Geography

2015
Friday 17 April

Anne Gough
Benjamin Thompson
Dennis Stolz
Elisha Anne Teo
Felix Malin
Jack Harris
James Wang Wei
Julian Chang Xiao Ping
Karel Caals
Khoo Choon Yen
Lee Chung-Rui (Ray)
Louisa-May Khoo
Nisha Ramdzan
Qi Yunting
Robert Cole
Song Siqi Grace
Tan Wei Peng, Olivia

Graduate Student

Workshop

Geography Department
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
National University of Singapore
Welcome to the 2015 NUS Geography Graduate Student Workshop!

The workshop is the culmination of the Graduate Research Seminar module, which all Graduate students in Geography are required to complete. The class includes both Masters and PhD students, some of whom only arrived at NUS and began their studies in January this year.

The module showcases students’ individual projects. They will be presenting 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.

The range of projects reflects the breadth of research interests in the Geography Department. The Department’s stated mission is “to be a key node of geographical knowledge production and dissemination, through both teaching and research, within Asia and globally” and our Graduate school – and these Graduate students – is a central element in the achievement of that aim.

Thank you for showing your support and interest by coming to the workshop today. Requiring our students to present their ideas at such an early stage is asking a good deal; it is not easy to expose ideas to scrutiny when, often, much is unsure and unclear. We feel, however, that it is worthwhile.

I hope you will enjoy the presentations, as well as providing constructive input and friendly advice to the students presenting their work today.

Jonathan Rigg
Module convenor
09:00-10:25
Physical Geography
Coastal & Fluvial Geography
Opening by Deputy Head A/Prof Roth

Ben Thompson
Assessing the suitability of Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) in the coastal tropics

Elisha Anne Teo
River avulsions along the Ping River, Thailand

Nisha Ramdzan
Hydroclimate Reconstruction Using Palaeoflood Deposits and Dendrochronology Evidence for the Dong Nai Catchment, Vietnam

10:25-11:50
Physical Geography
Spatial Analysis

Lee Chung-Rui (Ray)
Linking environmental changes, human dynamics and health inequalities- dengue fever risk assessment in Taiwan in Singapore with GIS tools

James Wang Wei
Seeing green(s): mapping contemporary vegetation dynamics in a tropical city

Song Siqi Grace
Planning Versus Pricing: the Effect on Redirecting Travel Behaviour

11:50-12:40
Human Geography
Social & Cultural Geography 1

Khoo Choon Yen
Becoming an Adult: Gender Subjectivities & Aspirations of Indonesian Young Women in Migratory Context

Tan Wei Peng, Olivia
Urban Interventions in Singapore: Tracing the Affective Production and Consumption of Utopian Imaginings

12:40-13:40 LUNCH

13:40-14:55
Human Geography
Economic & Political Geography 1

Jack Harris
The scaling of economic clusters and varieties of capitalism in China and Thailand

Rob Cole
Land-use displacement and changing livelihoods: Laos in the context of ASEAN/GMS integration

Dennis Stolz
How impact investing in Singapore Creates New Geographies of Marketization in Asia by integrating Finance into Regional Development

14:55-15:05 BREAK

15:05-16:20
Human Geography
Economic & Political Geography 2

Felix Malin
Political Geographies of Sea-level Rise: Examining spatial narratives of sinking islands, deterritorialisation and threatened sovereignty

Anne Gough
De-code the Landscape: The politics and ecology of transforming urban and agrarian space

Karel Caals
Patient Flows from Foreign Public Health Systems to Singapore, with a focus on Timor-Leste

16:20-16:40 BREAK

16:40-18:00
Human Geography
Social & Cultural Geography 2

Julian Chang Xiao Ping
Changing Subject(iv)ities: Negotiating the divide between school and academic geography

Louisa-May Khoo
Strange affinities: everyday encounters in public spaces of Singapore

Qi Yunting Tina
Negotiating Gender Identity and Belonging in Transnational Context: Skilled Chinese Immigrants to Singapore

Closing by Head of Department Prof Coe
I hold a BSc in Geography from The University of Sheffield (UK), and an MSc in Conservation Science from Imperial College London (UK). I have three years professional experience as a conservation scientist - working with the Zoological Society of London in Bangladesh, and Island Conservation Society in the Seychelles. I have also conducted research on mangroves and fisheries in the Philippines and Madagascar. I have published in the journals *Ecosystem Services* and *Aquatic Conservation*. My current research explores the development of Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) projects in coastal Southeast Asia.

