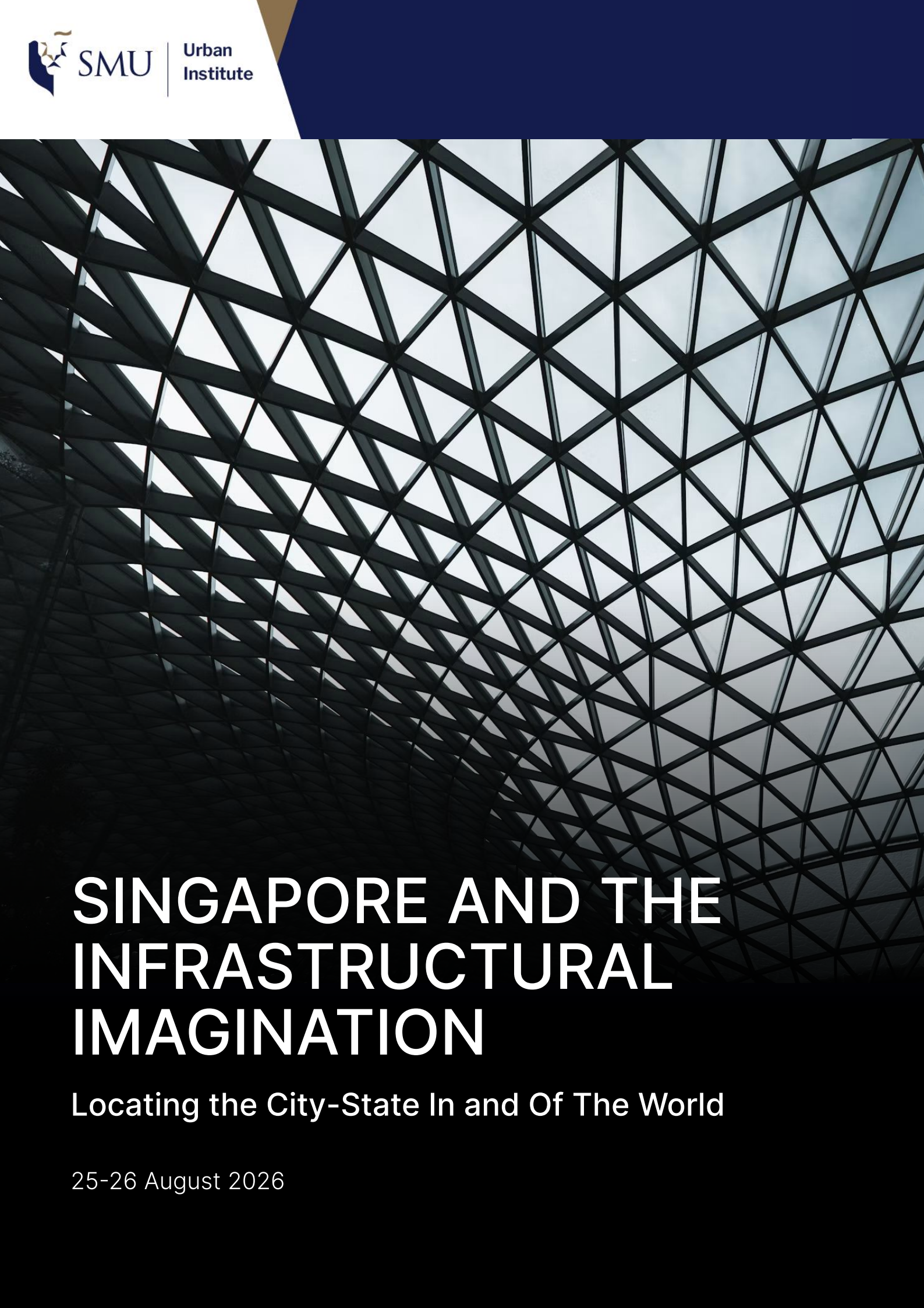




SINGAPORE AND THE INFRASTRUCTURAL IMAGINATION

Locating the City-State In and Of The World

25-26 August 2026

SINGAPORE AND THE INFRASTRUCTURAL IMAGINATION: LOCATING THE CITY-STATE IN AND OF THE WORLD

Over the last two decades, Singapore has emerged as one of the world's most important sites of infrastructural experimentation. Singapore has consistently functioned as a laboratory for new forms of infrastructural development and governance, ranging from logistics, ports, and aviation to digital platforms, ecological management, urban services, data centres, advanced manufacturing, and smart city systems. At the same time, Singapore's infrastructure increasingly extends beyond the territorial boundaries of the city-state through networks of capital, expertise, regulation, logistics and technological experimentation. Despite such a clear and celebrated capacity for infrastructure-led development, there has been no systemic attempt to i) critically compare these imaginaries across infrastructure domains and ii) consider the wider implications for how we conceptualise, theorise and research urban infrastructure in urban studies. The workshop addresses this gap.

