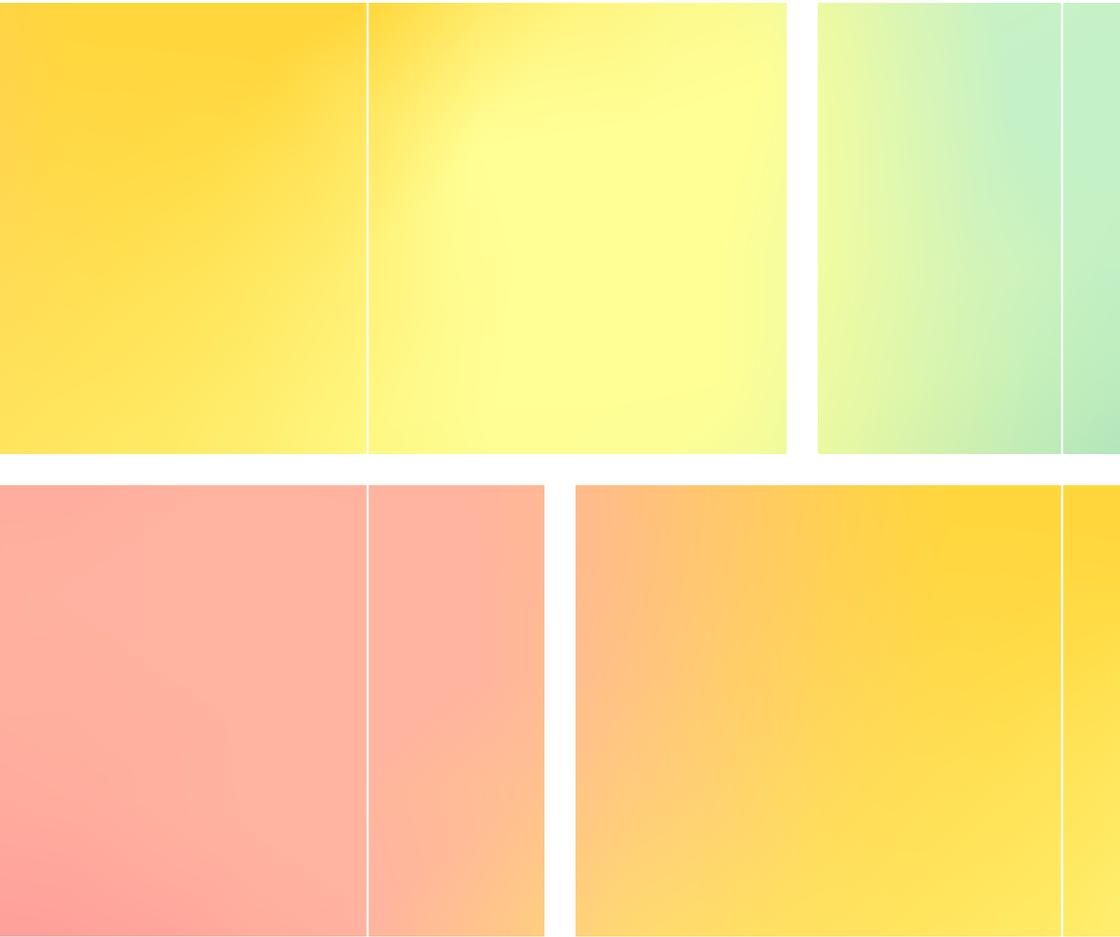


7th NUS
Geography

Graduate Research Workshop

26 April 2019
AS7, #01-02



New Bearings of Geography

Interpreting Dynamic Landscapes

We live in a dynamic world, saturated with interactions that occur at a range of temporal and spatial scales, and across human and natural environments. How do we make sense of the diversity of these interactions? How does the complex nature of these interactions change the way that we understand the world around us? How does it change the way that we understand what it means to be humans, inhabitants of the planet, and/or researchers?

Geography, as the study of the world and everything on it, is well-positioned to contribute meaningfully to these questions. It is in studying Geography that we learn about how we as humans interact with our environments, how landscapes are constantly changing with and through our spatial meanings and imagination, and how this in turn defines our roles and responsibilities towards this place we call home. At the same time, it is also in studying Geography that we are critically attuned to the workings of power in and through spaces. It enables us to uncover interdependent spatial connections and various forms of inequalities, fostering a more empathetic understanding towards all lives with whom we share this planet.

The theme of this year's 7th Geography Graduate Research Workshop is 'New Bearings of Geography: Interpreting Dynamic Landscapes'. The Oxford dictionary defines bearing as:

1. a person's way of standing or moving.
2. relation; relevance.
3. the direction or position of something, or the direction of movement, relative to a fixed point. It is usually measured in degrees, typically with magnetic north as zero.

