



International
Communication
Association

Intelligent Communication & City Networks

A hybrid symposium

19 June 2024 | 9:30am – 6pm
Zoom | AS8 #04-04, National University of Singapore



Department of Communications & New Media
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences

Cultural Research Centre



浙江大学

数字沟通研究中心

CENTER FOR DIGITAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES
ZHEJIANG UNIVERSITY

CICS

复旦大学
信息与传播
研究中心

Programme Schedule

9:00am	Breakfast & Registration
<p>Moderator: Dr Hety Wong Post-Doctoral Research Associate, Cultural Research Centre, National University of Singapore</p>	
Session 1: Welcome Remarks & Conference Vision by Host Organisations	
9:30am	<p>Prof Audrey Yue Professor and Head, Department of Communications and New Media; Director, Cultural Research Centre, National University of Singapore</p> <p>Prof Sun Wei Professor, School of Journalism; Director, Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University</p> <p>Prof Huang Dan Professor, College of Media and International Culture; Director, Center for Digital Communication Studies, Zhejiang University</p>
Session 2: Roundtable – AI & the Cities	
10:00am	<p>Chair: Prof Pan Ji Professor and Associate Director, Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University</p> <p>Discussants: Prof Huang Dan Professor, College of Media and International Culture; Director, Center for Digital Communication Studies, Zhejiang University</p> <p>Prof Sun Wei Professor, School of Journalism; Director, Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University</p> <p>Prof Scott McQuire Professor of Media and Communications, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne</p> <p>Prof Kim Yong-Chan (via Zoom) Professor, Department of Communication, Yonsei University</p> <p>Dr Jun Yu Assistant Professor, Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore</p>
11:30am	Lunch

Moderator: Dr Jun Yu Assistant Professor, Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore	
Session 3: Early Career Panel – Impact of Digital Integration on Urban Spaces and Practices	
1:00pm	Digital Railways as Urban Interface: A Study Based on the German Railway System Mr Cheng Taoran PhD Candidate, School of Journalism, Fudan University
	“Making the Block” – Contemporary Interactions between Urban Public Space and Mobile Media Practices Ms Kang Zhengyu PhD Candidate, School of Journalism, Fudan University
	Digitalized Monetary Media and the Intelligent Future of Exchange: A Case Study on “Ant Forest” and Its Implications for Monetary Media Mr Zhang Qikai PhD Candidate, School of Journalism, Fudan University
	Smartphone Sensing and Urban Communication: Behavioural Insights on Wellbeing in Intelligent Cities Ms Soh Kai Xin Research Assistant, Centre for Trusted Internet and Community, National University of Singapore
	The Late Teresa Teng’s Failed Digital Calling: Listening as the Way to Know Teng in Mainland China Dr Hety Wong Post-Doctoral Research Associate, Cultural Research Centre, National University of Singapore
	Q&A
Session 4: Faculty Panel I – Reorganising Urban Dynamics	
2:30pm	Complex Framing: Hybrid Space and the Reconfiguration of Frame Dynamics Prof Pan Ji Professor and Associate Director, Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University
	How Digital Communication Makes Network Different? – A Perspective from Complex Systems Prof Zhang Zi-Ke Professor, Center for Digital Communication Studies and College of Media and International Culture, Zhejiang University
	Local Familiar Strangers in Digitalizing Urban Neighborhoods in Seoul Prof Kim Yong-Chan (via Zoom) Professor, Department of Communication, Yonsei University
	Q&A
3:30pm	Afternoon Tea