This workshop aims to bring together scholars working on infrastructure in Singapore to reflect on the changing nature of infrastructural imagination, experimentation and governance. Instead of focusing on a single concept or framework, the workshop seeks to open up discussion around both the futures of infrastructure in Singapore and the conceptual vocabularies through which contemporary infrastructures are understood.

ABOUT THE SMU URBAN INSTITUTE

Launched in January 2024, the Urban Institute (UI) is a university-level research institute dedicated to delivering impact through the multi and interdisciplinary study of cities in Asia. The UI addresses critical issues shaping the future of Asian cities by forging an interdisciplinary research agenda that bridges theoretical and applied research, data science and the critical social sciences, industry and academia, and Singapore and Southeast Asia. Guided by four research pillars - Urban Growth, Urban Governance, Urban Systems and Urban Experiences - the UI understands the city in holistic terms, seeking to develop solutions that make Southeast Asia's cities more liveable, inclusive and resilient places. By leveraging the Singapore Management University's strategic positioning as a vibrant management university located in Singapore's city centre, the UI aims to develop empirical insights, theoretical understandings, and practical urban solutions that speak to the plethora of challenges facing Asia's cities, from the heart of urban Asia.

WORKSHOP ORGANISERS

Professor Orlando Woods

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Professor Simon Marvin

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TUESDAY, 25 AUGUST 2026

YPHSL SEMINAR ROOMS 3-09 | 3-10 | 3-11
55 ARMENIAN ST, SINGAPORE 179943

8:30 - 9:00	MORNING TEA
9:00 - 9:10	INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP
9:10 - 10:40	SESSION 1: INFRASTRUCTURES AT WORK
9:10	Scaffolding the Future: Robots, Labor, and Risk In Singapore Al Lim Singapore Management University
9:25	A Speculation on Infrastructural Overspeculation Lin Weiqiang National University of Singapore
9:40	The Afterlives of Great Works: Temporal Disjunctures and Singaporean Infrastructures, 1819 to 2026 Jack Greatrex Singapore Management University
9:55	Discussion
10:40 - 10:50	BREAK
10:50 - 12:20	SESSION 2: STATECRAFT AND INFRASTRUCTURAL ASPIRATIONS
10:50	From City-State to Global Asset Empire: the Extended Urbanisation of Singaporean State Capital Andrew Stokols Singapore Management University
11:05	Dream Factories? Metaphor, Mythology and Maintenance In Singapore's Infrastructural Imagination Orlando Woods Singapore Management University
11:20	It's About Time: Infrastructuring Kairopolis Singapore Through the Syncing and Retrofitting of Global City Kairotopias George Wong Singapore Management University
11:35	Discussion
12:20 - 13:20	LUNCH

13:20 – 14:50	SESSION 3: AI INFRASTRUCTURES
13:20	AI as 'Critical Infrastructure' In Singapore: Revisiting the Urban Infrastructure Debates Elisabeth Peyroux National University of Singapore, CNRS-IRASEC
13:35	Infrastructural Futures Connor Graham National University of Singapore
13:50	AI Realism In Singapore's Infrastructural Imaginaries Federico Cugurullo National University of Singapore
14:05	Discussion
14:50 – 15:00	AFTERNOON TEA
15:00 – 16:30	SESSION 4: INFRASTRUCTURAL PLATFORMS AND ASSEMBLAGES
15:00	Singapore's Stack Imaginaries: In(ter)dependence and Infrastructural Relationality Dylan Brady National University of Singapore
15:15	"Rome Wasn't Built In a Day, But Your Smart City Prototype Can Be!" Infrastructural Templating and Modularisation In and Beyond Singapore Prerona Das Singapore Management University
15:30	Vital Infrastructure: Emerging Infrastructural Imaginaries and the Limits of Existing Vocabularies Simon Marvin The University of Sheffield
15:45	Discussion
16:30	END OF DAY 1

WEDNESDAY, 26 AUGUST 2026

YPHSL SEMINAR ROOMS 3-09 | 3-10 | 3-11
55 ARMENIAN ST, SINGAPORE 179943

8:30 - 9:00	MORNING TEA
9:00 - 10:30	SESSION 5: INFRASTRUCTURAL CONVERGENCE AND EXTENSIONS
9:00	Global City Imaginaries: Singaporean Infrastructural Expertise in the Making of Urban Futures in South Asia Diganta Das Nanyang Technological University
9:15	Converging Infrastructural Imaginaries of Solar and Data in BBK Naomi Hanakata National University of Singapore
9:30	Infrastructural Arbitrage and the Regional Data Centre Economy Justin Kollar National University of Singapore
9:45	Discussion
10:30 - 10:40	BREAK
10:40 - 12:10	SESSION 6: LIFE'S INFRASTRUCTURES
10:40	Urban Greenery as (Health) Infrastructure Sayd Randle Singapore Management University
10:55	Who Cooks for Us in Ten Years? Food, Care, and the Geography of Public Kitchens Yong Zhang Singapore Management University
11:10	Waste Extensions Colin McFarlane Durham University
11:25	Discussion
12:10 - 12:20	CLOSING REMARKS
12:20	END OF DAY 2

