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TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**
SINGAPORE

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CENTRE FOR CHINESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE &
GLOBAL ASIA RESEARCH CENTRE**



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Migration and Governance in Global **Asia**

**27 - 28
AUGUST 2026**

**AMARA
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ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

International Conference MIGRATION AND GOVERNANCE IN GLOBAL ASIA

Over the past decades, Global Asia has developed through expanding inter- and intra-regional connections, driven by the movement of people, capital, goods, and ideas across borders. Migration and its governance play a central role in these processes, highlighting how Asia is shaped not only through nation-states and regional frameworks, but also through cross-border networks, sub-ethnic communities, and broader ecosystems of exchange. Recent geopolitical and economic shifts – including the rise of China and India, changes in global supply chains, and the increasing influence of technology, finance, and media – further underscore the importance of scholarly engagement with these dynamics.

This conference aims to bring together scholars from multiple disciplines to examine intra-regional developments and their global implications, focusing on how Global Asia shapes migration experiences and governance practices. We hope to foster dialogues on recent empirical and comparative research related to nation-states, migration, and transnationalism.



ABOUT THE CONFERENCE ORGANISERS

NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY SINGAPORE

A research-intensive public university, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) has about 40,700 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Business, Computing & Data Science, Engineering, Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences, Medicine, Science, and Graduate colleges.

NTU is also home to world-renowned autonomous institutes – the National Institute of Education, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies and Singapore Centre for Environmental Life Sciences Engineering – and various leading research centres such as the Earth Observatory of Singapore, Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute and Energy Research Institute @ NTU (ERI@N).

Under the NTU Smart Campus vision, the University harnesses the power of digital technology and tech-enabled solutions to support better learning and living experiences, the discovery of new knowledge, and the sustainability of resources.

Ranked amongst the world's top universities, the University's main campus is also frequently listed among the world's most beautiful. Known for its sustainability, NTU has achieved 100% Green Mark Platinum certification for all its eligible building projects. Apart from its main campus, NTU also has a medical campus in Novena, Singapore's healthcare district.

NANYANG CENTRE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Nanyang Centre for Public Administration (NCPA) at NTU Singapore is a leading institution in Asia that provides quality education and research in public governance and administration development as well as promotes good governance in the region and beyond. We are proud to be the first higher learning institution in Singapore, certified by China's State Administration for Foreign Experts Affairs to conduct executive development programmes for Chinese government officials and professionals.

As a premier training institution, NCPA promotes good governance and public services, facilitates knowledge exchanges, and strengthens cooperation among governments across the world.

We are fully aligned with NTU's high-quality teaching, while simultaneously placing equal emphasis on our research direction. Over time, we have formed strategic collaborations with world-renowned institutions and governments in various emerging fields worldwide, and are constantly working on creating new partnerships.

Among our nearly 20,000 alumni, many are holding decision-making positions at all levels of government in their countries, including ministerial-level leaders, mayors and heads of organisations. Our students hail from many countries, including China, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, India and Ukraine.

NCPA remains ever-committed towards our pursuit of excellence in academic and research standards. Our goal is to set the foundation for building and maintaining a world-class institution in public administration.

NCPA offers six graduate programmes, namely:

In Chinese

- **MASTER OF SCIENCE**
(Managerial Economics)
(Executive MME Programme)
- **MASTER OF SCIENCE**
(Managerial Economics)
- **MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**
(Executive MPA Programme)

In English

- **MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**
(China and Global Governance)
- **MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**
- **MASTER OF SCIENCE**
(Managerial Economics)

In addition, our Executive Development Programmes provide theme-based learning in public administration and public policy, urban planning and management, social management, and higher education management and internationalisation development. We also conduct and facilitate interdisciplinary fellowship and research programmes focusing on public administration, economic policies, environmental issues, health care and social welfare policies, as well as economic development.

THE CENTRE FOR CHINESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The Centre for Chinese Language and Culture (CCLC) at NTU Singapore was officially established in April 1994 as an educational and research institution dedicated to the teaching and study of Chinese language and culture.

During its first decade, CCLC provided Chinese-related educational services to the University, offering around fifty elective courses in areas such as language, literature, cultural economy, history, and ethnicity. In 2000, a Minor in Chinese programme was introduced, covering fields including politics, society, history, philosophy, language, and literature. Since 1997, CCLC has also admitted postgraduate students pursuing master's and doctoral degrees. Both the courses offered and the research topics pursued by postgraduate students have placed significant emphasis on regional and local characteristics.

In September 2003, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences was established, with the Chinese Division becoming the flagship department in the humanities field. Since then, all teaching responsibilities originally handled by CCLC have been transferred to the Chinese Division.

The Centre has since focused on publications, public lectures, academic conferences and seminars, as well as hosting visiting research scholars. Its key research areas include Chinese traditions and culture, Chinese languages and dialects, Chinese literature, Chinese migration and networks with a focus on both local and global issues, and Chinese education in Southeast Asia.

The Centre's core research objective is to place strong emphasis on interdisciplinary studies of the language, literature, culture, society, and history of contemporary Chinese communities in local and regional contexts, while maintaining distinctive Singapore and Nanyang characteristics.

GLOBAL ASIA RESEARCH CENTRE

At NTU's Global Asia Research Centre (GARC), we believe that research grounded in the histories and present societies of Asia can reshape our understanding of the world.

The centre brings researchers into the past and present of diverse, dynamic societies of Asia together in a conversation about this region and the world. Asia is not simply a site of rapid change. It is a generative force in global debates on political order, governance, development, culture and climate. Moving beyond intellectual frameworks which present Asia's societies as different from dominant European categories, the centre produces new sources, concepts and methods drawn from Asian contexts that travel across regions and disciplines.

Research ranges from the past and present of the global political order, to the role of migration within the global economy, to the way bodies are understood through time. Our goal throughout is to be an exciting, generative centre, drawing scholars from across the region and the world to produce new ideas.