Moderator: Dr Hety Wong Post-Doc Research Associate, Cultural Research Centre, National University of Singapore	
Session 5: Faculty Panel II – Narratives and Representations in Digital City	
4:00pm	Cities of Memory: From Cinematic Representation to Short Video Curation Prof Li Hongtao Professor, School of Journalism; Associate Director, Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University
	Toward Multiverse: Temporal-spatial Stacking in Digital Storytelling Prof Lu Ye (in Chinese; with translation) Professor, School of Journalism, Fudan University
	The Pervasive Game: A New Technological Culture in the Digital City A/Prof Zhou Haiyan (in Chinese; with translation) Associate Professor, School of Journalism, Fudan University
	Q&A
Session 6: Faculty Panel III – Innovation and Living in Digital Urban Landscape	
5:00pm	Localizing Big Data Governance in China during COVID-19: Urban Digital Infrastructure, Mobility Data, and Bureaucratic Dynamic A/Prof Li Mengying Research Associate Professor, School of Journalism, Fudan University
	What have We Learnt from 60 Years of Urban Computing? Prof Scott McQuire Professor of Media and Communications, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne
	Being Human in Digital Cities Prof Myria Georgiou (via Zoom) Professor, Department of Media and Communications, The London School of Economics and Political Science
	Q&A
Session 7: Closing Remarks	
6:00pm	Prof Audrey Yue Professor and Head, Department of Communications and New Media; Director, Cultural Research Centre, National University of Singapore
6:15pm	Business meal (By invitation only)

Welcome Remarks & Conference Vision by Host Organisations

Prof Audrey Yue

Professor and Head, Department of Communications and New Media;
Director, Cultural Research Centre, National University of Singapore

Audrey Yue is Provost Chair Professor (from July 2024) at the Department of Communications and New Media, and the Deputy Director of the Centre for Trusted Internet and Community, at the National University of Singapore. Her recent funded research projects are on digital information resilience, the mobility of home-based work and digital wellbeing indicator development. She is also completing her start up project at the NUS Cultural Research Centre.

Prof Sun Wei

Professor, School of Journalism, Fudan University

Director, Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University

Sun Wei's research focuses mainly on media theories and urban communication. For media theories, she conducted in-depth critical reflections on major theoretical issues. Related publications include "WeChat: The Dasein for Chinese", "The Arrival of Video Society: Reflections on Media's General Changes Based on ChatGPT". For urban communication, she offered many pioneering elaborations on urban operation practices. Her signature publications in this field includes "City of Codes: The Co-creation of Human-technological Systems".

Prof Huang Dan

Professor, College of Media and International Culture, Zhejiang University

Director, Center for Digital Communication Studies, Zhejiang University

Huang Dan's research areas include media theories, Chinese media history, urban communication and histories of communication thoughts.

Roundtable: AI & the Cities

Chair:

Prof Pan Ji

Professor and Associate Director, Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University

Pan Ji's main research area includes media effect, urban communication, digital technologies and innovations in digital research methods. His works have been published in *Journalism Studies*, *Chinese Journal of Communication*, *Telematics and Informatics* and *Internet Research*. He serves on several editorial boards and is now associate editor for *Online Media and Global Communication*.

Discussants:

Prof Huang Dan

Professor, College of Media and International Culture, Zhejiang University
Director, Center for Digital Communication Studies, Zhejiang University

Prof Sun Wei

Professor, School of Journalism, Fudan University
Director, Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University

Prof Scott McQuire

Professor of Media and Communications, School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne

Scott McQuire is a co-founder of the Research Unit for Public Cultures which fosters interdisciplinary research at the nexus of digital media, contemporary art, urbanism, and social theory. His recent books include *Geomedia: Networked Cities and the Future of Public Space* (Polity, 2016; Russian edition Strelka Press 2018; Chinese edition Fudan University Press 2019) and *Communicative Cities and Urban Space* (co-edited with Sun Wei, Routledge 2021).

Prof Kim Yong-Chan

Professor, Department of Communication, Yonsei University

For more than 2 decades, **Kim Yong-Chan's** research program has been built around three key areas: new media technology, urban communication, and risk society. His recent books include *Post-Mass Media, Risk, Society, and Media*, *The Candlelight Movement, Democracy, and Communication in Korea*, and *The Communication Ecology of 21st Century Urban Communities*. He has published more than 80 articles in prestigious journals.

Dr Jun Yu

Assistant Professor, Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore

Jun Yu employs qualitative and mixed-methods to explore the social, cultural, and ethical implications of emerging technologies. His current project explores how data, platforms, and AI are implicated in the ways in which individuals communicate and go about their everyday lives, and how such experience relates to a (re)configuration of the self and the way they build relationships with others.

