The QS World University rankings (2013) place National University Singapore (NUS) in the top 25 universities in the world and number one in Asia. In the same rankings, the Department of Geography, NUS, is ranked in the top ten Geography programmes globally.

The Politics, Economy and Space (PEAS) research group in the Department of Geography, National University invites applicants for competitive fully funded PhD scholarships. Please note that there are two application deadlines each year: 1 November and 15 May (for entrance in, respectively, August and January of the year following the application deadline). For further information, please contact in the first instance Ms Pauline Lee (email geoleepl@nus.edu.sg). Pauline is the administrator in the Department with responsibility for providing support to the Graduate Studies programme in Geography.

PEAS is a diverse and research active group with members holding Editorships in leading geographical journals like *Environment and Planning A*, *Economic Geography*, *Political Geography*, *European Urban and Regional Studies* and *Geoforum*. While PEAS will consider applicants who have research interests in economic geography and political geography (broadly defined), we especially welcome applicants who are keen and able to work in the following specific areas:

1) **Retail globalization: the variegated expansion of transnational retailers into Asia (Neil Coe)**

While there is now a rich multi-disciplinary literature on the globalization of retailing and its impacts on host economies, much remains to be done in order to deepen and strengthen our understanding and evidence base. Since the late 1990s, a tranche of global retailers including Wal-Mart, Carrefour, Tesco, Ahold, Metro and IKEA have rapidly expanded their international operations. The emerging markets of Asia have been one of the key arenas for this expansion. The entry of leading retail TNCs has been transformative in many host economies, driving profound and rapid changes in retail structures, urban landscapes, supply networks, consumption practices and regulatory regimes. At the same time, the map of success and failure of retail TNCs across Asia is highly variegated, and is heavily shaped by important national institutional and regulatory factors. There are a wide range of research questions, and therefore PhD projects, that could stem from this initial observation. In particular, this is rich territory for comparative work that blends the tools of political economy and institutional approaches:

- How do globalization strategies vary from firm to firm, and from country to country?
- How are national retail markets being remade by the presence of retail TNCs?
- What have been the competitive responses of domestic retailers to the entry of retail TNCs?
- In what ways are transnational retailers driving supply network restructuring in different markets in Asia?
- How, and to what extent, are regional sourcing patterns emerging across Asia?
- What are the regulatory consequences and challenges for governments in Asia with respect to transnational retailers?
- In what ways are transnational retailers driving new consumption dynamics in markets in Asia?

2) **The development of Singapore as a financial centre (James Sidaway and Karen Lai)**

This PhD project will develop an historical geography of Singapore's trajectory as a financial centre; from colonial times to the present day and examine its contemporary social and economic geography, both as an area within Singapore and as a node in regional and global financial networks. Particular moments and foci would be specified in the course of the research, but could include; the late 1960s and early 1970s development of an Asian Dollar market, contemporary Renimbi trading, the physical expansion of the financial district and its relationship to spatial planning and real estate markets in...
Singapore. It is expected that the research would draw on a mixture of archival and ethnographic methods.

3) **International trade, development and the global economy (Godfrey Yeung)**

I am interested in several sub-fields of economic geography and welcome PhD students who are interested to research on the linkages between foreign direct investment, international trade, and regional development. I am also interested in the intersections of economic geography and development geography, especially how developing countries link economically to the global economy. Theoretically, I am particularly interested on topics that could contribute to the development and potential synergies between international trade and the two main sub-branches of economic geography: evolutionary economic geography and relational economic geography. Topically, I am keen on proposals that look at the following issues:

- Impacts of foreign capital on regional diversification and specialization of production and regional development in transitional and developed economies
- Impacts of technology intensity of industrial production, and the roles of international trade, in regional development in transitional and developed economies
- Impacts of finance and banking reforms on industrial production, including the subsequent market segmentation and financial exclusion that may experience by certain sectors, in transitional economies