LIST OF SPEAKERS

AI LIM is a Presidential Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Singapore Management University. His research examines how people navigate value, risk, and uncertainty in Southeast Asia's rapidly changing financial and technological landscapes. His current book project, *Risking Fortune*, explores the social worlds of Thailand's crypto economy, drawing on more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork in Bangkok and across the region. His work has appeared in *Urban Geography*, *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, and *The Journal of the Siam Society*, and he was awarded the H. Russell Bernard Prize by the Society for Anthropological Sciences for a paper examining how fiscal design shapes AI-crypto ecosystems. His research is informed by industry experience in venture investing and ecosystem building at AI and crypto companies.

LIN Weiqiang is Associate Professor of Geography at the National University of Singapore. He is a Cultural Geographer who is interested in mobilities and infrastructures of moving. He has over twelve years of experience researching on contemporary mobility issues (particularly in transport) and has contributed to furthering cultural geographical concepts and theories by examining institutions. His work uses a distinctive infrastructural lens to shed light on the often-micro processes of mobilities production (e.g. norms, laws, STS, technologies, affects), offering unique and insightful windows into pressing real-world policy questions. His recent research examines labour and automation in four of Asia's biggest international airports, and extends to post-pandemic futures of work, digital technologies and mobilities.

Jack GREATREX is Assistant Professor of Urban History based at Singapore Management University's (SMU) College of Integrative Studies (CIS). His research interests lie at the intersections of urban, environmental, medical, and multispecies histories of the British Empire in Asia and the South Pacific. His projects include histories of Singapore/Malaya as insect-exporting hubs, the infrastructural assemblages of forests-water-oil-and-prisons in Hong Kong, and avian zoonosis and counter-insurgency warfare along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

Andrew STOKOLS is Assistant Professor of Urban Studies based at Singapore Management University's (SMU) College of Integrative Studies (CIS). Andrew's research interrogates the social and political dimensions of digital urbanism around the world, with a focus on China and Southeast Asia. His work draws on urban theory, political economy, and science and technology studies (STS). He also has ongoing research projects on the political economy of new city development, the geopolitics of infrastructure, state capitalism, and digital innovation policy.

Orlando WOODS serves as Professor of Geography and Associate Provost (Research Strategy) at Singapore Management University (SMU). He is also the Director and Pillar Lead (Urban Experiences) at SMU's Urban Institute. His interdisciplinary research agenda spans social, cultural and political geography; urban studies; new media and communications; and critical infrastructure studies. Empirically, his work focuses on South and Southeast Asia.

George WONG is Assistant Professor of Sociology (Education) at the School of Social Sciences at the Singapore Management University, where he is the Coordinator of the Global Asia second major programme. His research sits at the intersection of 3Cs: Cities, Communities and Capital in Asian contexts. His works include examining community powers and development, and the role of private and public capital in making (im)possible urban regimes and everyday experiences on the ground. He is also a trained ethnographer with a decade of experience in examining state-sponsored urban community development as political legitimacy projects in Asia.

Elisabeth PEYROUX is Research Director at the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), currently affiliated to the Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC), a CNRS research unit based in Bangkok, and to CNRS@CREATE in Singapore. She holds a PhD in human Geography from the University of Paris X-Nanterre and is a former Deputy Director of the research unit Prodig (2019-2024). She is a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the National University of Singapore's Asia Research Institute. Her current research focuses on the role of digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence in urban governance and planning in Southern Cities (South Africa, Singapore, Malaysia).

Connor GRAHAM is a Research Fellow in the Science, Technology and Society Research Cluster at the Asia Research Institute (ARI) at the National University of Singapore. Dr Graham's research focuses on the use of everyday technologies in people's lives, technologies of leadership and the role of ethnography in design. Over the last few years his work has focused on social studies of work and technology. Most recently he has been examining media use by Chinese families and the relationship between information and communication technologies and living and dying. His work at ARI involves developing a project on death, grieving and memorialisation in a digital age.

Federico CUGURULLO is an Associate Professor of Geography at the National University of Singapore. His research combines geography and philosophy to shed light on the evolution of cities, focusing on the ideologies that drive urbanization, such as sustainability and smartness, and on the spaces that they eventually produce. During the past decade, Federico has operated interdisciplinary at the intersection of urban geography and philosophy of technology, to theorize artificial intelligence (AI) from an urbanistic perspective and investigate its impact on cities. In so doing, he has developed the concept of urban AI, and conducted extensive empirical research, particularly in the Middle East and Asia to analyze how AI is changing both the material and immaterial fabric of the contemporary city, with significant repercussions for the sustainability of urban futures.

