Programme

Welcome 9:00 – 9:15

Session I 9:15 – 10:30
DUONG Do Quy 9:15 – 9:40
Jessica CLENDENNING 9:40 – 10:05
YANG Xueke (Stephanie) 10:05 – 10:30

Coffee/tea Break 10:30 – 10:55

Session II 10:55 – 12:35
Jenifa ZAHAN 10:55 – 11:20
Shona LOONG 11:20 – 11:45
Dina KRICHKER 11:45 – 12:10
YU Minghong 12:10 – 12:35

Lunch 12:35 – 13:55

Session III 14:00 – 15:15
WU Di 14:00 – 14:25
TAN Xuan Kai 14:25 – 14:50
Neil McGREGOR 14:50 – 15:15

Coffee/tea Break 15:15 – 15:35

Session IV 15:35 – 17:15
Wayne BANNISTER 15:35 – 16:00
CHEN Qin Qin (Christina) 16:00 – 16:25
YU Yao 16:25 – 16:50
Marie DELALAY 16:50 – 17:15
It is generally observed that agrarian transformations do not always conform to Kautsky (1899)’s prediction of the elimination of smallholding during Industrialization. In many parts of Asia, smallholdings still thrive as an important mode of production. In Vietnam, there are about 10 million smallholders, many of who are ethnic minorities living in upland regions. The integration process of the ethnic minorities into the national economy by different lowland actors was as early as 19th century, but most significant during Collectivization with massive land reform and in-migration of lowlanders. As the country embarked on DoiMoi (Reform) in 1986, the upland transformation was further complicated with non-state actors such as the market, multi-lateral development agencies Subsequently the state’s developmentalism, perpetuated by structural adjustments and externally introduced institutions, bring massive changes to rural society. Traditional subsistent mode of production is deemed as a hindrance to economic development, poverty reduction, ecological conservation and food security, and therefore is under constant pressure to be eliminated.

Interestingly, these policies do not effectively seize the practice of subsistent production of upland farmers, but rather enables them to adapt and diversify their livelihood options. It is also observed that different ethnic groups and households in each groups experience these transformation process differently, leading to stratified status among them. Thus, this research seeks to understand how and why ethnic minority communities in upland Vietnam remain their ‘smallholding’ mode of production despite externally imposed changes.
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Jessica joined NUS Geography Department in January 2016. She is interested in the broad fields of environment and development and has worked on a variety of research projects concerning forest conservation, rural livelihoods, land access and resource use. She has an MA in Development Studies from International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University, the Netherlands.

**New agrarian transitions? Future directions of rural youth in Indonesia**

This research examines how agrarian transitions, such as increased mobility, education and changing patterns of smallholder farming impact upon youth’s social and economic aspirations, and asks what it means for the future of rural landscapes in Java, Indonesia. Within this research, I aim to understand how rural youth plan to engage with their natal village and land. I will use a mixed-method approach to document households’ livelihood histories and survey their economic motivations and opportunities. I will seek to understand the extent to which youth (and to lesser extents, their households) hope to invest in rural land and or agricultural practices compared to off-farm opportunities. The research aims at:

1) Understanding the impacts of changing demographic and mobility patterns on families’ agricultural practices, land and social relations; and

2) Analyzing how economic diversification, including agricultural practices, relate to values on rural land and work across family generations, especially youth.
Many rural villages are suffering from social and economic problems not experienced by their metropolitan counterparts in China. These problems include polarization of economic opportunities and living standards, access to infrastructure, and declining of population due to out migration of young people. One of the potential solutions to the problems can be artists’ remaking of rural places, since creative artists are observed to contribute to village reconstructions through different approaches in China. While some of the artists help redesign and rebuild old houses, others organize cultural festivals/events and construct new public spaces as sites for such events. Over time, some villages have even become popular tourist destinations. Indeed, these villages have experienced (and many continue to experience) dramatic changes in their social, economic and environmental characteristics.

In China, it is usually the rural residents that immigrate to the urban area for a better livelihood, but the phenomenon addressed here is different from the common situation that these artists, in contrast, emigrate from cities to the countryside and affect the villages in different ways. My PhD thesis aims to understand this special phenomenon of rural change in China, especially to study the artists’ role in the process of rural transformation.
Jenifa joined NUS as a PhD candidate in August 2015. She has an MPhil from National University of Educational Planning and Administration, India and an MA in Geography from University of Delhi, India. Prior to joining NUS, she was working with various international and national development agencies in India in different capacities. Her work focuses on issues of gender and education in India.