In doing so, GARC positions NTU as a leading centre for reshaping our understanding of global public affairs, in the broadest sense.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE SUPPORTING PARTNER

THE ASIAN ASSOCIATION OF WORLD HISTORIANS

The Asian Association of World Historians (AAWH) was established on 4 May 2008 at Nankai University in Tianjin as an international scholarly association serving the Asia-Pacific and the wider world. Its headquarters were initially located at Osaka University, Japan. The current president of AAWH is Professor Hong Liu of Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

AAWH aims to promote the study of Asia's historical and contemporary transformations from global and transnational perspectives, to foster collaboration among historians and scholars in related fields, and to narrow cross-national gaps in understandings of global history through scholarly public initiatives.

AAWH maintains an extensive academic network across Asia and beyond, organises regular international conferences, and publishes the peer-reviewed academic journal *The Asian Review of World History*. AAWH welcomes individual scholars and institutions engaged in global, world, and transregional history and related areas. Members receive updates on development in the field and participate in the Association's conferences, workshops and other academic activities.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

International Conference MIGRATION AND GOVERNANCE IN GLOBAL ASIA

27 August 2026, Thursday
Amara Singapore, Ballroom 2

Time	Programme
9:00 am	Registration
Welcome Address	
9:30 am	Professor Hong LIU Tan Lark Sye Chair Professor, School of Social Sciences Director (Research & Executive Education), Nanyang Centre for Public Administration Associate Vice President (International) Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
Keynote Addresses (40 mins per speaker + 5 mins Q&A) Chair: Professor Hong LIU Tan Lark Sye Chair Professor, School of Social Sciences Director (Research & Executive Education), Nanyang Centre for Public Administration Associate Vice President (International) Nanyang Technological University, Singapore	
9:40 am	<i>The End of Suspension? Challenges in Migration Governance in the 21st Century Asia</i> Professor Biao XIANG Director, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology
10:25 am	Group Photo & Tea Break
10:55 am	<i>Across a Southward Sea: Chinese Migrants and "Illicit" Activity in Fin de Siècle Southeast Asia</i> Professor Eric TAGLIACOZZO John Stambaugh Professor of History, Cornell University
Book Launch	
11:40 am	Liu, Hong, Cheun Hoe Yow, and Huimei Zhang, eds. <i>The Making of Singapore as an Asian Regional Corridor: Historicity, Trade, and Diaspora</i>. Routledge, 2026. Book Introduction by: Professor Henry Wai-chung YEUNG Choh-Ming Li Professor of Geography and Resource Management Department of Geography and Resource Management The Chinese University of Hong Kong
12:00 Noon	Lunch

Panel 1: The New Geopolitics and Impact on Migration Governance (20 mins per speaker + 15 mins panel Q&A) Panel Chair: Associate Professor Jue WANG Director, Nanyang Centre for Public Administration Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences Nanyang Technological University, Singapore	
1:00 pm	<i>China's Got Talent: Reverse Brain Drain, Knowledge Migration and Global Political Economy Reshuffling?</i> Associate Professor Gordon CHEUNG Associate Professor in International Relations of China, School of Government & International Affairs (SGIA) Durham University <i>The Knowns and Unknowns of the Migration-Higher Education Nexus</i> Associate Professor Meng-Hsuan CHOU Provost's Chair in Public Policy and Global Affairs Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences Nanyang Technological University, Singapore <i>The Indian Diaspora: Shifting Notions of "Homeland" in the Era of Transnational Migrations</i> Professor Ajaya SAHOO Professor and Head, Centre for the Study of Indian Diaspora University of Hyderabad, India
Panel 2: Technology, Mobility, and Global Connectivity (20 mins per speaker + 15 mins panel Q&A) Panel Chair: Professor Shibao GUO University of Calgary, Canada	
2:15 pm	<i>Stack Migration and Strategic Immobility: The Butterfly Effects of Meta's Failed Acquisition of Manus</i> Professor Erika Wenhong CHEN Professor of Communication and Technology Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information Nanyang Technological University, Singapore <i>Seeking Benefits but Not Asianisation: Australia's Immigration Policy Changes as Responses to Rising Asia Since 1993</i> Professor Jia GAO Professor of Chinese Studies at the Asia Institute, the University of Melbourne <i>Scales in Motion: Transnational Chinese Entrepreneurs and the Making of Global Asia</i> Dr Chao YAO Research Fellow, Nanyang Centre for Public Administration Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
3:30 pm	Tea Break
Panel 3: Institutions, Social Structures, and Migrant Experiences (20 mins per speaker + 15 mins panel Q&A) Panel Chair: Professor Jia GAO Professor of Chinese Studies at the Asia Institute, the University of Melbourne	
4:00 pm	<i>Governing through Institutional Complexes: Race, Gender, and Class in Immigrant Employment Experiences in Canada</i> Professor Shibao GUO University of Calgary, Canada <i>Stateless People in Global Asia: Their Identities and Identification</i> Professor Lara Tien-shi CHEN Professor, Waseda University Founder, Stateless Network <i>The Double Valence of Formality and Informality: Institutional Pluralism and Complementary Logics within Migration Systems</i> Associate Professor Laavanya KATHIRAVELU Associate Professor of Sociology Associate Chair of Graduate and Continuing Education School of Social Sciences Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
6:30 pm	Dinner (By Invitation)

