'an Monastery Fellowship in Buddhist Studies, Singapore

18 MAR 2025

Sea Level Rise and Floating Structures along Asian Coastlines: New Adaptation Strategies for Sinking Cities like Jakarta and Others

Dr Stefan Huebner

Asia Research Institute, NUS, and Society of Floating Solutions (Singapore)

Assoc Prof Margo van den Brink

University of Groningen, Netherlands

Prof Katherine Dafforn

University of Massachusetts Boston, USA

Assoc Prof Rukuh Setiadi

Diponegoro University, Indonesia

Dr Anh Cao

University of Tokyo, Japan

Organised with Society of Floating Solutions (Singapore), with friendly support from the Max Weber Foundation and its DIJ-ARI Research Partnership on Asian Infrastructures

20 MAR 2025

Building a Better International Order: What Role for the Global South?

Mr Kishore Mahubani

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Dr Trita Parsi

Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, USA

Mr Sarang Shidore

Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, USA

Organised by Asian Peace Programme (APP) at the Asia Research Institute and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, and the Quincy Institute

1 APR 2025

Unsettling: Chinese International Graduate Women Navigating (Im)mobility and Chrononormativity

Prof Fran Martin

The University of Melbourne, Australia

Organised with Department of Communications and New Media, NUS

2 APR 2025

Regions and Regionalisms in Asia and Europe

Prof Tim Winter

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Prof Bogdan Góralczyk

University of Warsaw, Poland

Dr Dorota Jurkiewicz-Eckert

University of Warsaw, Poland

Prof Kamil Zajączkowski

University of Warsaw, Poland

Assoc Prof Sumit Mandal

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Assoc Prof Mairii Aung-Thwin

Asia Research Institute, and Department of History, NUS

10 APR 2025

The Museum in Asia

Assoc Prof Yunci Cai

University of Leicester, UK

Dr Chin Siew Ang-Eiselt

Independent Researcher

Dr Roslynn Ang

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Prof Tim Winter

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Assoc Prof Hamzah Muzaini

Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS

14 APR 2025

The Citizen and the Vagabond 2: On Speed

Prof Tim Cresswell

University of Edinburgh, UK

Organised with Department of Geography, NUS

23 APR 2025

One Village, One Temple: A Window into Early Everyday Life in Singapore

Prof Kenneth Dean

Asia Research Institute, and Department of Chinese Studies, NUS

Ms Gandimathy Durairaj

NUS Libraries, NUS

Dr Qi Wu

Singapore University of Social Sciences

Dr Kang Yu

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Dr Sisi Wang

National Library of Singapore

Ms Ruo Lin

Department of Chinese Studies, NUS

Mr Xincheng Hong

Department of Chinese Studies, NUS

Organised with Wan Boo Sow Research Centre for Chinese Culture, NUS, co-sponsored by the National Heritage Board, NUS Central Library, Wan Boo Sow Research Centre, and Singapore University of Social Sciences

29 APR 2025

The Service of Faith: An Ethnography of Mennonites and Development in Indonesia

Dr Philip Fountain

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Dr Ryan Tans

Yale-NUS College, Singapore

Dr Michel Chambon

Asia Research Institute, NUS

14 MAY 2025

Can Raising the Health-Climate Literacy of Food Choices Contribute to Educating a New Cohort of Individual Climate Leaders?

Assoc Prof Alberto Salvo

Department of Economics, NUS

7 AUG 2025

Housing and Citizenship in Postcolonial Nations: Singapore as a Paradigmatic Case

Prof Chua Beng Huat

Asia Research Institute, and Department of Sociology, NUS and Singapore Management University

14 AUG 2025

Bibliotactics: Libraries and the Colonial Public in Vietnam

Asst Prof Cindy Anh Nguyen

University of California, Los Angeles, USA

18 AUG 2025

Catholicism Beyond the Parish

Mr Gerald Kong

Archdiocesan Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism Centre of Singapore

Dr Krisha Vishinpir

Research Fellow, Singapore

Mr Arthur Goh

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore

Organised with Department of Southeast Asian Studies, and Department of History, NUS

26 AUG 2025

Socio-Technical Care Vortex: Older Migrants' Navigating the Paradoxes of Informal Support for Digital Inclusion in a Networked Home

Dr Earvin Charles B. Cabalquinto

Monash University, Australia

27 AUG 2025

FOO HAI SEMINAR SERIES IN BUDDHIST STUDIES – From Diaspora to Dialogue: Vietnamese Buddhism in Taiwan's Religious Modernity

Assoc Prof Wei-Yi Cheng

Fo Guang University, Taiwan

Funded by Foo Hai Ch'an Monastery Fellowship in Buddhist Studies, Singapore

2 SEP 2025

Theorising Critical Urban Geology through/from Southeast Asia

Dr Adam Bobbette

University of Glasgow, UK

Ms Susan Herawati

The People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice, Indonesia

Dr Bosman Batubara

Asia Research Institute, NUS

3 SEP 2025

The Environmental Turn in Southeast Asian Studies: A Discussion with the 2025 Harry J. Benda Prize Co-winners

Dr Adam Bobbette

University of Glasgow, UK

Asst Prof Faizah Zakaria

Department of Southeast Asian Studies, and Department of Malay Studies, NUS

Organised with Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS

9 SEP 2025

Migration Power in International Politics: Origins, Evolution, and Future Directions

Prof Gerasimos Tsourapas

University of Birmingham, UK

17 SEP 2025

FOO HAI SEMINAR SERIES IN BUDDHIST STUDIES – The Monk, the Monkey, and the Menu: Cuisine and the Self-Cultivation in "Journey to the West"

Assoc Prof Andrew Hui

Department of English, Linguistics and Theatre Studies, NUS

Organised with GL Louis Religious Pluralism Research Cluster in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, with funding support from Foo Hai Ch'an Monastery Fellowship in Buddhist Studies, Singapore

23 SEP 2025

War Memorialisation in Southeast Asia: Contested Memories, National Narratives

Asst Prof John Lee Candelaria

Hiroshima University, Japan

Asst Prof Jennifer Yip

Department of History, NUS

Assoc Prof Hamzah Muzaini

Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS

Assoc Prof Mark Ravinder Frost

University College London, UK

30 SEP 2025

The Social Properties of Concrete

Asst Prof Joshua Comaroff

Department of Architecture, NUS

Asst Prof Saptarshi Sanyal

Department of Architecture, NUS

Dr Eli Elinoff

Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

9 OCT 2025

"Medicinal Animals" in Crisis: A Three-Part Symposium

Assoc Prof Gregory Clancey

Asia Research Institute, and Department of History, NUS

Dr James Flowers

Kyung Hee University, South Korea

Prof Rethy Chhem

Cambodia University of Technology and Science

Assoc Prof Michael Stanley-Baker

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

10 OCT 2025

Buddhist Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence: From Ontology to Ethics