**Assessing the suitability of Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) in the coastal tropics**

Ecosystem services are the benefits that humans obtain from ecosystems as a result of their ecological structure and functioning. ‘Payments for Ecosystem Services’ (PES) is a neoliberal environmental conservation approach whereby landowners are paid to conserve or enhance ecosystem service provision.

Despite considerable publications on the ecosystem services provided by mangrove forests, and on-going discussions over the most suitable policy approaches, very few mangrove PES schemes are established on the ground. In theory, such schemes could finance and enhance a number of climate change mitigation, food provision, biodiversity, and livelihood benefits. However, carbon aside, suitable credit currencies and markets have not been established.

This interdisciplinary project unites the ecological, social and economic sciences. It aims to identify the most suitable approaches for designing and implementing PES schemes in the coastal tropics. It also aims to improve the generation and marketability of coastal ecosystem service credits through refining the quantification and valuation methods (supply side), and better understanding the motivations and requirements of buyers (demand side). Unlike the majority of previous studies, these themes will be explored using a number of real world case studies, from selected sites in Southeast Asia.
Elisha joined NUS as a PhD student in August 2014. She has a Bachelor of Science (Geography Major and Ecology Minor) and Master of Environment (Environmental Science) from the University of Melbourne, Australia. Prior to moving to Singapore, she was a Visiting Scientist at the Physical Research Laboratory (Department of Space) in Ahmedabad, India. Other previous experiences include being a Research Assistant for the School of Botany (Unimelb), the Department of Resource Management and Geography (Unimelb) and Beyond Zero Emissions, a not-for-profit research organization. Current research interests include fluvial geomorphology and luminescence dating.

River avulsions along the Ping River, Thailand

Preliminary evidence shows that avulsions, which are relatively abrupt shifts in river channel course, have occurred along a section of the Ping River near Chiang Mai. Sediment dating puts the last avulsion event at 600 years ago, which also coincides with the flood event that completely buried the ancient Lanna city of Wiang Kum Kam. Avulsions are usually associated with floods, as floods tend to trigger the initial channel breach during avulsion events, although various factors may have had contributed to the river reaching the avulsion threshold. The dynamics of avulsions along the Ping River are unknown and needs to be established.

Establishing this knowledge is crucial because the Ping River is currently not known as an avulsive river and there are no disaster management plans in place for a future avulsion (avulsions are potentially very catastrophic, especially since the floodplain of the Ping is highly populated). In general, the integration of avulsions into disaster management is challenging. It is the second aim of this research to investigate the challenges that would arise from introducing the avulsion research to disaster managers and to then discuss the best way forward with avulsion management in Thailand.
Nisha is interested in palaeo studies and its uses in understanding past climate and hydrological system. During the course of her Masters Programme, she hopes to attain more skills in dendroclimatology such as tree coring and analysis, and also palaeohydrology. With these skills, she hopes to use them to obtain an understanding on the past climate conditions in Southeast Asia.

**Hydroclimate Reconstruction Using Palaeoflood Deposits and Dendrochronology Evidence for the Dong Nai Catchment, Vietnam**

There has been a great deal of interest in the potential impacts of climate change on hydrological processes such as the possibility of increase in flood occurrences. Majority of recent studies on channel management investigate the relationships between climate, streamflow and flood events based on instrumental measurements of the last century to calculate flood frequency analysis and return periods of floods. However, the use of such instrumental data for research and management can be misleading, as short-term records do not include the non-stationary nature of long-term climate variability and catchment conditions. Long –term data on climate, flood events and streamflow are needed to provide an understanding on how small changes in climate can trigger changes in streamflow and flooding regimes of a particular catchment.