28 August 2026, Friday Amara Singapore, Ballroom 1

Time	Programme
9:00 am	Refreshments
	Plenary Session: Global Asia and Its Genealogies (30 mins per speaker + 20 mins panel Q&A) Chair: Professor Jon WILSON Tan Kah Kee Professor Director, Global Asia Research Centre Dean, College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
9:30 am	Global Asian Studies Program in IASA, University of Tokyo: Its History and Transformation Professor Shigeto SONODA Specially Appointed Professor, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, The University of Tokyo Global Production Networks and Megacity-Region Development in Global Asia Professor Henry Wai-chung YEUNG Choh-Ming Li Professor of Geography and Resource Management Department of Geography and Resource Management The Chinese University of Hong Kong Rethinking Global Asia through a Middle Eastern Lens Professor Ahmed Ibrahim ABUSHOUK Professor of Modern and Contemporary History, Department of Humanities Qatar University
11:20 am	Lunch
	Panel 4: Community Networks and Cultural Spaces (20 mins per speaker + 20 mins Q&A) Panel Chair: Associate Professor Shaohua ZHAN Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
12:35 pm	Asian Class as Method: Comparative Insights into Asian Migrants' Middle-Class Backgrounds Dr Sylvia ANG Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Monash University Dr Enqi WENG Teaching Fellow, School of Communication and Creative Arts, Deakin University Bidirectional Diaspora Capital and the Subnational Node in Global Asia: A Long-Arc Study of Jinjiang, 1979-2024 Ms Rachel Yulin HONG PhD Student, Public Policy and Global Affairs (PPGA), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Kopitiam across Southeast Asia: Visualising Space and Hainanese Identities through Documentary Practice Mr Hanxiang ZHANG PhD Candidate, SOAS University of London, UK Scales of Governance and Superdiversity of the Chinese Diaspora: A Case Study of Phan Ming Yen and His Family Lineage Associate Professor Cheun Hoe YOW Director of the Centre for Chinese Language and Culture Associate Professor, School of Humanities, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
	Closing Remarks
2:15 pm	Associate Professor Cheun Hoe YOW Director of the Centre for Chinese Language and Culture Associate Professor, School of Humanities, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
2:30 pm	Refreshments
3:00 pm	End of Conference

* The conference programme is subject to change. The Organising Committee reserves the right to make the final adjustments.

Please note that recording and photographs of the session will be taken for publicity, official publication, or archival purposes. Participants who do not wish to be included in the photographs/recording may wish to approach our staff before the start of the session.

**KEYNOTE
ADDRESSES****ABSTRACTS &
AUTHORS' INFORMATION**

The End of Suspension? Challenges in Migration Governance in the 21st Century Asia

**Professor Biao XIANG**

Director

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

ABSTRACT

Many Asian countries have managed international migration through a method of “suspension” since the 1970s. Policies suspend migrants’ settlement prospect and other social needs – for instance, by putting up migrants in concentrated dormitories away from local residents and subjecting migrants to compulsory return once the job contract ends – in order to achieve a high level of mobility while minimising political repercussions. Migrants are turned into single-minded economic agents. A number of developments in the 21st century challenge this mode of governance: (1) countries start offering opportunities of long-term settlement, most notably in Japan; migration becomes a population policy beyond economic calculation; (2) more people migrate for satisfying, rather than suspending, social needs such as more balanced, stable lifestyle; and (3) geopolitical and climate change in different parts of Asia may necessitate long-term population relocation. All these take place in a time when migration becomes a politically sensitive topic, economic uncertainty increases, and the development of AI raises the fundamental questions of what human life and human migration mean. Asian countries need to prepare well in order to move from the suspension method to a model of migration governance that is based on broader considerations of the reorganisation of social life.

About the Author

Born (1972) and raised in China, Biao Xiang is currently a director of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Germany, and was a Professor at the University of Oxford before that. He has worked on migration and social changes in China, India and other parts of Asia. He is now exploring a “common concerns” approach in social research.

KEYNOTE
ADDRESSES

Across a Southward Sea: Chinese Migrants and “Illicit” Activity in *Fin de Siècle* Southeast Asia



Professor Eric TAGLIACOZZO

John Stambaugh Professor of History
Cornell University

ABSTRACT

Over the course of half a century in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the British and Dutch empires delineated colonial spheres in Monsoon Asia, creating new political boundaries in the process. This talk analyses the development of these frontiers in Insular Southeast Asia, as well as the accompanying (and state-designated) “smuggling” activities of Chinese migrants – opium traders, currency runners, and human traffickers – who pierced such newly-drawn borders with growing success. The talk presents a history of the Overseas Chinese role in the smuggling of contraband: who smuggled and why, which routes were favoured, and how effectively the British and Dutch were able to enforce their gathering economic, moral, and political will. Examining the history of states and migratory smugglers playing off one another within a hidden but powerful economy of forbidden cargoes, the talk also offers insights into the modern political economies of Southeast Asia that are still with us today.

About the Author

Eric Tagliacozzo is the John Stambaugh Professor of History at Cornell University. He is the author of *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier* (Yale, 2005), which won the Harry Benda Prize from the Association for Asian Studies (AAS), and *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Oxford, 2013). He has also edited or co-edited a dozen other books, including the *Asia Inside Out* trilogy, published by Harvard University Press. He is the Director of Cornell’s Southeast Asia Program (SEAP) and serves as editor of the journal *INDONESIA*. His most recent monograph, *In Asian Waters: Charting Asia’s Maritime History from Yemen to Yokohama*, was published by Princeton University Press (2022).

**PLENARY
SESSION****PLENARY SESSION:
GLOBAL ASIA AND ITS GENEALOGIES****Global Asian Studies Program in IASA,
University of Tokyo: Its History and Transformation****Professor Shigeto SONODA**

Specially Appointed Professor
Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia
The University of Tokyo

ABSTRACT

Established in 2022 at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia (IASA), the University of Tokyo, the Global Asian Studies (GAS) Program represents a significant milestone in regional research. It emerged from the strategic integration and expansion of two long-standing initiatives: ASNET (Network for Education and Research on Asia), which dates back to 2001, and the Global Japan Studies Program, launched in 2012.

In shaping the program's foundation, IASA faculty members Sato and Sonoda (2021) defined its core objectives. To ensure the program's global relevance, GAS staff conducted extensive fieldwork, interviewing representatives from leading international research institutions that operate under the "Global Asian Studies" banner. These insights were instrumental in identifying the unique academic characteristics and strengths the University of Tokyo should offer.