Digital Railways as Urban Interface: A Study Based on the German Railway System

Mr Cheng Taoran

PhD Candidate, School of Journalism, Fudan University

As the earliest and most representative form of transportation that originated from modernity, the railway system is one of the most important interfaces for communication and transportation within and between cities. Nowadays, the railway systems all around the world are coupling with digital technology and transforming themselves into a broader part of the digital environment. The German railway system is the second largest railway network in the world and the largest in Europe. The German railway system includes a diverse parallel railway network within cities, between cities, and between countries, which poses unique challenges for its digital integration. On the other hand, German railways have long been considered the least popular railway service system in Europe, and their frequent failures provide us with a unique insight into the current state of digital development. Through walk through of its application interface and field observation of the German railway operations, the author attempts to explore and discuss how digital technology affects the technical foundation, operational logic and cultural significance of the railway system. Research has found that digital media has strong urban reterritorialization capabilities by transforming different social entities into binary codes with the same operational basis through digital interfaces such as Apps and plug-in units, the railway system is no longer just a simple form of transportation, but has become a more extensive and diverse digital urban interface, connecting virtual and reality, regulating the practical trajectories of different actors in the city, and coordinating different social fields.

Mr Cheng Taoran is a PhD Candidate of the School of Journalism at Fudan University, and a Guest PhD Student at the University of Amsterdam.

“Making the Block” – Contemporary Interactions between Urban Public Space and Mobile Media Practices

Ms Kang Zhengyu

PhD Candidate, School of Journalism, Fudan University

Cities play a central role in modern production and life. Within the framework of modernity, communication, and the city are juxtaposed, forming an isomorphic relationship (Lu, 2013). In this context, communication is an increasingly prominent and constitutive element of urban life. Today, media technology transcends fixed locations and specialized scenarios, and people’s daily lives are constantly immersed in, interacting with, and negotiating with the media flow. Therefore, both the street and the city need to consider the impact of media devices that redistribute the scale and speed of social interaction. Utilizing Anfu Road block and the platform *Xiaohongshu* in Shanghai as a case study, this research delves into the impact of *Xiaohongshu*, a prominent social platform, on the social dynamics of the block. It investigates how *Xiaohongshu*’s data-driven approach, commercialization strategies, and neoliberal discourse shape social practices within the area. The use of mobile media to promote folk imagery can be seen as a form of re-localization in the globalized world. However, we should also be aware of how commercial activities exploit culture and impact daily life by occupying limited public and private spaces, leading to legal and ethical controversies. Moreover, it examines how these factors contribute to and engage with the transformation of urban space and business models within the block, while also influencing the creation of urban imagery and culture.

Kang Zhengyu is currently pursuing her doctoral studies in Communication at the School of Journalism, Fudan University. As a visiting scholar at the School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne, she is delving into my research interests centered around urban communication and platform studies. Specifically, she focuses on exploring the dynamics of urban space, social relations, and social practices within the framework of platforms.

Digitalized Monetary Media and the Intelligent Future of Exchange: A Case Study on “Ant Forest” and Its Implications for Monetary Media

Mr Zhang Qikai

PhD Candidate, School of Journalism, Fudan University

In the past two decades, the profound digitalization of money has transformed the way we interact with others in the expending urban life. This study contributes to a larger dissertation on the digitalized form of monetary media by examining the complexities of money and quasi-money exchanges in the digital era. In this presentation, I will first discuss the multi-layered meaning of “Monetary Media”, drawing on previous works and theoretical debates on the concept of money and media. Then I will look into an empirical case study on “Ant Forest”, an individual carbon footprint game function integrated with Alipay, with open-access documents and multi-sited Internet ethnography on the user community. Focusing on trust building, gameplaying and the embodied interplay between different values, the concept of “conversion” from Jane Guyer will be introduced and altered to elucidate how this digitalized monetary system mediates the exchange between users and the company. Extending from this case, the presentation will be concluded with suppositions of how money could be understood as a “surviving messenger”, and how digitalized form of money may embody values in heterogeneity rather than in homogeneity.

Zhang Qikai is a PhD student in media and communication studies at Fudan University. His current research is about a media/communicational understanding of money and its transformation in digital age, which combines theories from media study and anthropology with case studies about digital payments and cryptocurrencies. He is generally interested in the shifting dynamic between technology and humanity within our economic and cultural life.