Re-constructing gender and space: Single women’s access to and experience of public spaces in the metropolitan city of Delhi, India.

My PhD research focuses on young single women in Delhi, India. The number of single women - young, educated, middle class, and mostly migrants from other parts of the country is on the rise after the post liberalisation period (roughly the post 1990s) in Delhi, India. Often viewed as ‘deviants’ from the mainstream society, these single women’s right to the city spaces is determined by normative societal setup that relegates women to a lower status than men. However, strategising through space, time and network building with others, these single women are becoming increasingly visible in Delhi.

The proposed study aims at understanding the lived, everyday experiences of young single women in Delhi, while examining the new geographies of the city that are created, recreated by these women with an interest in contemporary gender relations, women’s changing gender/social roles, identities and gender equality. It also aims at understanding the urban public spaces and the construction of gender from the perspectives of young single women in Delhi, India.
Although the UNHCR has—since 2009—recognized that almost half the world’s refugees reside in cities, political geographers continue to associate refugees with camps or camp-like spaces (e.g. detention centres, islands) associated with enclosure, isolation, and detention. In this context, I hope to study the experiences of ethnic minority refugees from Burma who have sought refuge in the Thai border town of Mae Sot, in order to understand how cities feature in the state-led approaches to forced migration and in the provision of humanitarian aid by local and international actors. Moreover, given that legal refugee protection does not exist in Thailand—the state is not party to any international instruments of refugee protection—I ask how we might be able to understand the lives of de facto urban refugees residing outside Thailand’s border camps, whose existence is accounted for only in vague stabs at the number of undocumented migrants in Thailand, but who are also ever-present in the informal economics of northern Thai cities? If the state and humanitarian agencies have been positioned as the two sovereigns that reign over refugee camps, how might sovereign power be reconfigured when the camp overlaps with the city? In order to untangle these issues, I will draw on two main methods: firstly, participant observation will be conducted while volunteering with a non-governmental in order to gain insight into how NGOs maneuver within the Thai state’s restrictive asylum policies; secondly, I will also draw on interviews with representatives from local and international NGOs and with urban refugees themselves.

Shona joined the NUS Department of Geography as a Masters student in August 2015, after completing her undergraduate degree at the same department. She is broadly interested in the field of political geography, and takes a keen interest in issues relating to state power, labour migration and forced migration.

The city as camp? A study of urban refugees in Thailand

Although the UNHCR has—since 2009—recognized that almost half the world’s refugees reside in cities, political geographers continue to associate refugees with camps or camp-like spaces (e.g. detention centres, islands) associated with enclosure, isolation, and detention. In this context, I hope to study the experiences of ethnic minority refugees from Burma who have sought refuge in the Thai border town of Mae Sot, in order to understand how cities feature in the state-led approaches to forced migration and in the provision of humanitarian aid by local and international actors. Moreover, given that legal refugee protection does not exist in Thailand—the state is not party to any international instruments of refugee protection—I ask how we might be able to understand the lives of de facto urban refugees residing outside Thailand’s border camps, whose existence is accounted for only in vague stabs at the number of undocumented migrants in Thailand, but who are also ever-present in the informal economics of northern Thai cities? If the state and humanitarian agencies have been positioned as the two sovereigns that reign over refugee camps, how might sovereign power be reconfigured when the camp overlaps with the city? In order to untangle these issues, I will draw on two main methods: firstly, participant observation will be conducted while volunteering with a non-governmental in order to gain insight into how NGOs maneuver within the Thai state’s restrictive asylum policies; secondly, I will also draw on interviews with representatives from local and international NGOs and with urban refugees themselves.

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Dina joined NUS as a PhD student in January 2016. She holds a Bachelor degree (International Relations) from the Udmurt State University (Russia) and Master of Arts degree (Geopolitics, Territory and Security) from King’s College London. In King’s College she was working on the issues related to borders under supervision of Richard Schofield. Her current research interests fall under border studies and geographies of violence.