Prof Rethy Chhem

Cambodia University of Technology and Science

14 OCT 2025

Ways of Worldmaking: On Markets, Miracles, and Emergence in the Postcolony

Prof Ravinder Kaur

University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Organised with Institute of South Asian Studies, NUS

16 OCT 2025

From Data to Action: Civic Engagement with Digital Tools

Prof Jeffrey Hou

Department of Architecture, NUS

Dr Chaewon Ahn

Department of Architecture, NUS

Organised with Department of Architecture, NUS

28 OCT 2025

Research and Scholarship on Asian Pentecostals: Select Contemporary Trends

Prof Amos Yong

Fuller Theological Seminary, USA

Dr Michel Chambon

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Organised with GL Louis Religious Pluralism Research Cluster in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS

3 NOV 2025

Urban Icons and Decolonial Memory: Rethinking Statues and Monuments in Asia

Dr Myra Mentari Abubakar

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Assoc Prof Hamzah Muzaini

Department of Southeast Asian Studies, NUS

Prof Maurizio Peleggi

Department of History, NUS

4 NOV 2025

Class and Inequality in China and India: Implications in a Changing World Order

Assoc Prof Vamsi Vakulabharanam

University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA

Organised with Centre on Asia and Globalisation (CAG) at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, funded by the Nalanda Professorship in India-China Studies

4 NOV 2025

For the Sake of Forests and Gods: Governing Life and Livelihood in the Philippine Uplands

Prof Wolfram Dressler

The University of Melbourne, Australia

Organised with Department of Geography, NUS

10 NOV 2025

Post-Soviet Brides in the China Dream: Marriage, Migration, and Geopolitics across Borders

Prof Elena Barabantseva

University of Manchester, UK

12 NOV 2025

FOO HAI SEMINAR SERIES IN BUDDHIST STUDIES – Between Humans and Gods: Earth and Sky Deities in Pali Cosmographies

Assoc Prof Alastair Gornall

Singapore University of Technology and Design

Funded by Foo Hai Ch'an Monastery Fellowship in Buddhist Studies, Singapore

20 NOV 2025

Tensions in Policy Learning: Grounding Learning Practices in Urban Southeast Asia

Assoc Prof Sulfikar Amir

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Prof Tim Bunnell

Asia Research Institute, and Department of Geography, NUS

Assoc Prof Daniel PS Goh

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, NUS

25 NOV 2025

The Congress of Indonesian Women Ulama and the Future of Gender Justice in Muslim Southeast Asia and Beyond

Ms Kamala Chandrakirana

Congress of Indonesian Women Ulama

Assoc Prof Fatima Seedat

University of Cape Town, South Africa

Dr Azhar Ibrahim

Department of Malay Studies, NUS

Dr Erica M. Larson

Asia Research Institute, NUS

1 DEC 2025

Grief Pilgrimage and Social Prescribing

Dr Jaeyeon Choe

Glasgow Caledonian University, UK

Assoc Prof Maribeth Erb

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, NUS

Dr Ali Kassem

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, NUS

Organised with GL Louis Religious Pluralism Research Cluster in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS

Lectures

22 APR 2025

ARI ASIA TRENDS 2025 – Why India and China?
Historical Significance and Contemporary Relevance

Prof Tansen Sen

New York University Shanghai, China, and New York University, USA

Assoc Prof Selina Ho

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS

Dr Ronojoy Sen

Institute of South Asian Studies, and South Asian Studies Programme, NUS

Held in conjunction with the Nalanda Professorship in India-China Studies

6 AUG 2025

ACM-ARI LECTURE – Xuanzang in History, Imagination, and Art

Prof Max Deeg

Cardiff University, UK

Prof Dorothy C. Wong

University of Virginia, USA

Prof Tansen Sen

New York University Shanghai, China, and New York University, USA

Organised with the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), held in conjunction with the Nalanda Professorship in India-China Studies

22 AUG 2025

Book Launch of "Can Asians Think of Peace? Essays on Managing Conflict in the Asian Century"

Mr Kishore Mahbubani

Asia Research Institute, NUS

Mr George Yeo

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS

11 NOV 2025

ACM-ARI LECTURE – Ritual Bronzes across the Seas

Prof Himanshu Prabha Ray

Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Dr Priya Maholay-Jaradi

Department of History, NUS

Organised with the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM), held in conjunction with the Nalanda Professorship in India-China Studies

4 DEC 2025

MUHAMMAD ALAGIL ARABIA ASIA STUDIES LECTURE – The Sacred is in Relatedness: Arabia-Asia as a Geography of Friendship

Assoc Prof Ismail Fajrie Alatas

New York University, USA

Dr Harini Kumar

Yale University, USA

Organised by Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship in Arabia Asia Studies at the Asia Research Institute, NUS



Landscape of the ricefields and rice terrace
Location: Indonesia
Image sourced from Shutterstock.com



7.0 Community Outreach

ARI continues to improve its digital connectivity and create media coverage to share research knowledge. Our outreach is aligned with our research values and clusters and underscores our commitment to embracing an array of channels for communication to foster a culture of knowledge dissemination not only with the larger community in Singapore but also worldwide.

Media Coverage

ARI researchers have actively contributed to op-eds, expert columns, and scholarly interviews, positioning ARI as a thought leader in various domains. In sharing their expertise and expert views in the media, our researchers have contributed to shaping public discourse on critical issues. ARI researchers have been featured in Channel NewsAsia, *Lianhe Zaobao*, *The Diplomat* and *NUS News* to name a few.

These activities include interviews of ARI researchers by local and international presses and media, published editorials by ARI researchers and their appearance in radio programmes as well as public affairs broadcasts as guest speakers. News articles by our researchers may be accessed at ari.nus.edu.sg/media/news/.

Other media contributions by ARI researchers in 2025 include:

Mairii Aung-Thwin

[Myanmar in Turmoil](#), *CNA Insider*, 17 April 2025.

Michel Chambon

[The Biggest Election of 2025? How the Catholic Church Chooses a New Pope](#), *Mothership*, 24 April 2025.