This research aims to explore the possibility of combining dendrochronology and palaeoflood deposits proxies to reconstruct long records of streamflow through investigating the long-term relationship between climate variability and palaeoflood events. To explore this possibility, the Dong Nai catchment in South Vietnam is chosen due to the frequent flood events and the availability of dendrochronology data for this catchment. The results of this study will be useful in extending long records of streamflow which is very valuable for effective flood frequency analysis in river management.
Mr LEE Chung-Rui (Ray) is a GIS Analyst with research interests in spatial demography, risk assessment and environmental changes. After earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography at National Taiwan Normal University, he served at the Central Geological Survey, MOEA in Taiwan. He continued his studies at San Diego State University, USA, received a Master of Science degree in Geography (concentration GIS). Mr. Lee then joined National Central University, Academia Sinica and National Science and Technology Centre for Disaster Reductions as an academic professional for national social change, environment health and disaster management research projects in Taiwan.

**Linking Environmental Changes, Human Dynamics and Health Inequalities with GIS Tools – Dengue Fever Risk Assessment in Taiwan and Singapore**

Dengue Fever has long been recognized as a tropical disease; yet, it might no longer just be a “tropical” disease under increasing international traveling and climate changes. Studies indicate that population at risk to infection is misread globally. Asian countries are especially less discussed in burden of dengue, but there seems to be an increasing infection rate based on recent notifications in Taiwan and Singapore. Thus, to look into how dengue dispersion correlates to environmental changes, human dynamics and health inequalities would be an urgent need. This research aims to investigate the relationship between dengue infection spatial and temporal dispersion as well as environmental changes within urban built-environments through geospatial analysis - which integrates data emulated from statistical analysis and other techniques with a geographical aspect.

This study utilizes historical weather and climate data with assessment scenarios and end products from Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to estimate the population at risk. The explicitness is using quantitative and qualitative approaches aided with GIS tools to scrutinize mobility and morbidity, transportation, urban expansion as well as inequalities in everyday life. How to highlight the complexities within space, place and time under increasing internal and external connectivity is under developed.
James worked with the National Parks Board (NParks) at the Centre for Urban Greenery and Ecology (CUGE) from 2011 to 2014, during which he managed several research portfolios in urban ecology research including water-sensitive urban design, urban biodiversity and remote sensing. He is a graduate of the University of Otago with a combined honours in botany and ecology, and is currently supported at NUS Geography by NParks.

Seeing green(s):
mapping contemporary vegetation dynamics in a tropical city

Cities in the twenty-first century are poised for a period of unprecedented expansion and densification. A primary constraint on the sustainability of this process is the provision of accurate and time-sensitive feedback on urban environmental change. Urban vegetation change is often accounted for in aggregated terms, such as ‘green cover’ or ‘tree cover’. Such broad categories obscure significant variability in the ecosystem services provided by vegetation within these categories, and limit the ability of urban planners to effectively plan for greenery provision in the context of multiple land-use constraints. Using Singapore as a case study, I propose to refine the ontology of remotely-sensed vegetation to the extent possible through the use of contemporary satellite image analysis and classification methods. I will focus on four broadly nested investigative levels: physiology (woody vs. herbaceous), physiognomy (trees, shrubs, forbs and grasses), floristics (locally-dominant vegetation cover types), and a functional trait (leaf area index). An extensive field campaign will be planned to provide measures of classification and change accuracy. The methods developed through these studies are envisaged to contribute substantively to developing the science of urban vegetation change monitoring, and towards managing urban green spaces for their diverse values.
I am currently a PhD student in the Department of Geography at National University of Singapore and I am a member of both Tropical Environmental Change (TEC) and Social Cultural Geography (SCG) research groups. I got my Bachelor degree of Engineering in Urban Planning from Wuhan University, China in May 2013, and then joined the Geography Family for graduate study.