Yet, what does Geography's "bearings" really mean to us? In this year's workshop, we aim to expound on the value of Geography in deepening our engagement with contemporary debates. Student presentations are divided into three themes which define some of the current research frontiers in academic Geography — (a) Environment: Interactions, Change, and Management, (b) Mobilities and Identities, and (c) Urban Scales. Each theme illustrates a branch of Geography interpreting human-physical environments and socio-spatial interactions.

As we take this theme **forward**, we reflect on our positionality as young graduate researchers as we pioneer **new directions** with our own research endeavours. Perhaps, as we **navigate** our respective fields, we may even stumble upon the emergence of new theory. Let's not **lose our bearings** and once again, thank you for joining us in our journeys!

Geography graduate students

Class of 2018/2019

Where's Geography Going?

As a discipline, Geography is not immune from questions of relevance and applicability in the wider world beyond academia. In asking “Where’s Geography?” in today’s world, we want to explore how Geography graduate researchers can bridge the academic—non-academic divide. As such, the closing plenary session of this workshop moots the possible ways in which Geography, as a multi-disciplinary approach, can be relevant to tackling complex real-world problems.

Panel Discussion

By bringing together academic perspectives from scholarly researchers and applied perspectives from practitioners in the industry and government, we put forth the question: How can academic research in Geography have more-than-academic value and engagement in today’s world?

Our panel discussion welcomes three distinguished speakers:

Dr. Harvey Neo (Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities), **Ms. Zing Lim** (Ministry of National Development Housing Division) and **Mr. Raem Tan** (NParks). How can a geographical frame of thinking inform our approach to tackling existing and emerging societal trends? What are the research frontiers for Geography as a praxis-based discipline? What is the applicability of Geography to industry? These are by no means easy questions to answer, but our panellists, all of whom are Geography graduates, will be able to offer their invaluable insight to these discussions.

Closing Keynote

To close the day, our guest speaker, **Dr. Alan Chong** (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies), will speak on “The Spaces of International Politics Today” to highlight the importance of interdisciplinary interactions between Geography and International Relations (IR). He does so by looking at the diverse meanings of political spaces in IR, and how they (re)produce power differentials and new contested identities around the world. This elucidates Geography’s relevance beyond its disciplinary boundaries and how Geographers like ourselves can make transdisciplinary contributions in future.



Dr Harvey Neo

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

Harvey's research focuses on critical urban studies, citizen urban science and policy-making as well as nature-society interactions. Previously an Associate Professor of Geography at the National University of Singapore, he has won multiple teaching and research excellence awards and taught courses on urban development, resource geography, environmental politics and nature/society issues. Harvey is an Associate Editor, *Regional Studies*, *Regional Science* (published by the Regional Studies Association and Taylor & Francis) and Member of the International Editorial Advisory Board, *Geographies of Justice and Social Transformation Book Series* (published by University of Georgia Press). Since 2013, he has been one of the editors of the leading geography-oriented, multi-disciplinary journal, *Geoforum*.

At the LKYCIC, Harvey leads the Cities Cluster Research on "The Future of Asian Cities". Amongst other things, he is interested in how a citizen-centric urban science can be practised, and sustained in tandem with "big data", and in so doing, how it can influence urban policies positively. The future of such citizen urban science will be studied across several Southeast Asian cities, including Phnom Penh, Jakarta and Manila. Harvey also leads the 'Urban Environmental Sustainability' programme, focusing on the issues of water, food and energy.



Ms Zing Lim

Deputy Director / Housing (Social Support)
Ministry of National Development

Zing is a Deputy Director in the Housing Division at the Ministry of National Development. She previously worked in the Prime Minister's Office, and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. She has a BA in Geography from Oxford University, and a Masters in Environmental Policy from the London School of Economics.

She enjoys learning about and supporting efforts to make the world a better place, and exploring the world on two wheels or two feet. At home, her Singapore Special dog enjoys taking her for walks.



Mr. Raem Tan

Arborist/Horticulturist
National Parks, Singapore

Raem works at National Parks as a certified arborist and horticulturist, helping in the maintenance and management of Singapore's parks and trees. He graduated in 2005 with Geography Honours from National University of Singapore and has previously worked in the Ministry of Education and National Council of Social Services. He has also worked as Parks manager at National Parks regarding visitorship management, biodiversity conservation, operations and maintenance, and enforcement. The study of geography has provided him "the ability to quickly assimilate ground information and apply it to environmental management decisions".