Since its inception, the program has successfully managed several high-impact projects, most notably the JF-GJS Initiative in partnership with the Japan Foundation and the Sumitomo Conference, supported by the Sumitomo Foundation. This presentation will explore the historical trajectory of the GAS Program, highlight its diverse educational and research activities, and address the current challenges it faces. Ultimately, we aim to facilitate a meaningful exchange of ideas with scholars and practitioners engaged in similar global academic endeavours.

About the Author

Shigeto Sonoda is a specially appointed professor of sociology and Asian Studies after his official retirement in 2026 at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia (IASA), University of Tokyo. He has been one of the core members of Global Asian Studies (GAS) Program in IASA since its establishment in 2022. Sonoda has been serving as co-director of Beijing Center for Japanese Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University in China since 2018. His most recent publications include *Japan-China Exchange: Half a Century History of Human Interactions* (ed., University of Tokyo Press, 2025).

Global Production Networks and Megacity-Region Development in Global Asia



Professor Henry Wai-chung YEUNG

Choh-Ming Li Professor of Geography and Resource Management
Department of Geography and Resource Management
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

This presentation examines the changing nature of global production networks in favour of East Asian urban and regional economies over the past two decades and the implications of the recent geopolitical shifts for the future of these megacity-regions in East Asia. My presentation is divided into three parts. In part one, I describe the massive global shift in industrial production during the 2010s, when East Asian urban and regional systems became strategically coupled with global production networks in different high-tech industries. The second part conceptually explains this process of strategic coupling or “plugging-in” of such urban and regional systems in a world of global production networks and demonstrates how it works in promoting industrial development in East Asian megacity-regions. Urban development in regional economies is viewed as an evolving process of shifting value capture trajectories within global production networks. In empirical terms, I showcase how several East Asian megacity-regions have emerged as dominant players in high-tech industries, such as information and communications technologies and semiconductors. The third part focuses on policy and practice for the future of urban and regional systems. I start with several key challenges confronting policymakers since the early 2020s and outline some strategies and policies oriented towards promoting megacity innovation and growth in this uncertain world of changing global production networks.

About the Author

Henry Wai-chung Yeung received his BA (1st Class) from the National University of Singapore in 1992 and his PhD from the University of Manchester in 1995. He was Distinguished Professor (and Professor of Economic Geography since 2005) at the National University of Singapore until the end of 2024. From 2025, he has been the Choh-Ming Li Professor of Geography and Resource Management at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is the recipient of multiple research awards, including the 2022 Sir Peter Hall Award for Lifetime Contribution by the Regional Studies Association in the UK, the 2018 Distinguished Scholarship Honors by the American Association of Geographers, and the 2017 Murchison Award by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), UK. He has published 7 monographs and 1 textbook (3 editions), 7 edited books, 120 journal articles, and 50 book chapters. His most recent books are *Theory and Explanation in Geography* (Wiley, 2024), *Interconnected Worlds: Global Electronics and Production Networks in East Asia* (Stanford University Press, 2022; multi-award winning). He is Editor-in-Chief of *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* (2001–2025), past Editor of *Economic Geography* (2001–2025) and *Review of International Political Economy* (2004–2013), and past Business Manager of *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* (1992–2025). He serves on the editorial boards of two book series for Cambridge University Press and Springer, and 17 other international journals in the fields of human geography, management, urban studies, area studies, and general social science.

PLENARY
SESSION

Rethinking Global Asia through a Middle Eastern Lens



Professor Ahmed Ibrahim ABUSHOUK

Professor of Modern and Contemporary History
Department of Humanities
Qatar University

ABSTRACT

This paper rethinks the concept of *Global Asia* through a Middle Eastern lens, arguing that dominant interpretations of Asia's global interconnectedness have often marginalised the historical and contemporary role of the Middle East in shaping transregional dynamics. While prevailing narratives tend to privilege East Asia as the primary engine of Asian globalisation, the paper contends that the Middle East has long functioned as both a strategic crossroads and an active agent in the making of Global Asia. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives from history, anthropology, and political economy, the paper examines the multiple forms of connectivity linking the Middle East and Asia, including trade networks, migration flows, religious and cultural exchanges, and the circulation of capital, labour, and knowledge. It traces these interactions from the premodern Indian Ocean world to contemporary Gulf–Asia partnerships, demonstrating how they have contributed to the emergence of Global Asia as a historically rooted and continually evolving phenomenon. The paper also interrogates the asymmetries embedded in global knowledge production by challenging Eurocentric and East Asia–centric approaches to globalisation and regional integration. In their place, it proposes an alternative analytical framework that situates the Middle East at the centre of Asian connectivity rather than at its margins. By highlighting the region's enduring role in facilitating economic, cultural, and geopolitical exchanges across Asia, the study contributes to a more inclusive understanding of Global Asia and encourages a reconsideration of conventional regional boundaries and historical narratives.

About the Author

Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk is a Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at Qatar University. He received his PhD in History from Bergen University, Norway, in 1998. Before joining Qatar University in 2012, he worked at Bergen University (1998–1999) and International Islamic University Malaysia (1999–2012). His latest publications include: *The Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the Gulf Arab Emirates, Doha: Forum of Arab and International Relations* (2019); “An African scholar in the Netherlands East Indies: al-Shaykh Ahmad Surkitti (1876–1943) and his life, thoughts, and reforms”, *Islamic Africa* (2011); *The Hadhrami Diaspora in Southeast Asia: Identity Maintenance or Assimilation?* (2009); “Al-Manār and the Ḥadhramī Elite in the Malay-Indonesian World: Challenge and Response”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (2007); “Globalization and Muslim Identity Challenges and Prospects”, *Muslim World Journal* (2007).

PANEL 1:
THE NEW GEOPOLITICS AND IMPACT ON MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

Panel 1

China's Got Talent: Reverse Brain Drain, Knowledge Migration and Global Political Economy Reshuffling?