My research interests fall under transportation and urban planning with focus on the interaction between land use and rapid transit, the impact of land use on travel behavior and transport pricing.

**Planning Versus Pricing: the Effect on Redirecting Travel Behavior**

Transport-related problems (e.g., environmental pollution, noise and traffic congestion) have received increasing attention over the last two decades. Researchers have proposed various solutions to deal with these issues. Two solutions that will be taken into account in this research are “transport pricing” and “urban planning”, both of which are expected to influence people’s travel behavior, e.g., shifting to less-polluting modes of transport, changing destination choices, combining trips and encouraging car sharing. However, there has long been a debate between transport economists and urban planners on the effect of these two strategies. Another conflict that complicates the debate is the contradictory empirical results regarding the influence of planning on travel behavior.

This research will join the debate, hoping to better understand how and to what extent planning and pricing can influence travel, and consequently to identify the potential of planning and pricing as mobility tool to achieve the environmental purpose of transportation. The three objectives are: 1) to examine the influence of planning on travel behavior based on different geographical scales; 2) to investigate the complementarities between planning and economic measures in affecting travel; 3) to compare the differences of the effect of planning and pricing on travel behavior across various trip purposes. This research will contribute to current transportation policy to realize sustainable transportation in metropolitan cities.
With a bachelor’s in Sociology, Choon Yen’s school-to-work transition was facilitated by her employment at Asia Research Institute. Responsible for conducting field/library research for Migrating Out of Poverty Consortium projects, her research interests include labour migration from/within Indonesia and Southeast Asia, youth aspirations and return migration with a gender lens. Her school-to-work transition has been complicated by her decision to enrol in a part-time Masters programme. When she is not being a student or a researcher, she volunteers her time to work closely with youths to run community projects, hoping to bring smiles to people.

Becoming an Adult: Gender Subjectivities & Aspirations of Indonesian Young Women in Migratory Context

Amidst the worldwide phenomenon of high rates of youth unemployment and underemployment, traditional expectations and markers of adulthood (e.g. financial independence, marriage) are increasingly difficult to attain. The global economic restructuring and an increasing demand for women’s labour in the gender-segmented labour markets for care- and domestic work, and factory work (Piper 2009; Wolf 1994) have also disrupted gender expectations and roles in export processing zones and labour-sending countries to the extent that (young) women are now more likely to become economic migrants (both internal and international) than (young) men.

In a context of highly feminized migration in Indonesia, I study young rural women’s aspirations and transition to adulthood in migrant-sending villages. There are contradictions between “change” brought about by feminised labour migration and “continuity” in terms of patriarchal expectations of women’s responsibilities as wives and mothers. I aim to unpack the implications of these countervailing expectations on young women’s subjectivities and (im)mobilities.

Using in-depth interviews complemented by visual research tools with 30 respondents, I take into account the larger intergenerational context, where I question if ongoing labour migration among the parent generation influences young women’s “navigational capacity” (Appadurai 2004). I also examine the spaces of conflict and negotiation produced at the intersection of older gender ideologies that locate women’s lives within the confines of the home space, and modern aspirations to venture outwards.
Olivia Tan was awarded a BSocSci (Hons) in Geography from the National University of Singapore in 2014 and decided to continue pursuing a Master degree in the same department. She is broadly interested in social and cultural geography, specifically how diverse everyday practices and imaginations of ordinary people have significance in transforming the ways we live by and the worlds we live in. After graduation in 2016, she will be heading to the National Institute of Education (NIE) to be trained as a teacher.

Urban Interventions in Singapore: Tracing the Affective Production and Consumption of Utopian Imaginings

Amidst pessimistic accounts of cities and urban living, there have been calls in recent literature to move beyond these dystopian urban representations in order to explore how attending to a “politics of hope” may open up possibilities for imaginations of better futures and re-enchant geography (Pinder, 2004). This thesis is thus based on such a premise and looks at urban interventions in the context of Singapore as a way to consider how creative practices from ordinary people can open up interstices in the urban fabric for utopian imaginings.