Dr. Alan Chong

Associate Professor and Acting Head, Centre for Multilateralism Studies
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Alan is Associate Professor, and Acting Head, Centre for Multilateralism Studies, at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. He has published widely on the notion of soft power and the role of ideas in constructing the international relations of Singapore and Asia. His publications have appeared in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *The Pacific Review*; *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*; *Asian Survey*; *East Asia: an International Quarterly*; *Politics, Religion and Ideology*; the *Review of International Studies*; the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs and Armed Forces and Society*. He is also the author of *Foreign Policy in Global Information Space: Actualizing Soft Power* (Palgrave, 2007) and editor of *International Security in the Asia Pacific: Transcending ASEAN towards Transitional Polycentrism* (Palgrave, 2018). He is currently working on several projects exploring the notion of "Asian international theory". His interest in soft power has also led to inquiry into the sociological and philosophical foundations of international communication. In the latter area, he is currently working on a manuscript titled "The International Politics of Communication: Representing Community in a Globalizing World". In tandem, he has pursued a fledgling interest in researching cyber security issues. He has frequently been interviewed in the Asian media and consulted in think tank networks in the region.

Welcome!

Welcome to the NUS Geography Graduate Research Workshop 2019!

This is the seventh iteration of the annual workshop that marks the culmination of the Graduate Research Seminar (GRS) module. All graduate research students in the Department of Geography are required to complete the GRS during their first year of graduate studies. The class includes both Masters and PhD students, some of whom only commenced their studies in January. This year the GRS module comprises 14 graduate research students from a variety of national and academic backgrounds. In addition to a strong contingent from Singapore, students on the course originate from Colombia, France, India and Indonesia. Some joined the Department direct from their undergraduate or Masters studies, while others arrived via a period of employment outside academia. Equally varied is the range of research topics, as is evident from the abstracts included in this programme.

The workshop showcases students' individual research projects. Within their fifteen minute-long slot, each student will be presenting some or all of the 'what?', 'why?' and 'how?' of their research, describing their respective projects, placing each in its academic context, outlining the significance of their planned work, and detailing how they aim to tackle the underpinning puzzles and problems. Some of the students may even be in a position to present preliminary findings of their research. Most, however, will focus on work that they propose to carry out during the remainder of their time in the Department. It is not easy to expose preliminary thinking to critical scrutiny. As in previous years, the intention of the workshop is that students can learn from presenting their own research ideas, and from receiving constructive feedback.



For many of the students involved, the workshop has been their first experience of organizing and hosting an academic event. I am sure that they will have gained much from the experience. The theme of 'New Bearings in Geography' is excellent—encapsulating both the diverse ways in which individual researchers find a place in Geography, and how our collective, disciplinary understandings compel new forms of action and ways of being in the world. The latter will be explicitly addressed in the Panel Discussion on "How can academic research in Geography have more-than-academic value and engagement in today's world?" So, to all GRS class members: thanks and well done for bringing this event to fruition. My sincere thanks also to the workshop's three distinguished speakers—Dr Harvey Neo, Ms Zing Lim and Mr Raem Tan—and to Dr Alan Chong for agreeing to give the closing keynote presentation.

I hope you enjoy the day's presentations, and invite you to participate actively in the friendly discussion and development of geographical research ideas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Bunnell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Professor Tim Bunnell
Graduate Student Coordinator 2019

Programme

08.45–09.00
09.00–09.15

Registration
Welcome Address—Professor Tim Bunnell, Department of Geography

Session 1

Environment: Interactions, Change, and Management

09.20–09.40

Human-wildlife interactions in a rapidly changing landscape: A case study of human encounters with the Sumatran tiger (*Panthera tigris sondaica*) in the Indragiri Hilir regency, Riau, Sumatra

Liu Weiting
e0383013@u.nus.edu

09.40–10.00

Understanding the recent history of metal pollution and environmental changes on Tonle Sap Lake.

Juanita Moreno Millan
juanita.morenom@u.nus.edu

10.00–10.20

Establishing Ecological Indices for a Forest Landscape Management in a Mangrove Ecosystem in West Papua, Indonesia

Meriadec Wilhelm Marie Sillanpää
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10.20–10.40

Ecosystem-level approach for systematic protected area planning in Sundarban mangrove forests of India and Bangladesh

Radhika Bhargava
radhika_bhargava@u.nus.edu

10.40–10.55

Tea Break

Session 2

Mobilities and Identities

11.00–11.20

The friendships of "grad trips": Understanding social life and self-identity formation through youth tourism

Cheong Yinn Shan
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11.20–11.40