[Pope Francis' Seven Trips to Asia Demonstrated His Deep Concern for the Marginalised](#), *Channel NewsAsia*, 26 April 2025.

Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho

[Being Singaporean](#), *CNA Insider*, 4 November 2025.

Clay Eaton, Naoko Shimazu & Chee Keng Lee

[Uncovering Hidden Stories of the Pre-war Japanese Community in Singapore](#), *NUS News*, 16 May 2025.

Kishore Mahubani

[It's Time for Europe to Do the Unthinkable](#), *Foreign Policy*, 18 February 2025.

[Can Asian's Think of Peace? Essays on Managing Conflict in the Asian Century](#), *Mothership*, 23 August 2025.

[The Ingredients of Peacemaking in Geopolitics: Insights from the Asian Peace Programme](#), *NUS News*, 4 September 2025.

Sumit Mandal

[Oceans Unbound](#), *Sin Chew Daily*, 19 July 2025.

Jacob Rinck

[Who is Nepal's New Prime Minister and What Challenges Lie Ahead?](#), *CNA938 Rewind*, 16 September 2025.

Kang Yu

[Two Postdoctoral Fellows Used Ancient "Photocopying" to Preserve History](#), *Lianhe Zaobao*, 19 January 2025.

Digital And Social Connectivity

ARI continues to engage proactively with emerging digital platforms to strengthen its connections with stakeholders locally, regionally, and internationally.

ARI's refreshed website provides up-to-date information about ARI's research programmes, events and publications and staff. It also serves as a rich resource for research on Asia studies.

In 2025, the Institute further expanded its reach across major social media platforms, including [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#). These channels share the Institute's latest developments—upcoming events, new fellowships, recent publications, and more. With a growing and active following, they remain an important way for ARI staff, students, alumni, and partners to stay connected with the Institute's work. In 2025, ARI's social media platforms had a total of 25000 followers.

Selected webcasts of ARI lectures, seminars, and keynote addresses from flagship events are available on ARI's dedicated YouTube channel and are regularly shared across its social media platforms.

Additionally, we continue to explore AI tools as a means of supporting innovative project development and expanding the Institute's capacity for creative and forward-looking communications.

ARIscope

ARI's academic platform [ARIscope](#), has been a significant and influential showcase since its launch in September 2020. This platform serves as a dynamic showcase of the diverse and impactful scholarship conducted at ARI and in collaboration with our regional and global networks.

ARIscope offers a variety of content types, including short articles, photo essays and interviews. Through these mediums, it provides a unique window into the wide-ranging research endeavours undertaken by ARI and its collaborators. The content is carefully curated to reflect the scholarly dynamism, innovative thinking, and research excellence that define ARI. What makes *ARIscope* unique is its commitment to reaching a broad audience. The accessibility of the content enables it to resonate with various stakeholders, including policymakers, the media, students, and the general public.

In 2025, *ARIscope* featured 14 new contributions, contributing to a total of 107 published to date. It amassed over 17,500 views and more than 10,000 active readers. *ARIscope* is a testament to the vibrancy of ARI's academic community and the platform has become a valuable resource for those interested in gaining insights into the latest Asia research that shapes the broader conversation and understanding on Asia.

ARINews

ARINews is an electronic newsletter published three times a year. It features the Director's update, key research highlights, news items, and the latest announcements and developments at the Institute. Together, these provides a concise yet comprehensive overview of the Institute's people and activities.

Shwedagon pagoda with lantern in the sky
Location: Myanmar
Image sourced from Shutterstock.com





ARI has fostered an active grant-seeking culture over the years, creating valuable opportunities for early career researchers to develop their proposal-writing skills and gain first-hand experience in securing research funding. Projects are an important training ground for emerging scholars in their respective fields of research, and ARI remains committed to broadening its external engagement by actively pursuing funding opportunities.

25 DECEMBER 2025 – 24 DECEMBER 2030

Heritage Diplomacy: Connecting Histories and Futures

Tim Winter (PI)
S\$3,825,000 funded by Singapore Social Science Research Council Thematic Grant

22 MARCH 2025 – 21 MARCH 2028

FUTUREMIG - Futures of Migration and Mobility

Anna Triandafyllidou (PI); Brenda S.A. Yeoh (Co-PI)
CA\$198,916 funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council [SSHRC] Partnership Development Grant, Canada

8.0
Grants and Projects



Publications arising from ARI's conferences and research activities form a key academic output and remain a significant measure of the Institute's scholarly impact. During the year, ARI researchers and alumni produced 2 authored books, 3 journal special issues/sections and 3 edited books based on their research or as deliverables from conferences held at ARI. In addition, they also published 75 journal articles and 17 book chapters based on their ARI research.

Books and Journal Special Issues

The disciplines and specialities of ARI members are remarkably diverse, a diversity which is reflected in the books they produce. Books published in 2025 are detailed below. In some cases, the terms of ARI researchers are shorter than the period required for seeing a book through to publication, and in such instances, this code is used:

*Published after the member has left ARI, but based on work wholly or partly done in ARI

Chambon, Michel

Les chrétiens dans la Chine de Xi Jinping
[Christians in Xi Jinping's China]

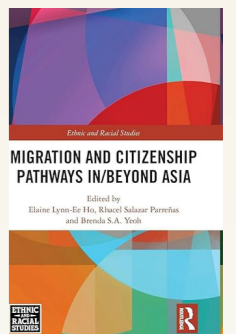
Paris: Le Cerf, 2025



Ho, Elaine Lynn-Ee, Rachel S. Parreñas, & Brenda S. A. Yeoh (eds)

Migration and Citizenship Pathways in/beyond Asia

Abingdon: Routledge, 2025

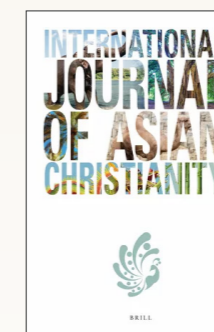


From ARI organised conference *Migration and Citizenship Pathways in Asia*, 21–22 September 2023

Chambon, Michel (guest ed)

Special Issue: *Asian Catholic Materials and Spaces*

International Journal of Asian Christianity 8(2), 2025

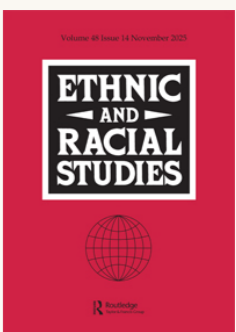


From ARI organised conference *Asian Catholic Materialities*, 30–31 August 2023

Ho, Elaine Lynn-Ee, Rachel S. Parreñas, & Brenda S. A. Yeoh (guest eds)