Geography of hostilities on Spanish-Moroccan border

The border between Spain and Morocco, located in Melilla, received increasing attention in the light of ongoing migrants’ crisis in Europe. Being the most southern frontier of the European Union, Melilla’s border has always been a line of continuous conflict between migrants and the locals, which was manifested in various ways and on multiple levels. However with the rapid growth in number of migrants, the scale of hostilities in the border area increased dramatically.

By problematising hostilities on Spanish-Moroccan border, this research argues against institutionalisation and normalisation of violence. It suggests that hostilities on Melilla’s border can not be reduced to mere processes of conflict and accommodation common to the majority of frontiers. Recent events, as well as historical evidence, inspire the assumption that the border space is produced in a way that features solid hostile characteristics. Therefore the production of hostilities will be looked at through the prism of “banality of evil” suggested by Hannah Arendt, as well as by the means of banal geopolitics. The ultimate goal of this project is to create a narration about people, with an emphasis on violence, where border is a key figure. This goal can be seen as a development of Nick Megoran’s concept of “border biography”.
Cities in the sub-tropical climates are amongst the fastest growing in terms of population. Singapore is a highly urbanised country which experiences urban heat island (UHI) effect and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions due to increased human population and activities. With the expected rise in urban development, determining the mitigation options of the UHI is important to improve future urban planning in Singapore. One option is to increase vegetation in urban areas. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in the role in which trees can play in mitigating UHI. Urban vegetation are found to regulate the microclimate by shading, evapotranspiration and CO₂ sequestration. While there is a mitigation potential of urban vegetation, there have been only few studies conducted on its role in improving UHI and urban air quality. The study will incorporate state-of-the-art instrumentation and assess how urban vegetation affect the well-being of people living in Singapore.

The aims of this study are to evaluate (1) the role of vegetation in urban temperature and air quality, and (2) the role of vegetation cover in the adaptation to UHI effects. With the results, this study hopes to contribute and improve our understanding in the processes linking urban climate, urban design and human comfort for more sustainable urban planning.
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Di joined the department of geography in January 2016 as a PhD student. She holds a BSc in Urban Planning, Design and Management from University College London and an MPhil in Planning, Growth and Regeneration from the University of Cambridge. Her current research interest lies in cultural and creative industries and creative cities.

Explaining the development of cultural and creative industries in Dali, China

Dali is a small town with a population of around 0.6 million in southwestern China. It is a county-level city, down the list of urban hierarchy in China. However, in recent years, it is receiving a large number of immigrants in the cultural and creative industries from large cities to work and live in Dali, including artists, designers, craftsmen, poets, musicians, writers etc. Many of these immigrants are influential in their own fields and could be considered as the “cultural icons” in China. Consequently, there is an increasing number of related enterprises, studios and events in Dali. The booming of cultural and creative industries in such a small town in the less-developed part of China contradicts with the general trend that these industries tend to agglomerate in large cities particularly cosmopolitan cities.

My research aims to explain this “unexpected” development of the cultural and creative industries in Dali from two aspects. First, my research aims to find out the unique dynamics of Dali’s urban environment valued by the creative workers that influenced their locational decisions to migrate to Dali. In other words, this is about finding out “why these creative workers come to Dali”. Second, my research aims to understand how creative workers in Dali produce their “products”, including their production processes, production chains and production networks. This includes their relationships within local production system as well as their non-local production networks. In short, this is about finding out “how these creative workers sustain/conduct their work in Dali”.

Spurred by the limited analytical attention being paid to the intersection of finance and global production in driving the dynamics of the world economy, this thesis aims to examine the role of finance in shaping global production networks (GPN) and the attendant economic processes and outcomes through a case study of the Singapore-based SingTel telecommunications company. By combining the GPN approach with studies on financialization, the study will unpack the mechanisms through which the GPN of SingTel was financed and financialized in the context of state-driven financialization, as well as the ensuing implications for its value capture trajectories. The significance of this study is threefold. First, it advances work on GPN by responding to the neglect of finance-production as an important nexus in shaping capitalist dynamics and economic processes. Second, it highlights the continued relevance of the state as a strategic actor in both the configurations of GPNs and processes of financialization, as opposed to most western-centric studies that emphasize the dominance of neoliberal logics. Third, my analysis positions telecommunications as a global industry that has been comparatively disregarded within GPN studies and economic geography more broadly, a significant lacuna given the increasingly globalised and networked nature of the sector. Taken together, the thesis thus contributes to a fuller yet geographically sensitive picture of how global industries are organized into systems of networks and how, in turn, the nature of those systems shapes the opportunities for economic development for the actors involved.