Learning to dwell: The negotiations of the unsettled Afghan migrants in New Delhi and Kolkota

Chayanika Saxena
chayanika.saxena@u.nus.edu

11.40–12.00

Building together: Collective design and belonging in Yangon

Nikhil Sambamurthy
nikhils@u.nus.edu

12.00–12.20

When health goes wrong: Towards a weight-inclusive health environment in Singapore

Shee Siew Ying
siewying_@u.nus.edu

12.20–12.40

Discursive struggles underpinning the construction of the gig economy in Singapore

Rohini Anant
e0383012@u.nus.edu

12.40–13.25

Lunch Break

Session 3

Urban Scales

13.30–13.50

Claims to the streets: Delving into the uses of streets as public spaces

Ananya Bhuyan
e0383057@u.nus.edu

13.50–14.10

Assembling Relational Neighbourhoods in Singapore: Actor-Network Theory and spatial imaginations of the city"

Julius Chiang Kai Cheng
julius_@u.nus.edu

14.10–14.30

Urban acupuncture in Bandung: An assemblage theory approach

Meriky Lo Alexander
e0308871@u.nus.edu

14.30–14.50

Negotiating Placemaking: Business Improvement Districts in Singapore and London

Tan Wenn Er
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14.50–15.10

Programming futures: Smart nation Singapore and the city of tomorrow

Yeo Si Jie Ivin
yeoivin@u.nus.edu

15.10–15.20

Intermission

15.20–16.30

Closing Plenary Discussion

How can academic research in Geography have more-than-academic value and engagement in today's world?

Dr. Harvey Neo
Lee Kuan Yew Centre
for Innovative Cities

Ms. Zing Lim
Ministry of National
Development

Mr. Raem Tan
National Parks

Keynote speech—"The Spaces of International Politics Today"
Associate Professor Alan Chong, S Rajaratnam School
of International Studies

16.30–16.40

Closing Remarks

Harking back to the field's scientific roots, the Earth has always been a central concern to geographical research. Concomitant with the expansion of human settlement and society across the terrestrial surface of the Earth, geographical research has expanded its remit to include the various ways in which natural environments intersects with the human world. By interrogating this environment-society nexus through the lens of interactions, change, and management, this session elucidates the variegated socio-spatial relations and processes that condition the ways in which the natural environment meets the human world. First, we go on a journey to the Sumatran Islands in Indonesia, where **Weiting** will introduce to us the Sumatran tiger and the human-wildlife interactions that it is involved in. Thereafter, **Juanita** brings us up north to the Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia, where she uncovers the long-term impacts of metal pollution on the lake ecosystem. Switching gears slightly, the latter two presentations in this session revolve around environmental management practices. From the mangroves of West Papua, Indonesia, **Meriadec** proposes a nuanced approach to the sustainable harvesting of forest environments. Finally, **Radhika** introduces an ecosystem-level approach towards the systemic planning of the Sundarban Mangrove Forest that straddle India and Bangladesh.

Session 1

09.20–09.40

Human-wildlife interactions in a rapidly changing landscape: A case study of human encounters with the Sumatran tiger (*Panthera tigris sondaica*) in the Indragiri Hilir regency, Riau, Sumatra

Human-tiger encounters in Sumatra appear to be on the rise, at least according to recent press reports. What could be driving the increase in these reports, and does labelling the encounters as ‘conflicts’ fairly reflect the interactions between humans and the critically endangered Sumatran tigers? My research aims to determine the extent to which human-tiger encounters in Sumatra have changed over time, and whether current encounters can be fairly labelled as ‘human-wildlife conflicts’. Focusing on the Indragiri Hilir regency in Riau, my research seeks to address the following questions:

- a) How have human-tiger interaction varied, in terms of frequency and severity, over time?
- b) Who are the actors involved, and do they differ in their perceptions of wildlife?
- c) To what extent can the encounters be regarded as examples of human-wildlife conflicts?

Liu Weiting (Masters Sem 1)
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Weiting embarked on her journey as a Master’s candidate in January 2019, after graduating from the department half a year ago. She focuses mainly on human-wildlife interactions and conflicts through the geographical lens and wishes to further hone her analytical skills technically and critically in the process of doing her research. Weiting is also a thrill seeker and is fond of hiking in the mountains and riding roller-coasters. Apart from her affection for animals, she loves to collect rocks from all around the world and hopes to one day identify their composition so that she can have a mini rock display at home.