Special Issue: *Migration and Citizenship Pathways in/ beyond Asia*

Ethnic and Racial Studies 48(14), 2025



From ARI organised conference *Migration and Citizenship Pathways in Asia*, 21–22 September 2023

9.0 Publications

Ho, Hannah Ming Yit & Ying-kit Chan (eds)

+Transnational Southeast Asia: Communities, Contestations and Cultures

Singapore: Springer, 2025



Lee, Kris H., Yi'En Cheng, Brenda S.A. Yeoh, & Kong Chong Ho (guest eds)

Special Section: The Internalisation of Education and "Belt and Road" Student Mobilities in Southeast Asia

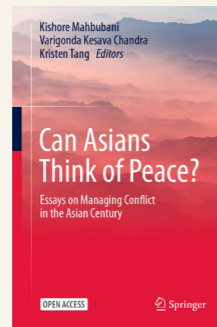
Asian Population Studies 21(1), 2025



Mahubani, Kishore, Varigonda Kesava Chandra, & Kristen Tang (eds)

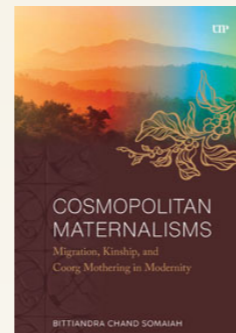
Can Asians Think of Peace?: Essays on Managing Conflict in the Asian Century

Singapore: Springer Nature, 2025



Somaiah, Bittiandra Chand
+Cosmopolitan Maternalisms: Migration, Kinship, and Coorg Mothering in Modernity

University of Toronto Press, 2025



ASIAN POPULATION STUDIES

EDITOR

Professor Brenda S.A. Yeoh
National University of Singapore

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Associate Professor Feng Qiushi
National University of Singapore

FOUNDING EDITOR

Professor Gavin Jones
Australian National University

Asian Population Studies is an ARI journal that publishes original research on matters related to population in this large, complex and rapidly changing region, and welcomes substantive empirical analyses, theoretical works, applied research and contributions to methodology. Topics covered include all branches of population studies ranging from population dynamics such as the analysis of fertility, mortality and migration (from both technical and social perspectives) to the consequences of population change. Heading each issue is a commentary on a topical issue by an expert in population issues.

Asian Population Studies entered its 20th year of publication in 2025. The journal is abstracted and indexed in Current Contents/Social and Behavioral Sciences, Journal Citation Reports/Social Sciences Edition, Scopus, and the Social Sciences Citation Index. *APS* is highly used, with 68K annual downloads/views. The 2025 Impact Factor for *APS* was 1.6.

Some articles published in 2025:

Shifting axis of educational diplomacy: Student mobilities at Vietnam-China borders

Phuong Hao Phan & Yi'En Cheng

The variability of age at first marriage across birth cohort and education level: The case of Taiwan

Hao-Chun Cheng & Philip N. Cohen

Gender inequality and subjective well-being amongst professional women in East and Southeast Asia: A study of eight societies

Liuyan Jiang, Vincent Chua, Daniel Xue Wei Wong & Dong-Kyun Im

The internationalisation of education and 'Belt and Road' student mobilities in Southeast Asia

Kris Hyesoo Lee, Yi'En Cheng, Brenda Yeoh & Kong Chong Ho

Housework sharing among older couples: Explaining the gendered division of domestic labour in older age in South Korea

Seung-Eun Cha, Jooyeoun Suh & Kamila Kolpashnikova

The potential impact of international migration on prospective population ageing in Asian countries

Markus Dörflinger, Michaela Potančoková & Guillaume Marois

Articles and Book Chapters

Allouache, Yannis-Adam

"I came here to work, not to die": Infrastructures of migrant labour solidarity across Taiwan's urban peripheries. *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography* 58(1). DOI: [10.1111/anti.70100](https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.70100).

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Linking up degrowth in/from the south with provincialised UPE: Mangrove and groundwater conservations in Semarang, Indonesia (with M. Belland & M. Kooy). *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 66, 105–14. DOI: [10.1111/apv.12440](https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12440).

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A comparison of comparisons: Evidence from an international comparative study of "smart cities" (with K. Ward, T. Abbruzzese, P. Cardullo, I.-C.C. Chang, et al.). *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 43(7), 1217–39. DOI: [10.1177/23996544251320261](https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544251320261).

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Assessing value and questioning self-worth in educational migration: Indonesian university students in Singapore." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.70036>.

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10.0 ARI Recognition

ARI researchers have gained significant recognition for their work and received awards for their research and publications, showing the quality and impact of their contributions. Additionally, invitations to give keynotes and plenaries, where they share knowledge with both local and international academic communities, highlight their status as leaders and experts in their fields.

Awards and Honours

Assoc Prof Jiat Hwee Chang was recognised, in September 2025, with the Dean's Chair at the [CDE Awards](#) for outstanding and impactful scholarly achievements.

Prof Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho was featured in Stanford University's list of [world's top 2% scientists](#) in October 2025 which ranks the most cited researchers globally based on their research impact and academic contributions.

She was also appointed Member, Ministry of Health External Review Panel of Duke-NUS Centre for Ageing Research and Education (CARE) and Geriatric Education and Research Institute, 1 March–31 November 2025.

Dr Stefan Huebner was appointed Deputy Head, International Scientific Committee for the World Conference on Floating Solutions.

Dr Justin Lau was awarded the [Best PhD Thesis Prize 2025](#) by the Australian Anthropological Society, in November 2025 for his thesis titled "Chasing 'Wonders': Textures and Infrastructures of Circular Economies in Cambodia".

Asst Prof Dr Patrick Quanton-Brown won two awards for the book he wrote during his ARI fellowship, *Intervention before Interventionism: A Global Genealogy* (Oxford University Press, 2024)—the [2025 Cecil B. Currey Book Award](#) presented by the Association of Global South Studies and the [2025 Sussex International Theory Prize](#) awarded by the Centre for Advanced International Theory, University of Sussex, UK.

Dr Kelzang T. Tashi received an [Honourable Mention](#) in the [E. Gene Smith Inner Asia Book Prize](#) of the Association of Asian Studies for his monograph *World of Wordly Gods: The Persistence and Transformation of Shamanic Bon in Buddhist Bhutan* (Oxford University Press, 2023) published during his fellowship at ARI.