Xuan Kai is a first year Master Candidate with a broad interest in the geographies of economic globalization. This encompasses the study of transnational corporations (TNCs), state actors, geographies of money and finance, as well as global production networks (GPNs). His current research interest centres on the intersection of finance and GPN, which he will explore through his Master dissertation work.

Finance and Global Production Network: A case study of SingTel

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Xuan Kai is a first year Master Candidate with a broad interest in the geographies of economic globalization. This encompasses the study of transnational corporations (TNCs), state actors, geographies of money and finance, as well as global production networks (GPNs). His current research interest centres on the intersection of finance and GPN, which he will explore through his Master dissertation work.
Neil McGregor has over 23 years of experience working in higher education, at Stirling University, Loughborough University and Abertay University. During this time Neil has held positions as RA, Management Teaching Fellow, Lecturer in Economics, Division Leader and Director of two Regional Economic and Labour Market Research Centres. Neil has published one book, several book chapters and journal articles and has produced numerous commercial research/consultancy projects for a range of public and private sector clients.

The economic geography of global production and innovation networks: The role of university-industry-government interactions in the strategic coupling of knowledge-intensive sectors in SE Asian and Australasia

The cases of Stanford University in Silicon Valley and MIT in the Route 128 area are often promoted as examples of the potential benefits of university-business interaction. However, other regions that have attempted to follow these examples have failed to deliver the same degree of success. Furthermore, there are also some who suggest that the role of Stanford and MIT in these economic success stories is over-played, with business-to-business interactions being far more important. Studies of the impact of university-business collaboration similarly suggests that the focus of university-business collaboration may be misguided. Despite the mixed evidence, there remains a strong policy focus globally on the triple-helix of effective University-Industry-Government (U-I-G) interaction as a route to the creation of Regional Innovation Systems, cluster development and economic growth.

The research will examine the relevance of U-I-G collaboration in the development and sustainability of global network linkages and regional clusters in knowledge-intensive sectors in SE Asia and Australasia. The Global Production Network and the closely associated Global Innovation Network logics provide a framework for both the spatial and temporal evaluation of GPNs and, critically, a framework for the analysis of the integration of regional knowledge clusters within global networks. The proposed research involves integration of the GPN approach with regional cluster theory integrated with the “triple-helix” model (a metaphor for U-I-G interaction), thus permitting examination of the role of U-I-G interactions in regional knowledge cluster development and strategic coupling with global networks.
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Wayne joined NUS as a PhD student in January 2016. He has a Bachelor of Science (Geography) and a Master of Science (Environmental Monitoring for Management) from Loughborough University in the United Kingdom. Wayne previously studied Temperate and Arctic lakes, but has since expanded the scope of his research to include Tropical freshwater lakes. Current research interests include palaeolimnology, and the use of biological proxies (e.g. diatoms) to infer palaeolimnological and palaeoenvironmental changes.

Determining the form and level of anthropogenic impacts on freshwater lakes in Tropical Asia, and the rate and nature of past recovery phases

Tropical East Asia (TEA) is a region that has experienced rapid environmental change, as a result of population growth and development. Rates of deforestation, environmental pollution and loss of biodiversity have all increased; anthropogenic modifications of terrestrial, coastal and inland aquatic ecosystems are becoming increasingly evident. The Philippines has a long colonial history (under Spanish rule from the 16th – 19th centuries, in addition to British, American and Japanese colonisation) and is experiencing a rapid increase in its population, which has led to subsequent changes in the region’s consumption and land use. However, the anthropogenic impacts of these colonial and post-colonial changes have not been adequately investigated in any environmental studies.

The aim is to determine the form and level of anthropogenic impacts on freshwater lakes in TEA and explore the rate and nature of past recovery phases. This will be addressed in the context of Luzon, the largest island of the Philippines; the objective is to evaluate and compare responses to human impact between periods of colonial and post-colonial development.