Session 1

09.40–10.00

Understanding the recent history of metal pollution and environmental changes on Tonle Sap lake

Tonle Sap Lake is a high productive ecosystem that serves as a major water and protein source for Cambodia. Despite its value to the population and different protection plans, this ecosystem is still under threat. Climate and environmental changes (e.g. hydrologic disturbances, land use change, gold mining) have contributed to the degradation and pollution of the lake. However, there is a lack of knowledge about the specific effects that environmental changes have on the lake and how they are contributing to the ecosystem degradation. The former hinders the design of effective management actions that guarantee a sustainable use of the lake. To understand the current state of the lake and to contribute to future management objectives, my project aims to study historic environmental changes on Tonle Sap Lake emphasizing on metal pollution. To achieve this, I will do a multi-proxy analysis on sediments from the lake using biological (e.g. diatoms, pollen) and inorganic compounds as proxies to understand historic changes in vegetation, water quality and metal pollution on the ecosystem.

Juanita Moreno Millan (Masters Sem 2)

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Juanita joined the Geography Department on August 2018. In October 2016 she graduated as a Biologist from the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia. In 2017, she continued working at the university on studies related to paleoecology and archeology. In 2018, before joining the Department, she worked at the Sewage and Water company of Bogotá performing environmental assessments for the designation of protected areas. Her interests revolve around past environment reconstruction, the influences of climate change and anthropogenic impacts to the environments. Aside from this, she enjoys hiking (just for fun!) and look for animals in their natural habitats.



Establishing Ecological Indices for a Forest Landscape Management in a Mangrove Ecosystem in West Papua, Indonesia

Bintuni Bay, located in the south of the Bird's Head Peninsula of West Papua, Indonesia, has one of the largest mangrove forest concessions in the world. The PT BUMWI concession has over 82 000 hectares of the forest undergoing a selective logging regime, with a primary focus on sustainable forest management. Although the company has done multiple assessments to carry out a good SFM practice, many improvements could be made, especially in forest classification to determine ecological and economical importance of different forest areas. We could therefore ask what indices are necessary to categorize forest areas for sustainable utilization and management?

The objective of the research would be determining a proper Forest Landscape Management Plan for a harvested mangrove ecosystem based on defined forest indices. These indices would be based on growth models from dendrometry data, experimental silviculture plot observations, existing field survey data, and hydrological data. Biodiversity, growth and harvest indices could be created to evaluate the current condition of a secondary mangrove forest and help foresters prescribe an appropriate management

Meriadec Wilhelm Marie Sillanpää (PhD Sem 2)
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Meriadec is a PhD. candidate in the department of Geography, and concentrates on the development and evaluation of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) regimes in mangroves. He has previously worked with forestry companies in Indonesian Borneo and West Papua, and his main interests are the use of remote sensing and drone imagery to monitor forest environments, botany, management of coastal forests and New Guinea forest ecosystems.



Session 1

10.20–10.40

Ecosystem-level approach for systematic protected area planning in Sundarban mangrove forests of India and Bangladesh

Sundarban Mangrove Forest is the largest mangrove forest in the world, shared between India and Bangladesh. It is ecologically, culturally and socially important for the region. Currently, it is managed as two separate units which are not representative of the needs of the ecosystem and its people. This thesis will study the current state and functioning of Sundarbans by understanding the interaction of internal forces/dynamics and external stressors (biophysical and social), the cause, affect and process of coastal regression and its impact on forest degradation, and the feasibility of a transboundary community management approach between India and Bangladesh. Finally, using outcomes from these three objectives, a reserve plan would be designed incorporating the functioning, flows and dynamics of the system, improving current threats, involving feasible parameters from transboundary community management to make the forest more resilient for future threats.



Radhika Bhargava (PhD Sem 2)

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Radhika Bhargava started her PhD at NUS in August 2018 after graduating with a MS from University of San Francisco in Environmental Management (2018) and with a BS from University of Cincinnati in Biology and Environmental Sciences (2016). Currently, she is using her skills in remote sensing and environmental management to study ecosystem management of Sundarbans mangrove forest in India and Bangladesh. Broadly, her interests are in reserve design, community management and sustainable development in the coastal areas of developing countries. She has prior experience in working with coral reef resilience in the Caribbeans and with the SERVIR-Mekong on sustainable development in South East Asia. When she is not being nerdy, Radhika likes to swim, dive, hike, paint, dance and roam around streets.

Session 2

11.00–11.20

The friendships of "grad trips": Understanding social life and self-identity formation through youth tourism

What is the significance of the graduation trip? Is it merely a trip taken with close friends, or are there deeper symbolic undercurrents to this ritualistic rite of passage, marking the transition between youthhood and adulthood? My research uses the graduation trip as an empirical lens to analyse the social relation of friendship as a means to discover the authentic self.