While there has been a recent interest in these forms of creative urban interventions in literature, I note that firstly, there has not been much written about the production of these interventions. Secondly, I suggest that there is a different organisational structuring and implementation of urban interventions in Singapore because of socio-political particularities which may contribute empirically to literature that have largely framed urban interventions as alternative responses to neoliberalism. Thus, through observant participation of urban interventions and in-depth interviews with urban interventionist groups and state agencies in Singapore, I will examine the kinds of territorial and relational linkages in the affective production and consumption of particular utopian imaginings which are then translated into action in the form of grounded urban interventions.
Jack Harris is a PhD student under the supervision of Dr Henry Yeung, interested in economic geography broadly, and varieties of capitalism and GPN more specifically. He holds a BSc in Geography from Canterbury Christ Church University, UK, and a MSc in Human Geography from the University of Amsterdam.

The scaling of economic clusters and varieties of capitalism in China and Thailand

The varieties of capitalism (VoC) literature is undoubtedly one of the most significant analytical innovations in political economy and has progressively argued the claim that there are multiple routes to long-run economic competitiveness and that national capitalisms are an enduring feature of capitalism. However, successive rounds of critique are gradually unveiling the simplicity of the traditional VoC position and its current untenable nature. This research will merge the three major lines of critique: that there is variety at regional and sectoral levels, there are forms of discontinuous institutional change away from the LME-CME continuum, and that there are commonalities in capitalist restructuring across varieties which is increasingly embedding national configurations into global configurations. Looking at clusters of auto-industry production in China and Thailand, this research will analyse the shaping of core institutions over time by local factors, the national institutional framework, and global influences, in an attempt to understand the global interconnectedness of capitalism.
PhD Candidate
Rob Cole
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Supervisors:
Prof Jonathan D. Rigg
Prof Neil Coe

My work prior to NUS combined media, communication and research roles at several UN agencies, the Mekong River Commission and Centre for International Forestry Research. I undertook a master’s in Social Policy and Development at London School of Economics in 2012-2013, conducting my fieldwork in Laos as an intern on a project about Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) in shifting cultivation communities. My research interests include rural development, livelihoods, migration and environmental change.

Land-use displacement and changing livelihoods:
Laos in the context of ASEAN/GMS integration

Globalised production is increasingly connecting spatially separated social-ecological systems (Meyfroidt et al., 2013), creating large land- and resource-use networks that link household-level activities to distant markets. These networks redistribute environmental and social impacts from richer, relatively land-constrained countries to less affluent countries, particularly via expansion of extractive and land-intensive production processes, altering rural land-use and livelihood practices in the process. In the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), the underlying context of ASEAN economic integration and infrastructure building provides physical conduits that facilitate production networks, boost cross-border movement of goods and people, and connect with outlying regions. Potentially complementary frameworks for analysis of these processes include land-use displacement and Global Production Networks, stemming from relational economic geography; and telecoupling, focusing on geographies of development and environmental change. The proposed research aims to contribute to these emergent frameworks by developing an empirical approach to understand how remote networks of production and consumption drive agrarian and social change in Laos. GMS ‘Economic Corridors’, new roads criss-crossing Laos, provide a comparative spatial lens for considering linkages between regional economic and infrastructure integration and household-level effects on land-use, migration and livelihood practices.
Dennis holds a BA in Media Science and Economic History, and a MA in Economic Geography from Goethe-University in Frankfurt am Main (Germany). His master's thesis scrutinized the socio-institutional constructiveness and calculation practices of sustainable investments. He has worked for Germany’s major stock exchange Deutsche Börse, and as journalist for Financial Times Deutschland. Before joining NUS in January, Dennis was an employee of the think tank Bertelsmann Foundation in Brussels and of the German Development Agency GIZ in New Delhi, where he collaborated in a project to support the social impact investment sector in India.