Compared to other parts of TEA, lakes are relatively abundant in Luzon and in the Philippines generally, and occur across a wide range of environmental gradients and levels of human impact. The latter will be especially relevant for placing this study into the larger context of environmental change in TEA. Research will be carried out on several lakes surrounding the city of San Pablo in the Laguna province, where freshwater bodies are affected by different levels of anthropogenic disturbances.
Variations in atmospheric pollutant fluxes to lakes on tropical Hainan Island, Southern China

East Asia is one of the world’s most rapidly developing regions. Development has not come without costs, however, one of which has been environmental quality. Atmospheric pollution is a particular problem, with the transboundary effects of pollutants cascading far beyond their original source locations. The East Asia monsoon also plays an important role in the transportation and dispersal of atmospheric pollutants in the region, such as heavy metals (e.g. mercury, cadmium) and Spheroidal Carbonaceous Particles (SCPs, only produced from fossil fuels combustion). Lakes are commonly regarded as sentinels of environmental quality because of their ability to amplify pollutant concentrations and climate change signals. Lake sediments contain proxy evidence of past changes in environmental conditions, in the lake basin and in the wider water- and air-sheds. Proxy evidence of past environmental conditions accumulates over time; lake sediments potentially archive temporal variations in pollutant sources, transportation and depositions (fluxes) that can be read using palaeolimnological approaches.

My research intends to use a combination of techniques to better understand the nature and causes of variations in atmospheric pollution depositions recorded in sediments accumulating in volcanic (maar) lakes on Hainan Island, up until recently one of the least polluted parts of China. In addition to local sources, atmospheric quality on Hainan Island is likely to be heavily influenced by industrialisation in southern China and northern Vietnam and Thailand, particularly during the northern (Northern Hemisphere winter) monsoon.
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Yu Yao joined NUS as a Master student in August 2015. She holds a Bachelor degree (Ecology) from Minzu University of China. She is interested in landscape ecology, especially in the regions inhabited by ethnic groups in China. Now she is focused on the research of land use change and human environmental interactions.

Dynamics of land use change in a Tibetan inhabited region, the Three Rivers Headwaters Region of China

In China, the Three Rivers Headwaters Region (TRHR) is a Tibetan inhabited region. It is also the source region for the Yellow, the Yangtze and the Lantsang River, thus playing a significant role in regulating the water supply and climate of East Asia. Using Geographical Information Systems, this thesis aims to analyze the temporal and spatial patterns of land use change in TRHR from 1987 to 2012. In addition, the differences of land use patterns between the surroundings of temples and the surroundings of villages will be investigated, and the most important driving forces of land use change will be scrutinized.

Although much land use change work has been done in TRHR, this thesis fills in the gaps in knowledge through comparing land use dynamics among each of the three headwaters regions. Remote sensing images of TRHR will be classified, and landscape indexes, which quantify the composition and configuration of patterns of land use change, will be compared. Moreover, to investigate the influence of cultural belief to land use change, buffer zones around temples and villages will be established to compare the land use change patterns. Further more, instead of simplify reality and only focus on a small number of driving forces, this research will choose a comprehensive approach to include probable driving forces from five types: environment, culture, economy, policy and technology. Based on local statistic data as well as suggestions of experts with local expertise and experts in the relevant subjects, a list of driving forces will be compiled for analysis.
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Prior to joining NUS as a PhD candidate, Marie worked 4 years as an actuary for a large consultancy in Switzerland. She holds a BSc in Environmental Engineering from EPFL and an MSc in Quantitative Finance from ETHZ. She is also a Qualified Actuary by the Swiss Association of Actuaries. Given her background, Marie is well positioned to bridge the knowledge from a physical and a socio-economic perspective to develop and enhance models of flood risk assessment.

Modelling of socio-economic impacts of floods in South East Asia

The dire consequences of past flood events in South East Asia, the possible trends in increased frequency of heavy rainfall and large floods, and the estimation of increasing damages from future floods by state-of-the art models of flood risk assessments showcase the necessity to accurately assess the frequency and magnitude of future floods as well as their socio-economic toll in this part of the world. Individuals, governments, capital markets, and financial institutions need to estimate the extent and likelihood of the economic risk they take on or transfer. Flood models coupled with vulnerability functions serve this purpose.