Associate Professor Gordon CHEUNG

Associate Professor in International Relations of China
School of Government & International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University

ABSTRACT

A reverse brain drain from the US to China has accelerated after the launch of the China Initiative in 2018 (Trump 1.0). To begin with, reverse brain drain paints a different picture from previous unidirectional brain drain of sojourner or even the brain circulation of talents working between host and parent countries. Reverse brain drains (mostly from the US and increasingly taking place from Europe) may provide some new dynamics of changes of the global knowledge competition between the US and China. In addition, we evaluate previous institutional support and policy outcomes from China to coax the global talents. Institutions such as Centre for China and Globalisation, China Overseas Returned Scholars Association and Chinese Scholars and Students Association will be examined in order to understand their roles in coordinating and facilitating Chinese talents back to China or enabling Chinese students studying in foreign universities. Again, to what extent have those talent-attraction policies, 100 Talents Plan (1995), Changjiang Scholars Plan (1998) and 1,000 talents programme (2008), for instance, been successful? Finally, we study some top recent returnee scientists to understand how they come to terms with the situational changes vis-à-vis their contribution to Chinese scientific academia.

About the Author

Gordon C. K. Cheung is Associate Professor in International Relations of China in the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University. He is the Editor-in-Chief of *East Asia: An International Quarterly*. He has published three books on China and global political economy: *China in the Global Political Economy: From Developmental to Entrepreneurial* (2018), *Intellectual Property Rights in China: Politics of Piracy, Trade and Protection* (2009) and *Market Liberalism: American Foreign Policy toward China* (1998). He contributed articles in disciplinary and area studies journals. His recent research projects cover the political economy of the global Chinese.

Panel 1

The Knowns and Unknowns of the Migration-Higher Education Nexus



Associate Professor Meng-Hsuan CHOU

Provost's Chair in Public Policy and Global Affairs
Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

ABSTRACT

Migration and higher education policies have long been salient in contemporary politics. For businesses, universities, and states, migration and higher education policies are used to address multiple objectives: to fill shortages (labour, skills), to attract and retain talent (foreign, returnees), and to facilitate competitive innovation. For individuals and their households, access to migration pathways and higher education enables socioeconomic mobility that may not be feasible within their current national, regional, or generational parameters. Taking the migration-higher education nexus as an entry point, this article contributes to this conference in three ways. First, I introduce the *politicisation* turn in the evolution of the migration-higher education nexus. Indeed, politicising this nexus is a new phenomenon. It departs from the accepted practices in contemporary knowledge economies and societies of welcoming skilled migrants across professional fields, and facilitating their settlement into host societies around the world. Second, I summarise findings from two decades of research in migration and higher education studies (“knowns” and “unknowns”) to help us make sense of the politicisation turn. Third, I present a research agenda on studying the politicisation of the migration-higher education nexus, focusing on migration pathways and transformation of the global higher education landscape.

About the Author

Meng-Hsuan Chou is an Associate Professor and the Provost's Chair in Public Policy and Global Affairs at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her research interests are in the politics and policies of knowledge, migration, and food. Hsuan applies a public policy perspective to examine the emergence and evolution of higher education regionalisms in Asia and Europe, how governments around the world strategise in the global talent competition, and the relationship between policy design and the effects of on-demand food delivery. More about her research and publications can be found at www.menghsuanchou.com.

The Indian Diaspora: Shifting Notions of “Homeland” in the Era of Transnational Migrations



Professor Ajaya SAHOO

Professor and Head, Centre for the Study of Indian Diaspora
University of Hyderabad, India

ABSTRACT

The rise of the Global South and, within it, India's emergence as one of Asia's superpowers are noteworthy in light of the Indian diaspora. This paper conceptualises “homeland” through the lens of the Indian diaspora. While homeland is mostly viewed in the literature as a geographical place/space where diasporic genealogies are traced, I argue that the homeland is no longer just a “myth of return”, an “imagined nation” or a “feeling of nostalgia” for the diaspora, rather, it is part and parcel of diasporic lives today, resonating in the transnational spaces they create. The homeland plays an important role in shaping diasporic communities in the age of transnational migration. The recognition and patronisation of the diaspora by the homeland, specifically the homeland government, today have rekindled the homeland's image in diasporic minds. This paper is divided into two parts: in the first part, after briefly discussing the emergence and growth of diaspora studies, I will show how the term “diaspora” has lost its original meaning when imposed with superdiverse concepts, and in the second part I will situate this argument from the perspective of the homeland, and show how the homeland is constructed, maintained and appropriated by the Indian diaspora.

About the Author

Ajaya Sahoo is the Head of Centre for Study of Indian Diaspora, University of Hyderabad, India. His teaching and research interests include international migration, South Asian diaspora, and transnationalism. He is the author of *Indian Diaspora, Transnationalism and Identity* (Routledge), and has co-edited multiple Routledge Handbooks on diaspora and migration studies, including *Handbook of the Indian Diaspora*, *Handbook of South Asian Migrations*, *Handbook of Asian Diaspora & Development*, and *Handbook of Asian Diaspora & Nationalism*. He is the founder and editor of the journal *South Asian Diaspora* and the Book Series Editor of Asian Diaspora published by Routledge.

Panel 2

**PANEL 2:
TECHNOLOGY, MOBILITY, AND GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY****Stack Migration and Strategic Immobility:
The Butterfly Effects of Meta's Failed
Acquisition of Manus****Professor Erika Wenhong CHEN**

Professor of Communication and Technology
Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

ABSTRACT

This research examines how the U.S.–China technology race reshapes AI migration through corporate relocation, technology transfer, and state intervention. Drawing on the perspective of glocalised networks, and moving beyond migration as the movement of people, I introduce the concept of stack migration to capture the bundled circulation of AI talent, technical expertise, code, data, capital, and corporate identity.