Dr Zezhou Yang received First Prize for Outstanding Thesis from the South Asian Languages Research Association, Chinese Association for South Asian Studies, China for his thesis titled "Nepal in Chinese Knowledge Production (1910s–1940s): (Dis)connection, In-between Knowledge and Inter-Asia Engagements".

Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh was appointed to the Public Service Commission's Disciplinary Panel of Persons (PSCDPP), 1 November 2025–31 October 2028.

She was also featured in Stanford University's list of [world's top 2% scientists](#) in October 2025 which ranks the most cited researchers globally based on their research impact and academic contributions.

Keynotes and Plenaries

Dr Myra Mentari Abubakar

"What Do Great Presentations Look Like?", *PG and ECR Public Speaking Workshop*, Indonesian Council, Australia, 29 May 2025.

"Female Hero: An Honoured 'Enemy' in a Holy War?", *The 9th International Conference of Islamic Study*, IAIN Madura, Indonesia, 30 July 2025.

"Textile Archives: Gender, Memory, and Islamic Materiality in the Indian Ocean World", *3rd Spiced Islam International Conference*, Fansuri Museum, North Sumatra, Indonesia, 21 August 2025.

Assoc Prof Mairii Aung-Thwin

"Shared Heritage in South-East Asia: Contemporary Reflections on the Museum", UNESCO Bangkok, Thailand, 27 February 2025.

Prof Tim Bunnell

"The Ex Novo City as Diagnostic: Urban Anxieties, Prescriptions and Aspirations from Putrajaya to Nusantara", *Anxieties of Urban Transformations: Southeast Asian Cities across Space and Time*, Institute of Asian Studies, University of Brunei Darussalam, 4-5 June 2025.

Assoc Prof Jiat Hwee Chang

"Thermal Governance and Citizenship: (Un)Making Air Conditioning Complexes in Urban Asia", *Conceptualising Environment(s): Continuity and Change*, Annual Architectural Humanities Research Association Conference, University of Liverpool School of Architecture and British Academy, 22 November 2025.

Dr Stefan Huebner

"City, Water Reservoir, Urban Waterfront: Innovations in Floating Structures for Urban Growth and Climate Adaptation", NUS Cities Plenary Lecture, 24 February 2025.

Dr Eric Kerr

"A Pre-History of Social Epistemology", *Asian Network for the Philosophy of the Social Sciences (ANPOSS) Conference*, Taylor's University, Malaysia, 11 July 2025.

Dr Theodora Lam

"Migration-led Diversification in Singapore: Opportunities and Challenges for Globalised Multicultural Cities" (with Brenda Yeoh), NRF Distinguished Scholar's Lecture Series in Migration and Multiculturalism, Busan University of Foreign Studies, Busan, South Korea, 28 November 2025.

Assoc Prof Sumit Mandal

"Saints of the Southern Indian Ocean: Hidden Geographies of Islam from Jakarta to Cape Town", *Hidden Geographies of Global History*, Tokyo University, Japan, 9 October 2025.

Dr Dhiraj Nainani

"Balancing Public Health and Group Privacy: Ethics, Rights, and Obligations for Wastewater Surveillance", *Workshop on Data Justice and Wastewater Surveillance* (online), University of Notre Dame, 24 January 2025.

Dr Nor Ismah

"Women's Way of Knowing", *Ramadhan with Book* (online programme), Center for Research and Community Service, Sultan Thaha Saifuddin State Islamic University, Jambi, Indonesia, 17 March 2025.

"Gender Training, Knowledge Transmission, and Muslim Women's Movements in Southeast Asia", *Third International Conference on Gender, Culture, and Society 2025*, Padang, West Sumatra, 9 September 2025.

"Islam and Women Ulama from Sociological Perspectives", Department of Sociology, Universitas Andalas, Padang, West Sumatra, 10 September 2025.

"Muslim Women's Movements and the Decolonisation of Religious Authority in Indonesia", *The Role of Islam and Christianity in Public Space: Perspectives from Indonesia and Germany*, University of Munster, Germany, 26–28 September 2025.

"Mainstreaming GEDSI in Policy Formulation", *Workshop of the Indonesian Women Ulama Network on Strengthening Collaboration among Women Ulama for Disability Rights Advocacy*, Cirebon, West Java, 20 October 2025.

"A Historical Approach in the Study of Women Ulama", History Department, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia, 24 October 2025.

"Training to Become Ulama: Lessons from Ma'had Aly in Java Indonesia", *International Seminar: A Multidisciplinary Dialogue on Education*, Faculty of Tarbiyah, Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq State Islamic University, Jember, Indonesia, 17 November 2025.

"The Ethics of Mubadalah and the Challenges of Islamic Education in the Post-Digital Era", *International Conference on Islamic Education*, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang, East Java, Indonesia, 27 November 2025.

Prof Tim Winter

"A Dialogue of Civilisations among Great Power Politics", *11th Nishan Forum on World Civilisations*, hosted by World Cultural Heritage Sub-forum Organising Committee, China, 7–8 July, 2025.

"Urban Heritage as Civilisational History", *Preservation and Production: Urban Heritage Development around the World*, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), Suzhou, China, 29–30 August 2025.

"China and the Future of Global Cultural Policy", *Third Liangzhu Forum*, Hangzhou, 17–19 October 2025.

"China-India Civilisational Relations", *China and South Asia: Growing Footprint and Comparative Perspectives in the Region*, Centre for Social and Economic Progress and Ministry of External Affairs, India, New Delhi, 30–31 October 2025.

Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh

"Migration and Multicultural Diversity in the Context of Rapid Ageing in Asia", *2025 South East Asia Research Group (SEAREG) Summer Conference*, Duke Sanford Centre for International Development and Henry Luce Foundation, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand, 7–9 July 2025.

"Transnational Labour Migration in the Asian Context", *CERC Migration Workshop*, University of Leeds, UK, 17–18 July 2025.

"Migrant Domestic Workers and the Struggle for Transnational Food Security in Southeast Asia", *Graduate Student Conference (August 2025)*, Seoul National University, South Korea, 18 August 2025.

"Migration-led Diversification in Singapore: Opportunities and Challenges for Globalised Multicultural Cities (with Theodora Lam)", *NRF Distinguished Scholar's Lecture Series in Migration and Multiculturalism*, Busan University of Foreign Studies, South Korea, 28 November 2025.