Dylan BRADY is an Assistant Professor of Geography at the National University of Singapore. As a geographer examining culture and politics through the lens of infrastructure, his research asks: through what things, what interactions, do people come to know the world? He examines how infrastructures, whether rail networks or digital payment apps, interact with everyday practice to integrate and fracture space across scales from the bodily to the national and global. His work speaks to three themes of broad interest within geography: the materiality of infrastructure, the skilled practices of national belonging, and the scalar politics of state territoriality.

Prerona DAS is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the College of Integrative Studies, Singapore Management University. She holds a PhD in geography from the National University of Singapore. Prerona's research spans South and Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on politics of urban infrastructure. Her work lies at the intersection of urban and political geography, exploring topics such as smart urbanism, AI urbanism, water infrastructure and frontier urbanism.

Simon Marvin is Emeritus Professor in the Urban Institute at Sheffield University. Overall, his work analyses the changing relations between *infrastructure and the urban condition* and explores social, economic and material interrelationships across diverse technologies in different urban contexts. Simon's work is noted for the way it develops innovative, interdisciplinary perspectives to help open up and explore important new agendas for urban studies and infrastructural research. He has played major roles within urban and planning research towards addressing important questions surrounding telecommunications, infrastructure and mobility, sustainability and, most recently, systemic transitions, climate change, ecological security and smart cities.

Diganta DAS is an Associate Professor of Human Geography at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, where he also serves as the Co-Chair of the Sustainability Learning Lab (SLL). He holds a Master's in Planning and Development from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and a Ph.D. in Geography from the National University of Singapore (NUS). His research focuses on smart and sustainable urban development, with particular attention to the intersections between the production of smart cities and everyday urban life, as well as the evolving dynamics of urban waterscapes in Asia.

Naomi HANAKATA is an Assistant Professor at the National University of Singapore's College of Design and Engineering. Dr Hanakata's research interests are in adaptive and strategic planning for high-density urban energy landscapes, planetary urbanization processes, platform urbanization, and in fostering the role of planning in a sustainable urban development practice: how visions, schemes, mechanisms of implementation and management can respond to specific situations, while following a sustainable urban development paradigm particularly in light of climate change and in an inevitable global context.

Justin KOLLAR is an Assistant Professor at the National University of Singapore's College of Design and Engineering. His research examines the territorial, environmental, and political consequences of high-tech industrialization, with a focus on semiconductor manufacturing, AI data centers, cloud infrastructure, and the land, water, and energy systems that support them. His current book project, *Silicon Frontier: Techno-statecraft and the New Geographies of Digital Capitalism*, examines semiconductor and cloud infrastructure development in Taiwan and the United States. Before joining NUS, he worked as a planner and urban designer at Sasaki.

Sayd RANDLE is an Assistant Professor of Urban Studies at Singapore Management University and a Fellow at SMU's Urban Institute. Trained as an environmental anthropologist, her research uses the tools of ethnography and the lens of political ecology to explore processes of urban environmental change. Broadly focused on climate adaptation and mitigation efforts, she studies how attempts to rework critical infrastructural systems transform material flows and urban lives, rearranging labour and power across the extended metropolitan landscape in the process. Her past work was grounded in the arid U.S. West and she is currently developing new projects in Singapore and Nepal. Her first book, *Replumbing the City: Water Management as Climate Adaptation in Los Angeles*, was recently published by University of California Press.

Yong ZHANG is an Assistant Professor of Urban Studies at the College of Integrative Studies, Singapore Management University. His research draws on critical urban theory to examine the governance of urbanisation and urbanism in China—and increasingly Southeast Asia—and their intersections with socio-spatial transformations and policy dynamics. He holds a BA with Distinction in Geography from Sun Yat-sen University, an MSc in Urban and Regional Planning from Peking University, and a PhD in Geography from the University of Manchester. Prior to joining SMU, he was a Lecturer in Social Science (Urban Studies) at Yale-NUS College. He is currently completing his first book, *Entrepreneurial Urbanism with Chinese Characteristics*, which critiques China's urban governance framework and lays the groundwork for comparative research across Southeast Asia.

Colin MCFARLANE is a Professor of Urban Geography at Durham University, UK. He explores how cities are known, lived and politicised. This includes research on urban living, wastes, densities, fragments, and learning across different cities, focussing in particular on the economic margins. His current work seeks to understand: 1) The production, experience and perception of density in cities; 2) The making and remaking of urban worlds. 3) The relations between sanitation and the city.



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