4) **‘Rising Asia’ and China’s geopolitical engagements (Woon Chih Yuan)**

The rising global economic importance of China since the 1980s has made it a subject of intense geopolitical speculations. Much (Anglophone) debates about contemporary China have been polarized around diametrically opposing views—conservatives that see China as a ‘communist threat’ that needs to be contained/countered whilst liberals (especially in Europe) view it as a ‘socialist brother’ that needs to be guided towards (Western) values of democracy. However these perspectives have been criticized for their Eurocentricism, with little attention ascribed to the geohistorical context that shapes China’s developmental trajectory and its ‘place in the world’. PhD projects under this theme thus will go beyond ‘Western’ narratives to investigate how Chinese elites (scholars and policymakers) envisage their future on the international stage. Topics may include: examining the ways in which China positions itself as a global geopolitical actor and how that translate into concrete foreign policy agendas; analyzing how the external engagements of China (e.g. Taiwan, Shanghai Cooperation Organization) relate to shifting forms of sovereignty, territoriality and political economies of power and accumulation; and interrogating how geopolitical narratives and initiatives emerging from within China are conveyed to the wider Chinese populace and the everyday responses towards such state actions.

5) **Private wealth management and the high net worth (HNW) market in Singapore (Karen Lai)**

Singapore is now the world’s fastest growing wealth management hub with $1.3 trillion assets under management, and is slated to overtake Switzerland as the world’s largest offshore wealth center by 2020. Its rise into the realm of ultra-wealthy global cities also reflects a broader economic shift as Asia becomes an increasingly important centre for growth and consumption. Capitalising on these trends, government policies over the past decade have focused on the development of financial services, retail sectors and lifestyle amenities aimed at attracting high net worth individuals (HNWIs). Asset management, private banking, insurance and financial advisory services have grown steadily despite the 2008 global financial crisis. The HNW sector is also evident in the increasing number of luxury cars on the roads, yacht clubs and marina property developments, glamorous new casino resorts, celebrity chef restaurants and hallmark events like the Formula One night race, global golf tournaments and regattas. Potential thesis projects could include: examining the private wealth management sector in Singapore (and the roles of different service providers e.g. private banks, fund management companies, legal and accounting firms, insurance and financial advisory business), comparing characteristics and impacts of regional wealth (e.g. from China, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines) and local HNWIs, competition with Hong Kong to become the leading wealth management centre of Asia, the economic and urban impact of HNW consumption and lifestyle sectors, and HNW market and philanthropy.
The political economy of East Asian development (Henry Yeung)

The preconditions and global contexts for economic development in East and Southeast Asia have changed dramatically in the past two decades. The 1997/1998 Asian financial crisis and the concurrent globalization of production and investment have fundamentally reshaped how national economies in East Asia reposition their developmental trajectories, and how actors, particularly business firms and state agencies, in these economies compete in the global economy. I am particularly interested in PhD applicants who want to explore from an economic-geographical perspective such major development issues as industrial organization, economic upgrading and transformation, firm competitiveness, state policies, and technological change. National economies of particular interest to me are Greater China (China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan), South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. I do expect some potential projects in this topical area to be strongly linked to research interests of PEAS colleagues such as A/P Godfrey Yeung and Dr. Woon Chih Yuan.

Global production networks and global value chains in East Asia (Henry Yeung)

The organization of the global economy has undergone massive transformation since the 1960s. This is much more than the simple story of “globalization”. In particular, this economic globalization is increasingly underpinned by complicated processes of production fragmentation, international outsourcing and offshoring, and the rise of giant producers in different global industries such as automobiles, electronics, apparel, agro-food, retail, logistics, and so on. The iPhone story – designed and engineered by Apple Inc in California, assembled by Taiwan’s Foxconn in China with key modules and components from Samsung (South Korea), Toshiba (Japan), and Infineon (Germany) – epitomizes this phenomenon of global production networks. In economic geography and adjacent social science disciplines, two interrelated theoretical perspectives on global production networks and global value chains have been firmly established. I am involved in co-developing the former (with my PEAS colleague Professor Neil Coe and others), and am well connected to key proponents of the latter. Given the highly influential nature of both perspectives in the social sciences and international organizations (OECD, WTO, and UNCTAD), I am sure very good PhD projects can emerge in relation to such major issues as the organization, dynamics, strategies, and development outcomes of these global production networks and global value chains. Prospective applicants should consider examining these issues from a comparative perspective, incorporating different industries in multiple regional or national economies.