11.0 Support for Undergraduate and Graduate Studies

Graduate and Other Teaching at NUS

In 2025 ARI researchers, mostly those on joint appointment with their respective faculties in NUS, contributed to the University in the following teaching and supervisory roles.

Prof Tim Bunnell: Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, taught GE6770 Graduate Research Seminar.

Supervised 3 PhD students and co-supervised 2 PhD students, Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Thesis committee member for 1 PhD student, Department of Geography, and 1 PhD student, South Asian Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Assoc Prof Jiat Hwee Chang: Department of Architecture, College of Design and Engineering, taught AR2228 History & Theory of Architecture II, AR5805 Advanced Architectural Studio, and AR5806 Architecture Design Research Report.

Supervised 1 PhD student, Department of Architecture, College of Design and Engineering.

Assoc Prof Jamie Davidson: Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, taught PS3236 Ethnicity and Religion in Asian Politics, and PS5312 Approaches to Comparative Politics.

Prof Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho: Supervised 3 PhD students, Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Dr Eric Kerr: Tembusu College, taught UTC1102C Fakes, UTC3103 The Tembusu Senior Learning Experience Project, UTC3104 Tembusu Senior Learning Experience Mentoring Programme, UTS2106 Science Fiction and Hope, and NG5002 Research Ethics for Graduate Students.

Dr Theodora Lam: Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, taught GE4236 Geographies of Migration.

Assoc Prof Sumit Mandal: Internal examiner to 1 PhD student, Southeast Asian Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Dr Michelle Miller: Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, taught CCS5103 Political Economy of Climate Change and Sustainable Development.

Co-supervised 3 PhD students, Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh: Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, taught GE4236 Geographies of Migration.

Supervised 1 Master's student, Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Dr Kang Yu: FASSTRACK ASIA: Summer School, taught FAS2882 Chinese Economic History in a Global Context.

20th Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies

16 – 27 Jun 2025, NUS Kent Ridge Campus

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Assoc Prof Mairii Aung-Thwin CHAIR
Dr Michel Chambon
Dr Jia Wen Hing
Dr Stefan Huebner
Assoc Prof Sumit Mandal
Dr Michelle Miller
Dr Emily Soh
Assoc Prof Titima Suthiwan

SECRETARIAT

Ms Minghua Tay

The Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies held at the National University of Singapore is ARI's flagship event, specifically designed to equip early career scholars, particularly those in the later stages of their PhD or up to two years post-doctorate, with the theoretical and practical skills necessary for academic research and professional development. Bringing together early career scholars from the Social Sciences and Humanities from around the globe, the forum provides an invaluable platform for participants to present their research, engage in interdisciplinary discussions, and connect with peers and experts in the field of Southeast Asian studies.



In 2025, the twentieth iteration of the forum was held over two weeks, with the first week focusing on methodology masterclasses and skills-based sessions tailored to the needs of early career scholars. These sessions were crafted to enhance participants' research capabilities and provide essential tools for navigating academic careers. The methodology masterclasses, each lasting 1.5 hours, offered deep dives into specific research methods, exploring their implications and providing practical training. The skills-based sessions covered

various aspects of academic labour and professional growth, such as publishing in peer-reviewed journals, transforming dissertations into books, and developing effective research proposals. Led by scholars from NUS and other institutions, these sessions aimed to build both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills necessary for participants to advance in their academic careers.

A highlight of the forum were the keynote addresses. Assoc Prof Marvin Montefrio from NUS Sociology and Anthropology delivered the first keynote that explored the complex relationships between precarity and food insecurity amid multiple, overlapping crises such as declining household incomes, the escalation of dependence on credit and eventual accumulation of debt, leading to decline in health and nutrition in the long run. The second keynote, delivered by Asst Prof Bryce Beemer from Duke Kunshan University explored the histories of enslaved Southeast Asians who laboured to glorify the king and palace through grand artistic, architectural, and theatrical projects. Beemer described the ways that histories of Ayutthaya's war slaves can be distilled from the arts and entertainments they produced for the Konbaung kings of Upper Burma. The third keynote address was given by Dr Robin Bush who was until recently The Asia Foundation's Country Representative in Malaysia, where she oversaw programmes in support of Malaysia's inclusive economic growth. Her presentation examined the colonial genealogies of both Southeast Asian Studies and international development, raised questions about knowledge production and institutional power, and the ethical imperatives of working in postcolonial contexts. These keynote speeches provided critical insights and set the stage for subsequent presentations and discussions.



The forum culminated with participants presenting their work in panels organised thematically around the fields broadly reflecting the core research strengths of ARI, including the Asian dynamics of religion, politics, economy, gender, culture, language, migration, urbanism, science and technology, identities, population and social change. These sessions facilitated academic exchanges and fostered interdisciplinary dialogues among participants. The forum created a vibrant environment that enabled early career scholars to showcase their research, engage with leading experts, and acquire essential skills for their professional development, thereby contributing to the growth of the next generation of academic leaders in Southeast Asian studies.

The forum has worldwide popularity among fresh academic circles, with applications coming from 26 countries in 2025.

Asian Graduate Fellows 2025

Allo, Ira Prayuni Rante: Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia.

Cultural landscape of Toraja traditional settlements.

An, Yiduo: Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Inventing "Malaya" in the early issues of Chao Foon.

Ang, Raksmei: Cambodia Development Resource Institute, Cambodia.

Decadal climatic variability and hydrological influences in the Tonle Sap Lake Basin, Cambodia.

Anastacio, Deborrah: De La Salle University, Philippines.

Cultural construction of power in Anting-anting, Poon, and Sanghiyang in Mendez, Cavite Philippines.

Baite, Lhunjamang: North-Eastern Hill University, India.

Kuki migrant domestic workers in Singapore.

Bathan, Bates: Kasetsart University, Thailand.

Political economy of rice trade liberalisation in the Philippines.

Blanco, Sunshine: University of California – Riverside, US.

Performing religion and indigeneity in the Philippines.

Chen, Haisu: Radboud University, The Netherlands.

Sino-Vietnamese marriages and stereotypes.

de los Santos, Jay Rome: University of the Philippines – Diliman.

Chinese in 19th-century Misamis Province, Philippines.

Esteban, Allan Jay: Kyung Hee University, South Korea.

Identity construction of Filipino university students in South Korea.

Fang, Chenyu: Fudan University, China.

Politicisation of international development cooperation in ASEAN under the BRI.

Fanzikri, Mirza: Indonesian International Islamic University, Indonesia.

Urban sustainable development policy and waste management in Banda Aceh.

Ghani, Hana: Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam.