Using Manus as a case, the research analyses how a China-origin AI startup relocated to Singapore, sought global capital, and pursued acquisition by Meta, before the deal was eventually blocked by the Chinese government. I argue that Manus represents the collapse of a glocalised network, where global mobility depended on locally embedded infrastructures. The case reveals the limits of “Singapore washing”: corporate relocation may change legal identity, but it does not sever technological lineage, data origins, talent formation, or regulatory claims.

Theoretically, the paper advances stack migration as a framework for understanding how geopolitical and technopolitical forces produce selective mobility and strategic immobility. Empirically, it positions Singapore as a relay node in Global Asia, where global flows are recombined but rarely disentangled. The paper concludes by discussing implications of the Manus case for migration and mobility in frontier technology sectors.

About the Author

Erika Wenhong Chen is Professor of Communication and Technology at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information, Nanyang Technological University. She previously spent sixteen years as Professor of Media Studies and Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin, where she was a Distinguished Scholar at the Strauss Center for International Security and Law and founding Co-Director of the Center for Entertainment and Media Industries. An award-winning scholar and educator, her current research studies AI and platform governance, U.S.–China technology competition, digital inclusion, and the evolving relationship between media, markets, and the state.

Seeking Benefits but Not Asianisation: Australia's Immigration Policy Changes as Responses to Rising Asia Since 1993



Professor Jia GAO

Professor of Chinese Studies at the Asia Institute
The University of Melbourne

ABSTRACT

Australia's Labor government led by Paul Keating decided in 1993 to accept thousands of Chinese nationals to settle in Australia, which has been regarded as part of Keating's "big picture" of shifting towards Asia. Before his decision, Keating visited China, and China's economy made him see the country differently. Superficially, Keating lost the 1996 election due to his idea that demeaned Australia's values. However, the policy reset pursued by the John Howard-led Coalition government was driven by a similar idea, which was to tie Australia to Asia's economy. The reset led to not only the acceptance of more Chinese in the late 1990s, but also a change from family-focused immigration to the focus on merits. This article analyses how Australia's immigration policy has since evolved on three tracks: adjusting immigration selection, immigration source countries, and overseas student markets. The first track alone has brought about an immigration selection tetralogy comprised of qualification, skill, business experience and investment. Since the shifts have affected established patterns in distribution of employment, wealth and influence, Australia has been agitated by waves of anti-Asian sentiment and the spreading of grassroots xenophobia into elite circles. Yet, Australia has meanwhile become part of Asia, at least economically.

About the Author

Jia Gao is Professor of Chinese Studies at the Asia Institute, the University of Melbourne. His research areas are new Chinese immigrants in Australia and social changes and dynamics in contemporary China, and his main publications include: *Chinese Activism of a Different Kind* (Brill, 2013); *Chinese Migrant Entrepreneurship in Australia from the 1990s* (Elsevier, 2015); *Social Mobilisation in Post-Industrial China* (Edward Elgar, 2019), *Chinese Immigration and Australian Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), *Aspirational Chinese in Competitive Social Repositionings* (Anthem, 2023), and *The Braking Mechanism in Mao-Era Politics* (Routledge, 2026).

Panel 2

Scales in Motion: Transnational Chinese Entrepreneurs and the Making of Global Asia



Dr Chao YAO

Research Fellow, Nanyang Centre for Public Administration
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

ABSTRACT

Recent scholarship reconceptualises scale not as a fixed hierarchy (global–regional–national–local) but as the outcome of relational power and socio-spatial practices. Moving beyond the global–local binary, this paper foregrounds communities of practice and knowledge-making that inhabit and create scale, highlighting blurred boundaries between state and society, where some mobile actors simultaneously (re)produce multiple, overlapping scales through their embedding in transnational infrastructures. Drawing on itinerant scale and infrastructural politics, this study delves into “Global Asia” by examining how migrant entrepreneurs utilise emergent digital technologies and transnational infrastructures to leverage a symbolic sociotechnical alliance for planetary economic expansion.

Focusing on Chinese transnational entrepreneurs, this paper traces their business-making trajectories from initial capital outflows to cross-border consolidation and global operations. It examines TikTok and Mindray to show how entrepreneurial assemblages – spanning social media, logistics, trade relations, as well as digital healthcare ecosystems – reshape the territorial configuration of power networks. Rather than assuming the digital as inherently global, this paper turns to the pivotal role of transnational Chinese entrepreneurs in the symbol-making of Asia under the state-capital nexus, and how this interconnection, driven by shared values, contributes to broader political projection and global economic expansion.

About the Author

Chao Yao is a research fellow at the Nanyang Centre for Public Administration, Nanyang Technological University. Her research interests lie in the area of geopolitics, with a particular focus on Southeast Asia. Beginning with transnational Special Economic Zones, she examines the cross-border mobility of people, capital, materials, and ideas through a relational, infrastructural, and process-oriented lens. Her current work extends to transnational knowledge production and appropriation in the digital era, exploring how technological infrastructures reshape global geopolitical and economic relations. Her background in bioengineering informs her interdisciplinary approach to questions of technology, governance, and spatial transformation.

PANEL 3
INSTITUTIONS, SOCIAL STRUCTURES, AND MIGRANT EXPERIENCES

Panel 3

Governing through Institutional Complexes: Race, Gender, and Class in Immigrant Employment Experiences in Canada



Professor Shibao GUO
University of Calgary, Canada

ABSTRACT

Despite the ethnocultural diversity afforded by Canadian immigration policies, recent immigrants from non-traditional source countries are subject to multifaceted downward social mobility in their labour market participation and social integration, leaving them feeling inferior, segregated, and marginalised. This paper draws on governmentality and intersectionality to examine the institutional complexes that govern racialised immigrants' employment experiences in Canada. The combined lenses expose institutional complexes as the translocal arrangements where ruling relations are exercised, where hiring, ideology, precarity, and organisational engagement converge to coordinate racialised immigrants' conduct in ways that appear natural, routine, and inevitable. Adopting institutional ethnography as its methodology, the study examines how immigrants' transition to work is produced by a complex system within institutional complexes, including hiring complexes in a racialised discourse, ideological complexes in gendered experiences, precarious complexes in classed oppression, and engagement complexes in immigrant service organisations. These institutional complexes reveal a form of ruling that organises distinctive modes of generalising coordination interwoven into individuals' knowing and being and formulating deviating controlling practices that are exercised through daily involvement.