Smartphone Sensing and Urban Communication: Behavioural Insights on Wellbeing in Intelligent Cities

Ms Soh Kai Xin

Research Assistant, Centre for Trusted Internet and Community,
National University of Singapore

In the age of intelligent cities, where digital connectivity and mobile communication underpins urban life, understanding the relationship between smartphone usage and psychological wellbeing is paramount. This study explores this nexus through a smartphone sensing and mobile experience sampling method (m-ESM) study to identify computational and behavioural markers of wellbeing. By collecting data from 138 adults in Singapore over four weeks from November to December 2023, we found that overall smartphone usage had minimal impacts on long-term psychological wellbeing, but had small yet significant associations with daily mood and stress. Notably, “app swinging”—the behaviour of rotating and returning to different apps—was negatively correlated with short-term wellbeing, where individuals with higher daily rates of app swinging reported poorer moods, thus underscoring the importance of examining nuanced smartphone behaviours rather than relying on generic usage metrics. These findings have profound implications for the design of urban interventions in intelligent cities. By pinpointing specific digital behaviours that impact wellbeing, tech developers, urban planners and policymakers can devise and design targeted strategies to foster healthier digital habits. This study thus not only contributes to the academic discourse on urban communication and intelligent cities, but also offers practical insights for enhancing urban wellbeing. By leveraging the power of smartphone sensing, we can create smarter, more responsive urban environments that support the psychological health of their inhabitants.

Soh Kai Xin is an AI and media scholar and incoming PhD student in Media, Technology, and Society at Northwestern University. Graduating with Double Degrees (Highest Distinctions) in Communications and New Media and Business (Marketing) from the National University of Singapore (NUS), she is passionate about (1) exploring the socio-cultural intersections and ethical implications of generative Artificial Intelligence on the communication and creative industries, and (2) examining how human-AI collaboration and co-creativity can impact individuals, organisations, and society. At NUS, she currently researches about digital wellbeing and resilience as a Research Assistant at the Centre for Trusted Internet and Community.

The Late Teresa Teng's Failed Digital Calling: Listening as the Way to Know Teng in Mainland China

Dr Hety Wong

Post-Doctoral Research Associate, Cultural Research Centre
National University of Singapore

This paper studies the controversy over the first “live” broadcast of the late Teresa Teng’s performance for mainland Chinese audiences. Teng (1953-1995), or rather, the most recent virtual human iteration of the late singer produced by artificial intelligence appeared in Jiangsu Satellite Television’s *New Year’s Eve Gala 2022*. In the midst of praise in the Chinese-language media inside and outside of China, criticism surfaced. The most prominent complaint was that the audiences had “listened to an emptiness” when they realized that the singing voice was not Teng’s. I attempt to provide an answer to this sonic challenge by presenting how Teng’s singing has been mediated with available technology and media infrastructure in mainland China. Firstly, I present a historical trace of how mainland Chinese got to know Teng through listening during the cross-strait Cold War. Then, I examine the content of Teng’s posthumous audio-visual performance in 2021 and the change in viewing conditions following advances in media and technology. By laying out the two different technological conditions, I show that mainland Chinese audiences had become accustomed to listening to Teng’s voice in the analog era, but in the digital era, the same method failed them. I argue that mainland Chinese audiences shared an imperfect sonic persona (see Schulze, 2018), so when they perceived Teng’s singing, they felt let down by the failed sonic generativity that had been cultivated by such a sonic persona.

Hety Wong is a Post-Doctoral Research Associate of the Cultural Research Centre at the National University of Singapore. Trained as a vocalist, her research interest in patterned sound combines her practical and academic training. Her contracted monograph examines modified Cantopop songs in post-1997 Hong Kong from a sound studies perspective, in connection to the development of media and sound (re)production technologies. She is currently conducting a pilot study on Teresa Teng’s live posthumous holographic performances. As part of her on-going second book project, she is exploring the creation of digital realness through the (re)production of sound/singing voices, including with artificial intelligence technology, in posthumous performances.