Instapoetic practice and literary remediation in Brunei and Singapore.

Goh, Jeremy: University of Warwick, UK.

The Chinese Commercial Bank (1912-1930) in the British Straits Settlements.

Grillo, Valentina: University of Vienna, Austria.

Rohingya home births in Bangladesh refugee camps.

Haokip, Hemkholen: North-Eastern Hill University, India.

Kuki migrants from Indo-Myanmar borderlands in Singapore.

Hasbi, Baiquni: State Institute for Islamic Studies Lhokseumawe, Indonesia.

Acehnese Islamic resistance and the Eurocentric world order.

Hsu, Szu Ying: Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

Buddhist iconography in Thai arts in the 1950s and 1990s.

Htwe, Tin Maung: Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

Human rights, remittent, social relationships, and resilience of Myanmar migrants in Thailand.

Huynh, Vy Vu Hong: Waseda University, Japan.

Career trajectories of Vietnamese skilled workers in Japan.

Imamah, Fardan Mahmudatul: Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia.

Critical discourse analysis of ecological narrative in Javanese rice farming.

Kemala, Hilda: Waseda University, Japan.

Women ulama's strategies in combating child marriage in Indonesia.

Le, Anh: Waseda University, Japan.

Vietnamese sending organisations amid Japan's changing low- and medium-skilled labour migration regime.

Lemence, Allen Lemuel: Kyoto University, Japan.

Social acceptance and stakeholder involvement themes in Philippines' rural electrification policies.

Liu, Hao: Waseda University, Japan.

Diachronicity in linguistic landscape in New Chinatown on Pracha Rat Bamphen Road, Bangkok.

Lukmanulhakim, Nur Nadia: University of Nottingham Malaysia.

Second-generation Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.

Mohammad, Ghamal: Murdoch University, Australia.

Volcano monitoring and scientific collaboration along the Pacific Ring of Fire.

Niu, Zhuo: Free University of Berlin, Germany.

Illegality, deportability, and resilience of Burmese migrants crossing the China-Myanmar border.

Nurlatipah, Nasir: SOAS University of London.

Impact of the emergence of Chinese companies in South Sulawesi's silk tenun industry.

Pagador, Princes Mara: Mahidol University, Thailand.

Cultural role of mothers-in-law in farming families in rural Philippines.

Pal, Ayushi: Pondicherry University, India.

The socio-economic transformation of the Karen community from Myanmar in North and Middle Andaman.

Pamungkas, Bani: Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia.

Proposing BRT Integrated Joint Service Board for Greater Jakarta.

Pitigala, Charulatha: Monash University Malaysia.

Faith, gender, and coloniality in anti-trafficking work in Southeast Asia.

Qiao, Runze: National University of Singapore.

Chinese overseas zones embedded in the regionalisation of Southeast Asia.

Quek, See Ling: Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Translational cultural heritage and ekphrastic translation by Singaporean artists.

Reinhart, Hilary: Victoria University of Wellington.

Production of knowledge and geotourism development in Karst Gunung Sewu, Indonesia.

Savira, Medina: Bandung Institute of Technology & University of Groningen.

Digitalisation of agriculture in Indonesia.

Seah, Xing Jun: The University of Melbourne, Australia.

The anaesthetisation of hawker culture and the politics of space in Singapore.

Serirak, Napak: Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

Global biodiversity conservation and transforming tropical rainforests and indigenous livelihoods in Brunei Darussalam.

Sidiq, Asrul: Australian National University.

Power, resistance, and land governance in Lamteuba, Aceh, Indonesia.

Thongkasem, Nattida: Thammasat University, Thailand.

Femininity and the politics of beauty pageants in Thailand (1934–1957).

Tran, Thi Mai Thoa: L'Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada.

Liminal spaces of waterfront in the city of Ha Long, Vietnam.

Vo, Trang: National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan.

Behavioural determinants of climate-smart agriculture adoption in salinity-affected Vietnam.

Wardhani, Dyah Kusuma: Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia.

Global standards and local wisdom in the design process of Indonesian architects.

Xu, Lin: University of Malaya.

Ethnic technological cultural capital and the localisation of vocational education in Malaysian Chinese independent schools (1987–2012).

Yang, Fanying: Xiamen University, China.

Marginalisation of the Mah Meri indigenous community in Malaysia.

Yang, Hankang: National University of Singapore.

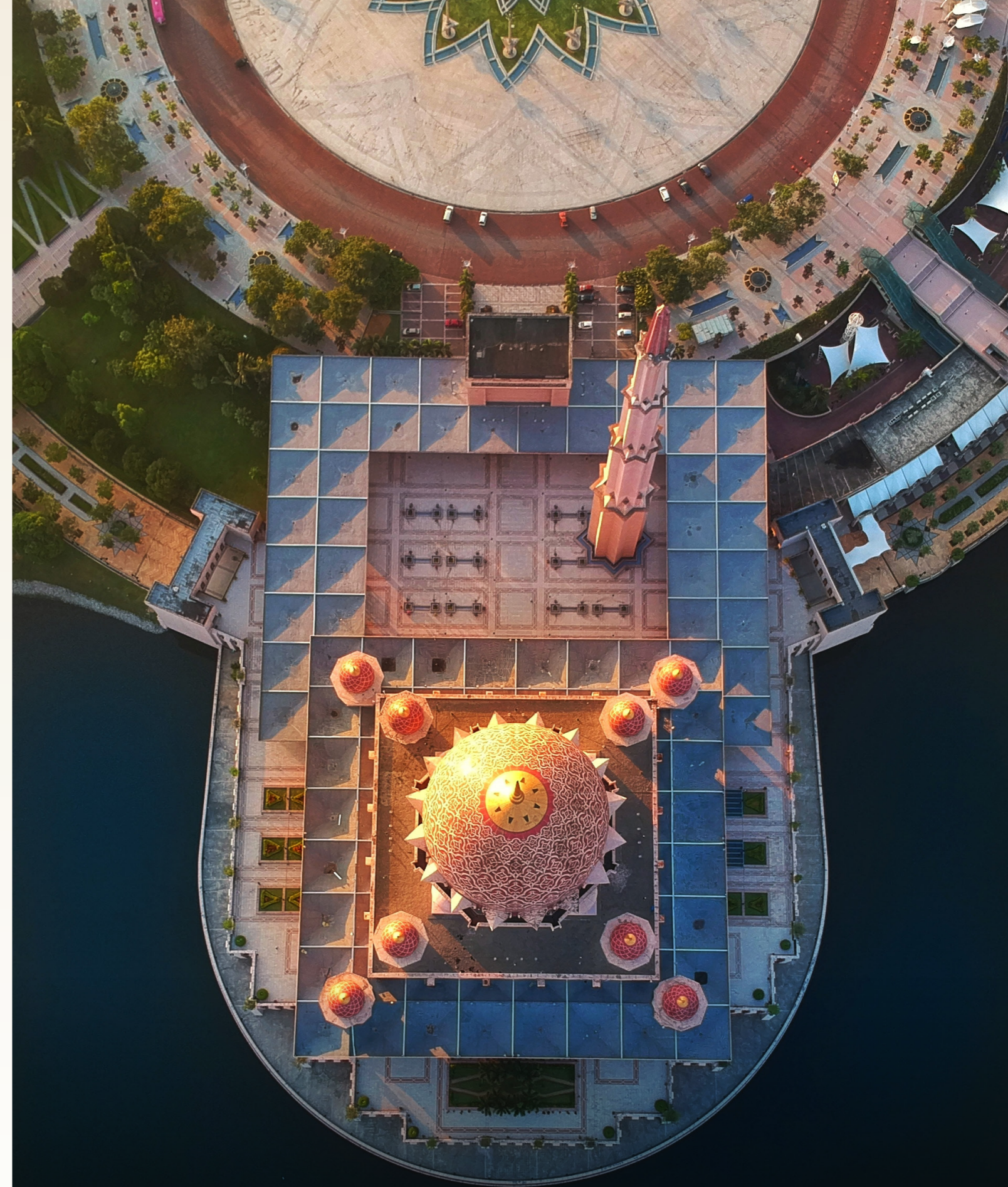
Ethnographic insights into Singapore's informal commercial spaces.