How Impact Investing in Singapore Creates New Geographies of Marketization in Asia by Integrating Finance into Regional Development

Dennis’ PhD research aims to analyse the spatio-institutional configuration and socio-material construction of the financial market for social impact investments (henceforth SII). SII implies the provision of finance to social enterprises, intended to create positive social impact beyond financial return. SII and social enterprises target low-income communities in Latin America, Africa and Asia, and sectors such as healthcare, housing and education. Foundations, high net worth individuals and development banks traditionally engage as impact investors, but institutional financiers are increasingly active in this market. Other key actors include social stock exchanges, consulting firms, business schools, governments, family offices and rating agencies, constituting a multi-scalar market ecosystem and a vibrant field for geographical research.

The presentation will evaluate first conceptual ideas for analysing the SII market in Asia through the lenses of financial and economic geography. Beyond micro-analytical concepts focusing on actor-networks, financial innovation or the discursive imagineering of an entire new asset class, the embedding of SII in a macro-economic framework might be useful. Here, questions about the mediation of these financial practices through multiple institutional scales or the fit with neoliberal ideology will be discussed as analytical approaches.
Felix has begun his doctoral studies at the department in August 2014 with a KCL-NUS studentship. Prior to joining NUS he worked for a leading foreign policy think tank in Brussels, where he conducted and published research on the foreign policy agendas of European and Pacific microstates. During his studies and research visits he has developed a keen interest in the Pacific island region, which also led him to work as a diplomat for the Republic of Vanuatu at the UN. He holds a BSc in Geography from the University of Bonn, Germany, and an MA in Geopolitics, Territory and Security from King’s College.

Political Geographies of Sea-level Rise: Examining spatial narratives of sinking islands, deterritorialisation and threatened sovereignty

Sea levels have been changing – mainly rising – for the entirety of human civilization and there is a long history of adaptation to this phenomenon in the context of small islands. Contemporary sea-level rise (SLR), however, is largely portrayed as a singular, unprecedented event in human history that threatens the livelihoods and territories of entire island nations.

Based on this observation, I presume a set of dialectical forces that underlie popular and scientific conceptions of SLR in the context of low-lying islands and atolls in the Pacific and Indian Ocean. It is then the endeavour of the envisaged project to not only identify the ways in which politico-economic interests frame and appropriate SLR to further certain agendas, but to interrogate the ways in which SLR challenges established conceptions of territory, nature and ultimately the human. The envisaged analysis will be grounded in a qualitative hermeneutical research design. Taking cues from a recent “deconstructive turn in environmental criticism” (Clark 2013), a detailed study of popular and academic SLR discourse will be conducted. The findings will be further informed by ethnographic insights into the phenomenon that will be generated during upcoming ethnographic fieldwork in Kiribati and the Maldives.
Anne Gough began PhD study at NUS in January 2015 with a Yale-NUS studentship. Her PhD advisors are Jane M. Jacobs and Harvey Neo with input from Ali Kadri at the NUS Middle East Institute. Prior to arriving at NUS she was an instructor in the Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management at the American University of Beirut where she researched critical approaches to regional food security and co-directed a dance film project on rural-urban linkages in Lebanon. She is a member of Thimar: research collective on agriculture, environment & labour in the Arab world // athimar.org

**De-code the Landscape: The politics and ecology of transforming urban and agrarian space**

This presentation will outline a work-in-progress research on approaches to landscapes as organized systems of energy (Mitchell 2007), socioeconomic patterns governing the distribution of species assemblage (Farino 2002) and as “volatile participants” (Macfarlane 2013). Landscapes have been studied as palimpsests (Zurayk - Mundy, forthcoming) and as ideological obfuscations of labour and power struggles (Mitchell 2002). Focusing on the production of landscapes in Lebanon at the nexus of urban— village — and food productive raises unique questions about global food regimes, post-war reconstruction and ongoing refugee crises.