Complex Framing: Hybrid Space and the Reconfiguration of Frame Dynamics

Prof Pan Ji

Professor and Associate Director, Center for Information and Communication Studies,
Fudan University

This study examines how digital media create novel conditions of space hybridization, and how these conditions prompt new means to make sense of social situations in daily life. The capacity to recognize and define social situations/contexts often help distinguish between human and artificial intelligence. In particular, we categorize space hybridization into four modes based on whether the convergence between virtual and actual realities entails flattening; whether the process is symmetric; or whether multiple senses are involved. Distinct mode of defining/recognizing social situations in each condition is elaborated based on a critical reflection on framing theory. To conclude, this study argues that complex relations (including bridging, nesting, competing) between four distinct modes of framing generate more interesting urban life and enable AI to interact with human in a more collaborative gesture.

Pan Ji is Professor and Associate Director of the Center for Information and Communication Studies at Fudan University. His main research area includes media effect, urban communication, digital technologies and innovations in digital research methods. His works have been published in *Journalism Studies*, *Chinese Journal of Communication*, *Telematics and Informatics* and *Internet Research*. He serves on several editorial boards and is now associate editor for *Online Media and Global Communication*.

How Digital Communication Makes Network Different? – A Perspective from Complex Systems

Prof Zhang Zi-Ke

Professor, Center for Digital Communication Studies and College of Media and International Culture, Zhejiang University

Quantifying the structural and functional differences of networks is a fundamental and challenging problem in the era of big data. In this talk, I shall introduce a temporal dissimilarity measure for temporal network constructed by digital communications. Experimental results on both synthetic and empirical temporal digital networks show that the proposed measure could discriminate diverse temporal digital networks with different structures by capturing various topological and digital properties. Moreover, the proposed measure can discern the functional distinctions and is found effective applications in digital network classification and spreadability discrimination.

Zhang Zi-Ke, Ph.D in Complex Systems in 2011 at University of Fribourg, Switzerland, now is serving as a Full Professor at the Center for Digital Communication Research and College of Media and International Culture, Zhejiang University. His main research interests are the interdisciplinary area of data- and model-driven social computing oriented research questions. He has published more than 100 peer-reviewed international journal papers with more than 5900 citations from Google Scholar.

Local Familiar Strangers in Digitalizing Urban Neighborhoods in Seoul

Prof Kim Yong-Chan

Professor, Department of Communication, Yonsei University

The purpose of this study is to examine how localized ICT use is related to interactions with local familiar strangers, from the perspective of communication infrastructure theory. More specifically, we examine (1) how individuals differ in terms of their relationships with local familiar strangers; (2) how individual-level socio-economic factors affect the scope and intensity of such relationships; (3) which individual-level communication factors (i.e., integrated connectedness to community storytelling network or ICSN) come into play in such relationships; and (4) how individual use of ICT affects the scope and intensity of such relationships. This study uses in-person survey data (n = 2001) collected in Seoul in the fall of 2019. We found that more than half of the respondents communicate at least occasionally with local familiar strangers in their neighborhoods. However, there were relatively fewer interactions with local familiar strangers from local businesses and local institutions. Females, older people, and the more educated were more likely to interact with local familiar strangers. ICSN was positively and strongly associated with interactions with local familiar strangers. Localized ICT use was generally negatively related to interactions with local familiar strangers. This negative relationship between localized ICT use and interaction with local familiar strangers is moderated by ICSN. For residents with lower ICSN, localized ICT use and interactions with local familiar strangers were clearly negatively related, and for those with higher ICSN, the two variables assume a U-shaped relationship.

Kim Yong-Chan (PhD, University of Southern California) is Professor in the Department of Communication at Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea. Prior to joining the faculty at Yonsei, he was on the faculty at the University of Iowa and the University of Alabama. For more than 2 decades, his research program has been built around three key areas: new media technology, urban communication, and risk society. His recent books include *Post-Mass Media, Risk, Society, and Media*, *The Candlelight Movement, Democracy, and Communication in Korea*, and *The Communication Ecology of 21st Century Urban Communities*. He has published more than 80 articles in prestigious journals.