About the Author

Shibao Guo is Professor at the University of Calgary, Canada. He specialises in transnational migration, Chinese diaspora studies, internationalisation of higher education, and international student mobility. He has over 250 publications, including books, journal articles, and book chapters. His latest book is *Reimagining Chinese Diasporas in a Transnational World* (ed., Routledge, 2024). He is former president of the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada and Canadian Ethnic Studies Association. Currently he serves as co-editor of *Canadian Ethnic Studies*. Since 2023, he has been named among the world's top 2% most-cited scientists in the Stanford/Elsevier rankings.

Panel 3

Stateless People in Global Asia: Their Identities and Identification



Professor Lara Tien-shi CHEN

Professor, Waseda University
Founder, Stateless Network

ABSTRACT

This presentation will focus on stateless people in Global Asia, especially those with a transnational migration background. The presenter was born and raised in Japan to Chinese parents and lived as a stateless person for over 30 years. The presenter will discuss why their families became stateless, questioning “Where is my home country?” “Where do stateless people belong?” and “What is nationality?” which led her to explore these issues and make them the subjects of her research.

The presentation will also touch on the case of Japanese descendants left behind in the Philippines and living as stateless person. Last year marked the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. There are Japanese descendants who were separated from their parents during the war and were born and raised stateless in the Philippines. What meaning do their roots hold for them? How do family ties, ethnic background, and nationality affect them? Conversely, how do nation-states, ethnic groups, and families perceive these stateless people? While unravelling these questions, this presentation aims to examine, from multiple angles, the conflicts surrounding the roots of stateless people involving family, ethnicity, and the state in Global Asia.

About the Author

Lara Tien-shi Chen was born and raised in Yokohama Chinatown and lived over 30 years as a stateless person. After earning her Ph.D. in International Political Economy from the University of Tsukuba and conducting research at Harvard University, she turned to anthropological studies of statelessness to highlight the gap between legal frameworks and lived realities. She is the author of *Stateless* (2024), *Mukokuseki* (2012), and *Kajin Diaspora [Chinese Diaspora]* (2001), and the editor of *Passportgaku [Passportology]* (2017). She is currently a professor at Waseda University and the founder of the Stateless Network.

The Double Valence of Formality and Informality: Institutional Pluralism and Complementary Logics within Migration Systems



Associate Professor Laavanya KATHIRAVELU

Associate Professor of Sociology
Associate Chair of Graduate and Continuing Education
School of Social Sciences
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the processes of transborder movement and mobility are intrinsically embedded in and shaped by multiple institutional logics and forms across several scales. Institutions serve a “double valence” – they both regulate (formality) and socialise (informality), and it is in their interplay that the dynamics of transborder mobility are found. In particular, this paper highlights how this double valence is more visible in non-Western migration contexts, although not necessarily more present. These dynamics of (in)formality, while often foregrounded in analyses of Global South contexts, are indicative of overlooked processes that are increasingly also characterising the Global North. This differential reading of migration contexts is in part, because of an inclination to see Southern and non-Western contexts through the lens of informality (Kębłowski and Rekhviashvili, 2022; Hodder, 2016), but also because of a tendency in migration studies to prioritise the impacts and prerogatives of formal laws, organisations and bureaucracy (Thiollet, 2020; Ho and Hatfield, 2011). Taking seriously a perspective of institutional pluralism means prioritising the interplay and interstices between aspects of regulation and socialisation.

About the Author

Laavanya Kathiravelu is Associate Professor of Sociology and Associate Chair of Graduate and Continuing Education at the School of Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her research is at the intersections of international migration, race and ethnic studies, nationalism and urban diversity, particularly in South and Southeast Asia and the Arabian Gulf. She has also previously held positions at the Max Planck Institute, Princeton University, the University of Oslo, and was a Fulbright Scholar at the City University of New York. She comments regularly on public forums and through op-eds on issues of migration, urbanism, race and diversity.

Panel 4

PANEL 4: COMMUNITY NETWORKS AND CULTURAL SPACES

Asian Class as Method: Comparative Insights into Asian Migrants' Middle-Class Backgrounds



Dr Sylvia ANG
Senior Lecturer in Sociology
Monash University



Dr Enqi WENG
Teaching Fellow
School of Communication and Creative Arts
Deakin University

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the middle-class identities of Asian migrants, with a focus on Chinese and Indian international graduates in Australia. While many migrants arrive with middle-class backgrounds from their countries of origin, little is known about what constitutes “middle-classness” in those contexts. By examining migrants’ classed narratives, the paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of class as both socially constructed and context dependent. The paper advances three key insights. First, the paper furthers our understandings of how class may or may not translate conceptually across contexts. This is supported through discussing the nuances around “cadre” and the concept *xiaokang* in the Chinese context, and the importance of land ownership and paid staff in the Indian context. Second, the paper demonstrates how class and inequalities travel transnationally to shape migrants’ lives and aspirations in the host country. Third, through centring “Asian class as method”, the paper argues for Asia as a productive space to uncover new perspectives of class and migration, beyond dominant understandings founded in “western” contexts.

About the Authors

Sylvia Ang is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Monash University, Australia. Her research focuses on two key pillars: 1) theorising race and racisms beyond Western contexts and frameworks, and 2) analysing how class and intersecting inequalities shape migrants’ lives. She has published in leading journals including the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Mobilities*, and *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. She is the award-winning author of *Contesting Chineseness: Nationality, Class, Gender and New Chinese Migrants* (Amsterdam University Press, 2022) which challenged dominant understandings of racisms as White-versus-Others. She co-convenes the Migration and Mobility Research Network.