It aims firstly to better understand the geographical dimensions of how friendship is sustained through travel, thus unravelling how social relations are made through our mobilities. Secondly, the friendship group on holiday allows us to understand how sociality is co-produced through travel companions, thus de-exoticizing tourism as not merely an individual asocial experience. This research aspires to speak back to tourism scholarship's theorization of authenticity and wellbeing. In doing so, I hope to broaden understandings of travel as a way to reflect inwards on the self through the sustained presence of others in a spatially- and temporally-contingent mobility. Using focus group discussions and an autobiographical methodology, I seek to explain the importance of friendship as a social tie pivotal to the personal development of young adults in contemporary modern life.

Cheong Yinn Shan (Masters Sem 2)
yinnshan.cheong@u.nus.edu

Yinn Shan is a first year Masters candidate in the Department of Geography. She graduated with First Class Honours in 2018 in her Bachelor of Social Sciences, majoring in Geography and minoring in Sociology. She decided to pursue graduate studies because it gave her a chance to do what she loves— honing her critical thinking skills and understanding the society around her better. Her research interests span the fields of urban geographies, feminist geographies and of course, tourism geographies, probably because she loves to travel too much! She was proud to present her honours thesis on family holidays and the everyday social reproduction of the home at the 1st Critical Tourism Studies Asia-Pacific Conference 2018. She currently reads modules at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and hopes to pursue a career in the public sector. You'll most likely find Yinn Shan singing songs and staring happily at clouds, because life's too short not to be happy!



Learning to dwell: The negotiations of the unsettled Afghan migrants in New Delhi and Kolkata

What does it mean to dwell in/on displacement? Leading an *unsettled, dis-placed* life, the Afghan “immigrants”, forced or otherwise, experience and perform negotiations in the new places they find themselves. The cities of New Delhi and Kolkata where they have *arrived* may or may not be the places where they *settle*. However, as they come to dwell in (particular) places within these cities, where dwelling is a phenomenological-geographical process, they are acted upon and act upon the dynamics that are attendant to any given geographical and social space.

In this research, I will provide a multi-scalar and multi-sited perspective on these different dwelling experiences and performances of the *unsettled, displaced* Afghans in Delhi and Kolkata by drawing on ethnographic research. These negotiations are multi-scalar insofar that they take place at various scales – self, family, community, etc. They are also multi-sited because how they dwell is (re)formed and (re)articulated at different places and in different settings. Then, what does these different dwelling experiences and performances look, feel, sound (etc.) like will be the leitmotif of this research.

Chayanika Saxena (PhD Sem 2)
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Chayanika Saxena is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore (Singapore). She was formerly at RSIS, Singapore as Student Research Assistant and Post Graduate Student of International Relations. Her doctoral thesis looks at the dwelling experiences of the “unsettled” Afghan “immigrants” in the Indian cities of New Delhi and Kolkata.

She has more than seven years of research experience on Afghanistan and has published and presented on related matters nationally and internationally. She maintains linguistic proficiency in Hindi, Urdu, English and has working knowledge of Farsi.



Session 2

11.40–12.00

Building together: Collective design and belonging in Yangon

Decades of underinvestment have charged the residents of Yangon with maintaining and improving their shared urban spaces together. Whether through individual initiatives or planned programmes run by civil-society organisations, these everyday acts of design connect a diverse range of people and communities in the shared practice of building 'home'.

How are the places that they make located in the urban landscape? How do these collective processes of design affect notions of belonging? Could these acts of urban commoning speak to and impact the larger, more fraught discourse of identity and belonging in Myanmar?



Nikhil Sambamurthy (Master's Sem 1)
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Nikhil is a Masters candidate in the Department of Geography. He was born in Chennai, raised in Singapore and Geneva, and has lived in Pittsburgh, New York, and Yangon. In 2016, he graduated from Carnegie Mellon University with a Bachelor of Architecture degree and a minor in Drama. His thesis, *Home: Territorialising Plural Identities*, used design as a tool to research identity and process his personal sense of unrootedness.

He has worked as a designer/researcher at Terreform, a non-profit center for urban research, an editor for *Onward: Mobility in the Next New York* (UDF, 2018), and a graphic designer for UNOPS Myanmar.

Session 2

12.00–12.20

When health goes wrong: Towards a weight-inclusive health environment in Singapore

Why and how has health become a norm in our lifestyles today? What is the role of geography in constructing (un)healthy bodies? Although geography's role in constructing identity norms such as those of gender and sexuality has been well-researched, health as a norm and the role of geography therein is less evinced. I will explore these questions through the context of Singapore, where the state's efforts in managing population weight have led to a nationwide proliferation of health promotion spaces.