Zhang, Chen: Sun Yat-sen University, China.

Forgotten Lao King Zhao Wenmeng between Qing China, Vietnam, and Siam (1785–1819).

Zhao, Ziran: Monash University Malaysia.

Situational connectivity in playable cities and Sunway City as case study.



An aerial photo of Putra Mosque in Putrajaya during sunrise.
Location: Malaysia
Image sourced from Shutterstock.com



12.0 External Relations

External Funding for Conferences & Workshops

	Organisation/Grant	Date of Agreement/Award	Conferences & Workshops	Amount/Sponsorship
1.	NUS-Paris research collaboration on fostering social scientific research on Asian societies and religious networks	Jan 2025	Framing Migration: The Role of Religious Actors in the Production of International Law	SGD 19,596.87
2.	NUS Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences – Wan Boo Sow Research Centre for Chinese Culture	Jan 2025	New Directions for the South China School: Southeast Asia and Digital Humanities	approx. SGD 25,000
3.	Qualification and Skill in the Migration Process of Foreign Workers in Asia (QuaMaFA) project funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany (BMBF)	Jan 2025	Recalibrating "Skill" in Changing Immigration Regimes: Skilled Migrants and the Nature of Work in Asia	EUR 9,502.93
4.	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	Mar 2025	Global Foodscapes: Transnational Pathways of Food and Migration In and Out of Asia	approx. USD 16,700
5.	The "Migration Rhythms in Trajectories of Upward Social Mobility in Asia" project at Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), funded by the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme	Apr 2025	Theorizing Migration and Social Mobility in Asia and Beyond	approx. SGD 11,917.86
6.	Nalanda Professorship in India-China Studies	Apr 2025	ARI ASIA TRENDS 2025 – Why India and China? Historical Significance and Contemporary Relevance	SGD 4,895
7.	Tan Chin Tuan Foundation Grant – "Diligent Daughters: Chinese Women's Educational Revolution"	Apr 2025	Gender and New Educational Mobilities in Asia and Beyond	approx. SGD 15,000
8.	Singapore Ministry of Education Science Research Council Thematic Grant – "Climate Governance of Nature-based Carbon Sinks in Southeast Asia"	May 2025	Natural Climate Solutions in Southeast Asia: Positioning Local Carbon Transitions within Global Frameworks	approx. SGD 15,000
9.	Journal of Southeast Asian Studies	Jul 2025	New Histories of Capitalism in Southeast Asia	approx. SGD 18,000
10.	Singapore Ministry of Education Social Science and Humanities Research Fellowship	Jul 2025	Archipelagic Performance Histories and Digital Methods	approx. SGD 20,000
11.	Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship	Jul 2025	Connecting Imaginaries 2: Mapping Interconnectedness in a Time of the Rescripting of Nation-States	SGD 3,036.20
12.	Asian Metacentre Endowment, funded through Wellcome Trust	Aug 2025	Children and Youth in Asian Migration: Temporalities, Transitions, and Turbulence	approx. SGD 1,700
13.	Singapore Ministry of Education Academic Research Fund Tier 2 Grant – Capitals of the Future: Place, Power and Possibility in Southeast Asia	Aug 2025	Cities as Sites and Techniques of Futuring	SGD 23,433.98
14.	The Fullerton Hotel Singapore	Aug 2025	Book Launch of "Can Asians Think of Peace? Essays on Managing Conflict in the Asian Century"	Venue Sponsorship
15.	NUS Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences	Sep 2025	The Geological Turn in Asia: Empires, Geological Knowledge, and Geological Agencies	approx. SGD 4,000
16.	NUS Cultural Studies in Asia Programme in Department of Communications and New Media, in collaboration with the William Lim Siew Wai Fellowship Fund.	Sep 2025	East Asian Pop Culture: 30 Years of Transformation	approx. SGD 7,180
17.	Singapore Ministry of Education Tier 2 Grant – "History & Sustainability of Animal-Based Drugs in Asian Traditional Medicines"	Oct 2025	"Medicinal Animals" in Crisis: A Three-Part Symposium	SGD 3,597.40
18.	Independent Research Fund Denmark – DIGINEX project	Oct 2025	Bytes and Biomes: Navigating the Digital-Environment Nexus across Southeast Asia	approx. SGD 14,000
19.	Nalanda Professorship in India-China Studies	Nov 2025	ACM-ARI LECTURE – Ritual Bronzes across the Seas	SGD 2,345
20.	Singapore University of Technology and Design – Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities,	Oct 2025	Digital Work, Mobilities and Changing Cities in Asia	SGD 7,435.94
21.	Muhammad Alagil Distinguished Professorship	Dec 2025	Exploring the Sacred: People, Place and Power in the Islamic Indian Ocean	SGD 17,052.93

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