Enqi Weng is a sociologist whose research focuses on the politics of difference and its implications for social inclusion, belonging and wellbeing in multicultural Australia. Drawing on decolonial epistemologies and methodologies, her research spans three interconnected areas: digital equity for diverse communities; media politicisation of race and religion; and intercultural perceptions and relations. She is currently a Teaching Fellow in the School of Communication and Creative Arts and a member of the Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University. She is Co-Managing Editor of the *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*.

Bidirectional Diaspora Capital and the Subnational Node in Global Asia: A Long-Arc Study of Jinjiang, 1979–2024



Ms Rachel Yulin HONG

PhD Student
Public Policy and Global Affairs (PPGA)
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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to Global Asia scholarship through a long-arc study of Jinjiang, a Minnan qiaoxiang in southern Fujian, from 1979 to 2024. It argues that Jinjiang's four-decade economic trajectory consists of two successive but mutually constitutive phases of transboundary capital circulation: inbound diaspora capital from the early reform era to around the 2000s, which supplied initial capital, technology, and market access for the emergence of local industrial clusters; and outbound direct investment by qiaoxiang-rooted firms since the 2000s, spanning overseas subsidiaries, brand acquisitions, and cross-border listings. These two phases are not independent processes but represent the sequential activation, in opposite directions, of a single durable architecture of cross-border kinship and merchant networks. Drawing on statistical yearbooks, archival materials from the Jinjiang Municipal Archives, listed-firm disclosures, and GIS spatial analysis, the paper shows how qiaoxiang networks are reorganised within new institutional forms including capital markets and cross-border acquisitions, advances bidirectional diaspora capital as an analytical concept, demonstrates how the subnational qiaoxiang node operates as a constitutive element of Global Asia through flow, connectivity, and embeddedness, and provides a subnational long-arc empirical foundation for future comparative research across Chinese qiaoxiang.

About the Author

Yulin Hong is a PhD student in Public Policy and Global Affairs at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her research interests include transnational business networks, regional development, transnational migration, and geographic information science. She holds a master's degree in Natural Resources from Cornell University, a BS in Geographic Information Science and a BA in Geography from Arizona State University, and a BA in Business English from Southwest Jiaotong University.

Panel 4

Kopitiams across Southeast Asia: Visualising Space and Hainanese Identities through Documentary Practice



Mr Hanxiang ZHANG

PhD Candidate
SOAS University of London, UK

ABSTRACT

Coffee culture and traditional coffee shops have long been important to Hainanese communities across Southeast Asia. The research begins with an examination of representations of coffee and traditional coffee shops in Southeast Asian visual art. Based on fieldwork conducted in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, it examines how kopi culture, kopitiam spaces and Hainanese identities can be represented through documentary filmmaking. The presentation includes selected sequences from an ongoing documentary project, featuring food, kopitiam spaces and interviews with kopitiam owners. The research investigates kopitiams as spaces shaped by memories and histories of Hainanese migration. Through visual practice, it explores how food, Hainanese communities and histories of migration are connected within these spaces, and how these connections contribute to the construction of Hainanese identities across Southeast Asia.

About the Author

Hanxiang Zhang is a documentary filmmaker and researcher in film studies. He is a PhD candidate at SOAS University of London and a visiting research student at Nanyang Technological University. He has professional experience in filmmaking, curation and distribution. His academic research and creative practice focus on documentary film and explore space, identity and memory.

Scales of Governance and Superdiversity of the Chinese Diaspora: A Case Study of Phan Ming Yen and His Family Lineage



Associate Professor Cheun Hoe YOW

Director of the Centre for Chinese Language and Culture
Associate Professor, School of Humanities
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

ABSTRACT

The conventional knowledge accumulated in the studies of Chinese overseas is concerned with “roots”, either ancestral roots, where Chinese migrants and their descendants would probably return to, or new roots, which in many cases they would sink and grow in their places of residence. Meanwhile, the field of diaspora has shed light on “routes” where people have undertaken movement across geographical and political boundaries. Drawing on concepts derived from Chinese overseas and diaspora, this article examines how various scales of governance, locally, nationally, and transnationally, determine diasporic Chinese roots and routes. It argues that the intersection of cultural legacy and geopolitics has engendered the superdiversity of each and every member of the Chinese diaspora, in terms of place, connection, and identity. It is based on a case study of Phan Ming Yen, who migrated to and settled in Singapore, and whose family lineage is tied to Malaysia and China. First, it demonstrates how Phan positioned himself as a producer, writer, and researcher in Singapore. Second, it examines why and how he and his brother repurposed their grandfather’s house, in Kampar, Malaysia, as a heritage and documentation centre for the history of tin-mining. Third, it uncovers the implications of their visits to Meixian, Guangdong, where his grandfather originated, to rekindle their kinship.

About the Author

Cheun Hoe Yow is Associate Professor at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore where he is the Director of the Centre for Chinese Language and Culture. He served as the Director of Chinese Heritage Centre and Head of the Chinese Programme at NTU. His academic areas include Chinese migrants and diaspora, *qiaoxiang* (Overseas Chinese homelands) ties, and diasporic Chinese literature. His books include *Xinjiapo yu Zhongguo xin yimin: rongru de jingyu* (New Chinese Migrants in Singapore: A Question of Citizenship); *Yimin guiji he lisan lunshu: Xin Ma huaren zuqun de chongceng mailuo* (Migration Trajectories and Diasporic Discourses: Multiple Contexts of Ethnic Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia); and *Guangdong and Chinese Diaspora: The Changing Landscape of Qiaoxiang*. His articles appear in important journals such as *Journal of Contemporary China*, *Modern Asian Studies*, *Asian Ethnicity*, *Cross-Cultural Studies*, *Changjiang Xueshu*, *Nanyang Wenti Yanjiu* (Southeast Asian Affairs), and *Waiguo Wenxue Yanjiu*.

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