Cities of Memory: From Cinematic Representation to Short Video Curation

Prof Li Hongtao

Professor, School of Journalism, Fudan University

Associate Director, Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University

“As this wave from memories flows in, the city soaks it up like a sponge and expands”. So writes Italo Calvino in *Invisible Cities*. Through ruins, monuments, memorials, photographic depictions, cinematic representations, and short videos, cities are turned into cities of memory. By focusing on two Chinese cities, Nanjing, the site of the horrific massacre, and Wuhan, the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will examine how they were transformed into cities of memory by the representation of urban places/spaces and reveal the resulting tension between local identities and master narratives centering on national victimhood or heroism.

However, as M. Christine Boyer (1994) argued, “the public realm of the city of collective memory should entail a continuous urban topography... should include places for public assemblage... as well as private memory walks.” We will further discuss two memory projects to explore the possibility and potential of collaborative and participatory storytelling in connecting everchanging cities to their pasts. The first is City of Memory, “a dynamic story map of New York City” that “creates a web of interlocking memories, chronicling the city’s inner life”; the second is Cities and Memory, “a global, collaborative sound art and field recording programme” to “remix the world, one sound at a time”.

Li Hongtao is Professor of the School of Journalism and the Associate Director of the Center for Information and Communication Studies at Fudan University. His research interests include media sociology, cultural memory, and global communication. He has published a book on the memory politics of the Nanjing Massacre. Currently he works on projects related to the traveling memory of media events, COVID-19 memories, as well as the making of digital memory. His work has appeared in major English and Chinese journals, including *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *Global Environmental Change*, *China Quarterly*, *Media, Culture, & Society*, *Communication and Society*, etc.

Toward Multiverse: Temporal-spatial Stacking in Digital Storytelling

Prof Lu Ye

Professor, School of Journalism, Fudan University

Borrowing the concept “multiverse” to summarize the current new technological culture, this present uses rich cases to discuss the dimensions and characteristics of space-time stacking of digital storytelling. Space-time stacking refers to the interweaving of different types of visual and auditory elements of digital storytelling like a set of stacked narrative blocks. The most noteworthy features are the inherent unpredictability driven by technology and people’s response to it, a sense of loss of control. And this is precisely the potential of digital storytelling to break past media experience and cultural frameworks.

Lu Ye is Professor of the School of Journalism and a researcher at the Center of Information and Communication Studies at Fudan University. Her research fields are digital news production, new technologies & daily life, and public art communication.

The Pervasive Game: A New Technological Culture in the Digital City

A/Prof Zhou Haiyan

Associate Professor, School of Journalism, Fudan University

The Pervasive Game is a significant media practice that reflects the evolving relationship between technology and culture. This paper explores two cognitive orientations that emphasize either culture or technology, depending on differing perspectives regarding the foundations and mechanisms of the game. In the digital media era, new media technology dynamically merges reality and virtuality, resulting in the game becoming culturally pervasive in physical spaces and technologically pervasive in virtual networks. This has given rise to a fresh understanding of the concept of the “Pervasive Game.” Driven by digital media, the Pervasive Game has the capacity to recreate urban culture. On one hand, it transfers the cultural significance of technology, enhancing urban culture through interactive participation and establishing a new cultural community that transcends anthropocentrism. On the other hand, it ignites technological innovation within culture, exploring novel approaches to cultural heritage through the digital continuity of species and the protection of cultural diversity. Furthermore, it employs digitally gamified mechanisms in urban renewal processes.

The Pervasive Game represents a significant breakthrough in bridging the gap between technology and culture. By merging technology and culture, it directly fosters the development of an integrated technological culture within the digital city.

Zhou Haiyan, Ph.D. in Journalism, is now an associate professor in the School of Journalism at Fudan University. Her research mainly focus on new media and urban communication. Based on the new experience field of digitalization and urbanization in China, she conducted in-depth research on digital games, aerial photography, AI and other new media. She is a certified drone pilot and the host of the National Social Science Fund Youth Project on drone journalism. She has published 2 monographs and more than 20 papers such as “Metagame: Mediation of Digital Society in the Context of Metaverse”, “Body without Organs · Organs without Bodies: Sensory Production of Aerial Videos under Tiktok Algorithms”, “On New Forms of the Posthuman Communication Initiated by Soft Artificial Life”.