This presentation will raise more questions than it answers. First, on the material indicators for defining, analysing and mapping landscapes, secondly, on how material conditions of ongoing struggles against exploitation and violence in transforming landscapes are organized and produced in Lebanon. The goal of this presentation is to identify specific questions and needs and to seek feedback.
Karel Caals has a degree in Tourism Management from Lessius University College in Belgium and has extensive experience in the corporate travel industry. More recently he worked as a research assistant at the Centre for Biomedical Ethics (CBlmE, YLL School of Medicine, NUS) on projects ranging from end-of-life care, access to medicines to clinical trials in low-and-middle-income countries. This is also where he developed his interest in Medical Travel and Health Systems, which inspired him to pursue graduate studies in Health Geography. In his free time he is an avid traveller and he is fond of peranakan food.

**Patient Flows from Foreign Public Health Systems to Singapore, with a focus on Timor-Leste**

Some international medical travellers are patients that are sponsored by their public health system to travel abroad for medical treatment that is not available in their own country. I’m keen to examine to what extent a country with a small and limited health system should invest in capacity building, and to what extent it should depend on other systems through referral. Important issues are optimal and ethical use of resources, governance, and quality of care. I would also like to explore how an inter-government arrangement could be set up to facilitate transnational medical cooperation. For my research, I would like to focus on the young state of Timor-Leste, as it has not developed tertiary care yet. It refers patients to healthcare facilities in Australia, Indonesia and Singapore, due to a lack of both resources and scale.

An important component of my research will be qualitative. I plan to conduct semi-structured in-depth face-to-face and/or phone interviews, with various stakeholders such as patients, physicians and administrators, as well as document (including regulation) review. Going forward, my approach may evolve to also include some limited quantitative elements and as such I may attempt to apply mixed method to my research.
Chang Xiao Ping Julian is a first year Masters student in the Department of Geography. He graduated from the Department with a B.Soc.Sci (Hons) in 2005, and has been a school geography teacher for ten years. Influenced by the changing curriculum of school geography, he has developed an eclectic plethora of interests across the wide span of physical and human geography domains. His current research topic seeks to explore the changing representations of school geography and the pedagogical assemblage of geographical education.

**Changing Subject(ivities): Negotiating the divide between school and academic geography**

This research seeks to examine the workings of space and subjectivation in the production and consumption of a geographical education. It contends that geographical knowledge is pedagogical, (re)assembled and practised differently in spaces and unevenly through the subject tribe of ‘Geography’. Through a study of geography textbooks, the research first traces the changing representations of school geography and academic geography set within the context of educational change and discourses of sociospatial transformations. Within the spaces of geographical education, two particular subjects and the associated politics of subjectivation, power and identities will be studied – geography teachers and undergraduate geography students. Drawing from the work of Deleuze and Guattari, the research elaborates the notion of pedagogical assemblage to offer insights into practices of the making and unmaking of geographical knowledge. In traversing the chasm between school and academic geography, geography teachers and undergraduate geography students have to adjust their ontological and epistemological subjectivities in the teaching and (un)learning of academic geography and school geography. Apart from developing a deeper understanding of a discipline implicated in the politics of subjectivation, the research will hopefully offer new insights in the cultural production of the educated person through the materialities, practices and more-than-representational ways of knowing.
Masters Candidate

Louisa-May Khoo
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Supervisor:
Prof Lily Kong

It is great to be back in the Geography Department, after such a long hiatus, with passion for the discipline rekindled. During this time of absence, I was variously a research assistant, a military wife, a mom to 3 kids, an urban planner and a public servant dabbling in the art of policy making. More recently, my work with the Centre for Liveable Cities on issues of housing, planning for the foreign workforce, and spatial equity concerns, has fuelled my interest in pursuing research exploring the intersections between urban policy, immigration issues and governance, and how these shape everyday geographies and social relations of increasingly diverse societies, such as those in the global city-state, Singapore.