Using Singapore as an example of a highly-interventionist health governance regime, my research also aims to re-centre the state in governing population weight and bodies amidst current neoliberal accounts of health production. Finally, I will also explore people's more-than-representational health experiences—their doings and feelings of being and becoming (un)healthy. Uncovering these diverse health experiences may unsettle what we thought we knew about (un) healthy bodies and health.

Shee Siew Ying (Masters Sem 2)
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Siewying is currently a first year Masters student in Geography. Upon graduating from this department in 2016, she had the opportunity to pursue her interest in academic geography by working on research projects with topics ranging from food poverty to smart urbanism and religion and migration at Singapore Management University. From these projects, Siewying has co-authored and published a report detailing Singapore's food poverty landscape, and also presented her undergraduate Honours Thesis at the 7th International Food Studies Conference, Roma Tre University. She is a socio-cultural geographer interested in identity politics and social justice issues, geographies of religion, food, music, health and wellbeing.



Session 2

12.20–12.40

Discursive struggles underpinning the construction of the gig economy in Singapore

Economic geographers have long emphasised the social and institutional processes regulating labour markets. However, less attention is paid to discourses as a key component of the labour market's regulatory infrastructure. Through discourse analysis of official reports, print media and social media content on digital labour, as well as semi-structured interviews with digital workers themselves, my research aims to use a geographical lens to explore the labour market discourses underpinning digital platform labour in Singapore and how they are assembled to shape its labour market realities. In doing so, I am mobilising labour market discourses as a key concept in the theory of local labour markets, highlighting the (discursive) geographies of the global platform economy and outlining the distinctive digital platform labour market regime in Singapore. Labour market discourses are important in foregrounding the value of post-structural sensitivities to, and methodologically extend, labour geography to allow for more nuanced analysis.

Rohini Anant (Masters Sem 1)
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Rohini joined the NUS Geography department in January 2019 as a Master's student. She holds a B.Soc.Sci degree in Geography with a minor in India Studies from NUS. Her research interests broadly lie in labour geography. In her free time, Rohini enjoys reading as well as watching films and theatre.



Session 3

13.30–13.50

Claims to the streets: Delving into the uses of streets as public spaces

I wish to perform a comprehensive study on urban encounters, which create complex claims over utilisation of street space. Drawing on case studies from my fieldwork on streets in Delhi, India, I aim to bring out the gaps between what a variety and complex set of actors “have” and what they “want” from the streets in terms of form, character and use of urban streets in everyday life. Through this research, I hope to analyse the dynamics of power played out on these streets, exploring elements of class, caste, gender, religion, and culture to create a more nuanced understanding of urban street spaces and their use in everyday life.

Ananya Bhuyan (PhD Sem 1)
e0383057@u.nus.edu

Ananya Bhuyan joined the NUS Geography department in January 2019 as a PhD student. She holds an M.A. in Geography degree from the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi and a B.A in Geography degree from Miranda House, University of Delhi. She also has a Bachelor of Dance degree, from her 7-year specialisation in Kathak dance. She is currently interested in studying urban street spaces and urban life.



Session 3

13.50–14.10

Assembling Relational Neighbourhoods in Singapore: Actor-Network Theory and spatial imaginations of the city

My research aims to take a critical look at the neighbourhood and its relationship with spatial imaginations of the city. Using actor-network theory to inform a multi-methods approach, my research will (re)assemble the neighbourhood as a socio-material construct. Through this assembly process, I also hope to investigate the influence that the notion of the neighbourhood has in configuring spatial imaginations of the city.



Julius Chiang Kai Cheng (Masters Sem 2)

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Julius completed his undergraduate studies in this department, where he pursued (largely) an interest in urban geography, with a side-interest in geopolitics.

Session 3

14.10–14.30

Urban acupuncture in Bandung: An assemblage theory approach

Urban acupuncture refers to small-scale but socially catalytic interventions into the urban fabric (Casagrande, 2013), that can be achieved within short periods of time with limited resources, but can generate wider effects (Lerner, 2004).

Urban acupuncture in Bandung was initiated by a group of communities in 2012 to improve the city's liveability and to solve the multiple city's problems such as flooding, traffic jam, crime and environment issues. The tools for urban acupuncture are solution-oriented design and policy that supports the execution of the design. Under urban acupuncture program, dead spaces in Bandung have been turned into public parks.

Through the lens of assemblage thinking, I seek to understand the ways urban acupuncture in Bandung works and the wider social, political, economy and material effects of urban acupuncture in Bandung.