Localizing Big Data Governance in China during COVID-19: Urban Digital Infrastructure, Mobility Data, and Bureaucratic Dynamics

A/Prof Li Mengying

Research Associate Professor, School of Journalism, Fudan University

This article explores the implementation of digital governance strategies by local governments in China during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the conflicts that arise from the spatial-temporal nature of big mobility data and the bureaucratic logic of government agencies. The utilization of large-scale mobility data for tracking the virus's spread was a national-level strategy facilitated by urban digital infrastructure. However, when these data were transferred to grassroots-level government agencies responsible for implementing specific preventive measures, numerous challenges emerged. These challenges included data errors and the mismatch between big data constructed based on geographical scales rather than administrative boundaries. Contrary to the perception of a highly centralized and automated governance apparatus, this study highlights the complexities and fragmented nature of data governance in China.

Li Mengying is a Research Associate Professor of the School of Journalism at Fudan University and a researcher at the Center for Information and Communication Studies. She holds a PhD in Digital Media and Culture from King's College London. Her research focuses on the digital transformation of state governance, particularly in relation to the growing importance of big data and digital infrastructures. She has published articles in journals such as *Information, Communication & Society* and *Journal of Digital Social Research*, as well as in major Chinese journals including *Journalism Review and Exploration*, and *Free Views*.

What have We Learnt from 60 Years of Urban Computing?

Prof Scott McQuire

Professor of Media and Communications, School of Culture and Communication,
University of Melbourne

The practical application of computing to urban life began in the 1960s. In this paper, I will trace the progress of urban computing from the novel partnership initiated between the RAND Corporation and the city of New York in 1969 through the various smart city scenarios that spread across the world from the early 2000s to the new enthusiasm for “AI” as a key force driving a new urbanism in the 2020s. I will argue that major transformations of the field—most notably the increasing scale and diversity of available urban data and the massive growth of analytical capacity—have been counterpointed by significant continuities in the models and conceptual frameworks that animate “AI urbanism”. This has important implications for urban futures, in terms of the capacity of machine-learning systems to deliver on the promises made in their name but also in terms of the evolving relations of power in contemporary cities.

Scott McQuire is Professor of Media and Communications in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. He is a co-founder of the Research Unit for Public Cultures which fosters interdisciplinary research at the nexus of digital media, contemporary art, urbanism, and social theory. His recent books include *Geomedia: Networked Cities and the Future of Public Space* (Polity, 2016; Russian edition Strelka Press 2018; Chinese edition Fudan University Press 2019) and *Communicative Cities and Urban Space* (co-edited with Sun Wei, Routledge 2021).

Being Human in Digital Cities

Prof Myria Georgiou

Professor, Department of Media and Communications,
The London School of Economics and Political Science

How is life in digital cities changing what it means to be human? In this presentation, I outline the new configuration of social order that is taking shape in today's cities. Although routed through extractive datafication, compulsive connectivity, and regulatory AI technologies, this digital order nonetheless displaces technocentrism and instead promotes new visions of humanism, all in the name of freedom, diversity, and sustainability. But the digital order emerges in the midst of neoliberal instability and crises, resulting in a plurality of contrasting responses to securing digitally mediated human progress. While corporate, media, and state actors mobilize such positive sociotechnical imaginaries to promise digitally mediated human progress, urban citizens and social movements propose alternative pathways to autonomy and dignity through and sometimes against digital technologies. Through brief references to fieldwork findings from across seven different digital cities, I will show how the digital transformation of cities says less about technological innovation and more about the competing claims to urban humanity.

Myria Georgiou is Professor in the Department of Media and Communications at LSE. Professor Georgiou researches and teaches on migration and urbanisation in the context of intensified mediation. Adopting a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, she is committed to putting the human of the urban, transnationally connected world at the core of her research. Her more recent books include *The Digital Border* (with L. Chouliaraki, NYU Press, 2022) and *Being Human in Digital Cities* (Polity Press, 2023).

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“Intelligent Communication and City Networks”

A Hybrid Preconference of the International Communication Association

Co-hosted by

Cultural Research Centre (Department of Communications and New Media, National University of Singapore),

Center for Information and Communication Studies (Fudan University), and

Center for Digital Communication Studies (Zhejiang University)

Local Arrangement Committee:

Prof Audrey Yue

Dr Jun Yu

Dr Hety Wong

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