Strange affinities: everyday encounters in public spaces of Singapore

Diversity is increasingly becoming the hallmark of cities. In a dense global city state like Singapore, urban spaces become sites of proximity where differences collide. This thesis seeks to understand that moment of urban encounter and elucidate the conditions under which such encounters may variously produce different outcomes. It draws on Christian Schmid’s (2006) work on Switzerland mobilizing Henri Lefebvre’s concept “heterotopia”, and suggests that relationships between elements of urban space could lead to frames of encounters that result in ‘productive’, ‘unproductive’ and ‘nonproductive’ outcomes. Focusing its empirical investigation across urban public spaces in Singapore, the research suggests that outcomes of urban encounters are shaped by both organized and organic elements, and that the way urban space is conceived, designed and implemented, and how the ‘stranger’ is constructed, particularly through the lens of multiculturalism in Singapore, are key dimensions that need to be interrogated, to understand how the “preformed, performed and imagined” (Vertovec, 2011) intersect to shape the dynamics of that moment of encounter. In so doing, the study suggests potential strategies that would engender a greater propensity towards conviviality that could shift encounters with ‘nonproductive’ or ‘unproductive’ outcomes to more ‘productive’ ones. The study builds on Ash Amin’s (2012) conceptual framings advocating a “Land of Strangers”, by attempting using the case of Singapore, to demonstrate the strategies through which a greater capacity towards living amid diversity and an enlargement of the urban commons might be achieved, thereby offering an empirical toolkit drawn from an Asian context to enrich the scholarship around urban encounters moving forward.
I majored in Human Geography and Planning of Urban and Rural Regions at East China Normal University and was conferred B.Sc. in July 2014. The title of my undergraduate thesis was “Yangtze-River Delta City Networks in Cyberspace in Respect of Industrial Development and Regional Innovation”. From August 2014, I study as Masters Candidate at NUS under the supervision of Prof Huang. Now I focus my research within the field of social cultural geography, with an especial interest in transnational migration. The topic of my research thesis is “Negotiating Gender Identity and Belonging in Transnational Context: Skilled Chinese Immigrants to Singapore”.

Negotiating Gender Identity and Belonging in Transnational Context: Skilled Chinese Immigrants to Singapore

Taking skilled Chinese immigrants to Singapore as example, the research aims to examine what is belonging of Chinese immigrants and how they perceive the belonging after settling down in Singapore. Furthermore, provided that burgeoning literature on transnational migration has addressed the relations between gender identity and migration, the research plans to explore the gender identity’s effect on immigrants’ belonging after they completed the migration process and the belonging’s counter-effect on gender identity. The data collection methods include semi-structured interview, archival research and focus group. To avoid the drawback of previous transnational migration research that political economy of migration often serves as a background but not an active agency to influence migration and identity, I will combine cultural logic of transnational migration and political economy factors, including immigrant policies in Singapore and PRC, citizenship laws, recent economic development, etc. in the discussion.

Through the research, I hope to expand the knowledge of how immigrants perceive the belonging in new environment and how gender identity associates with belonging. And I also try to make a contribution to deepen understanding of ‘new’ Chinese immigrants to Singapore through exploring their emotion, identity and living experience.
Acknowledgements

The participating graduate students would like to thank Prof Jonathan D. Rigg, lecturer of the Graduate Research Seminar, their respective supervisors, the NUS Department of Geography, and last but not least the Graduate Studies Administrator of the department Pauline Lee Poi Leng and Mrs Lee Li Kheng.

Invitations
Julian Chang
James Wang
Louisa-May Khoo
Elisha Anne Teo

Programme and Poster
Karel Caals
Robert Cole
Khoo Choon Yen
Dennis Stolz

Food
Qi Yunting Tina
Olivia Tan
Felix Mallin

Chairs
Ben Thompson
Lee Chung-Rui
Nisha Ramdzan
Anne Gough