Meriky Lo Alexander (Masters Sem 2)
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Meriky joined NUS as a Master's student in August 2018. She holds a Bachelor of Engineering in Architecture from Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia. Upon graduating, she has worked in Indonesia and Singapore, handling design projects that include residentials, schools and office buildings. Besides architecture and urban geography, she has a deep interest in classical music, which is evident through her regular performances in classical piano and Javanese gamelan. Her research interests relate to design, arts and urban geography with a focus on urban interventions in South East Asia.

Negotiating Placemaking: Business Improvement Districts in Singapore and London

My research offers a comparative analysis of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in Singapore and London, looking at their role in shaping or re-shaping the everyday life of neighbourhoods. Understanding BIDs as a form of policy mobility that is being adopted and modified, I will first trace their evolution— initially to London and subsequently, Singapore. Specifically, I seek to elucidate how and why BIDs have emerged in the Singapore context. I then turn to understand how they are implemented and negotiated on the ground through the everyday lived experiences of placemaking. Concomitantly, I ask how the overarching placemaking objectives of BIDs have materialised, and how people have responded to these changes.

Importantly, placemaking initiatives employed by BID stakeholders (e.g. retail pop-ups and arts-led interventions) closely resemble the everyday resistance movements enacted by tactical urbanists and ‘guerrilla’ activists in their attempts to assert their right to the city. Hence, when removed of these subversive intentions and replaced with the intent of urban conviviality for the sake of capitalist gain, I hope to understand whether these placemaking initiatives can retain their ‘authenticity’ and value.

Tan Wenn Er (PhD Sem 2)

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Wenn Er is a PhD student interested in the social life of cities and urban policy mobilities. Before joining NUS in August 2018, she received her bachelor’s degree in Sociology from Goldsmiths, University of London and her master’s degree in Culture and Society from the London School of Economics. Her current research builds on this interdisciplinary training in urban geography and cultural sociology and focuses on the politics of placemaking. Having spent a little too much time walking around museums (as part of her previous research but also for fun!) as well as other forms of privately-owned public spaces, she has cultivated broader interests in spatial and social inequalities and walking as an ethnographic method.



Session 3

14.50–15.10

Programming futures: Smart nation Singapore and the city of tomorrow

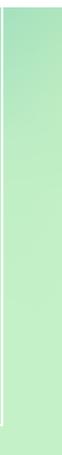
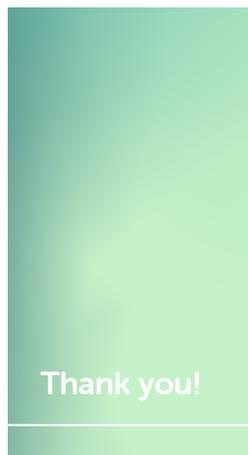
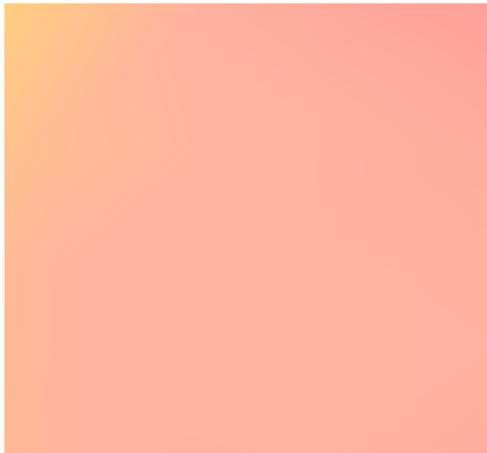
Smart urbanism programmes are often advanced as future-oriented and capable of bringing about promising transformation to the way we experience urban space. Yet there seems to be a disconnect between this hyperbolic, futuristic representation, and the ways in which the rhetoric is experienced and realised in practice. Moreover, although the future is often invoked in smart urbanism discourses, there has been little scholarly consideration of how futures are shaped by--and shape--the smart urbanisation of everyday geographies.

By thinking through the e-payments initiative in Singapore, my work aims to contribute to debates in urban studies around smart cities and urban futures by critically interrogating how conceptions of the future are programmed, engaged, and negotiated in and through smart urbanisation. Additionally, this research contributes to the scholarship by taking seriously the affective and lived dimensions in the examination of futurity and smart urbanisation.

Yeo Si Jie Ivin (Masters Sem 2)
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Ivin is a Masters student in the Department of Geography. He holds a Bachelor of Social Sciences, majoring in Geography and a minor in Geosciences. His current research focuses on smart urbanism and urban futures. In his free time, Ivin enjoys scuba diving and eating mala at the Deck.





Thank you!