

GLOBAL DIGITAL GEOGRAPHIES

Digitalising the Territorial / Territorialising the Digital

Annual Symposium
Digital Geography Research Group
19-20 June 2025
online



**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning



香港城市大學
City University of Hong Kong

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Welcome, everyone, to the 2025 Annual Symposium of the Digital Geographies Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society. Whether you're joining us from Hong Kong, Johannesburg, São Paulo, Singapore, Tehran, Erlangen, Jerusalem, or just down the road, it's an absolute pleasure to welcome you to this truly international gathering.

When we started this group in 2016, digital geography was still taking shape. We had questions about how the digital was transforming space, politics, and everyday life, and what geography could do with and about those transformations. Today, those questions animate a thriving field of research that spans continents and crosses disciplinary boundaries. This year's symposium is our most international yet. Over two days and across time zones, we're bringing together geographers from China, India, Brazil, Vietnam, South Africa, Iran, the US, the UK, and many many more, all exploring what it means to do digital geography in a world shaped by uneven infrastructures, shifting sovereignties, and digital technologies.

This ambitious programme wouldn't have been possible without the brilliant work of June Wang, this year's Chair, and our fantastic event coordinator, Adam Michael Packer, who have organised this event with such care, creativity, and global scope. I also thank all our speakers, chairs, and panellists for contributing to what promises to be a rich and thought-provoking set of conversations.

As Chair of the Digital Geographies Research Group, I welcome you. This symposium reminds me that digital geography is not only keeping pace with global change but also shaping how we understand it.

Enjoy the symposium!



Tess Osborne

Chair of the Digital Geographies Research Group

A warm welcome to all participants of this year's DGRG symposium, joining us from across the world!

Our theme this year, "Global Digital Geographies: Digitalizing the Territorial / Territorialising the Digital," reflects the vital conversations taking place in our field. As a researcher from Hong Kong, I am deeply aware of the importance of including perspectives from the Global South. Our collective experiences—whether from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, or other parts of the Global South—are essential for challenging and expanding the dominant paradigms of global knowledge production. This symposium is an opportunity for us to bring those voices to the forefront and to engage in a truly global conversation.

At the same time, what I am especially committed to in this symposium is building it as a platform for dialogue between digital geography and political geography. In today's digital age, these questions take on new urgency: digital infrastructures are not only shaping our territories—they are also being shaped by them in return. This is why bridging digital geography and political geography is, I believe, at the heart of addressing some of the most pressing questions in our world today.

Before we begin, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks. First, to all our speakers for sharing your work and insights with us. Second, to the DGRG committee for your unwavering support—from the very beginning, since I joined DGRG in 2024, and all the way to today. In particular, thank you to Tess, Sammia, Adam, Olivia, Sam, and everyone else who has contributed so much to making this event possible.

This symposium spans three time zones and would not be possible without the many committee members who volunteered to chair sessions, handle technical issues, and ensure that everything runs smoothly. Your efforts make this global gathering possible.

Thank you all once again, and I look forward to a wonderful symposium with you!



June Wang

Chair of the 2025 DGRG Annual Symposium
International Officer of the Digital Geographies
Research Group

Contact the DGRG

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Do you want to get involved with the Digital Geographies Research Group?
The Digital Geographies Research Group holds its Annual General Meeting during the Royal Geographical Society annual conference (Tuesday 26 August to Friday 29 August 2025.). This year there will likely be openings for a number of positions on the committee. Keep an eye on the DGRG mailing list for further information and calls for applications.

Subscribe to the DGRG mailing list

If you would like to receive updates from the RGS Digital Geographies Research Group and its researcher community, then subscribe to our ListServ via digitalgeogrsgs@jiscmail.ac.uk.

Introduction to the programme

We are running this year's online symposium over multiple time zones across 2 days starting with Hong Kong (GMT+8) into UK (GMT+1) on Day 1 then starting with East Africa and Middle Eastern (GMT+3) into UK (GMT+1) on Day 2.

This ambitious online format seeks to accommodate a global community of digital geographers we are bringing together at this symposium. Please refer to the paper abstracts below to select the sessions you will like to attend. Once in Zoom during the Symposium (log in details will be sent after you Register), please enter the appropriate Virtual Room (as detailed in the programme below).

The conference programme details equivalent timings for each time zone, with a neat summary as follows:

Day 1		Day 2	
HK (GMT+8)	UK (GMT+1)	EA/ME (GMT+3)	UK (GMT+1)
9am			
10am			
11am			
12pm			
1pm			
2pm			
3pm			
4pm	9am		
5pm	10am		
6pm	11am	9am	
	12pm	10am	8am
	1pm	11am	9am
	2pm	12pm	10am
	3pm	1pm	11am
	4pm	2pm	12pm
	5pm	3pm	1pm
	6pm	4pm	2pm
		5pm	3pm
		6pm	4pm
			5pm

All sessions will be recorded and uploaded to the DGRG YouTube channel, for wider dissemination.

Keynote Speakers Bios



Ayona Datta

University College London

Fantasies of territorial calculability: Automated Ignorance (AI) in digitalising land in the global south

My research interests are in postcolonial urbanism, smart cities, gender citizenship and regional futures. My research is set in the ethos of co-production with grassroots communities using digital/mapping, visual and participatory research methods to develop and build gendered capacity in the digital and urban margins.



Georg Glasze

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität

Sovereign – yet still open and also civic? Discursive and Infrastructural Configurations of “Digital Sovereignty” in Europe

Georg Glasze is Professor of Political and Cultural Geography at Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU). His research focuses on questions of Political Geography and the socio-technical configuration of spaces in the context of digital transformation. At the Symposium he will be discussing the discursive and infrastructural configurations of “digital sovereignty” in Europe



Iginio Gagliardone

University of the Witwatersrand

Digital sovereignty and networked sovereignty. A perspective from Africa

Iginio Gagliardone is Professor of Media Studies at Wits University in Johannesburg, South Africa and inaugural fellow of Wits’ Machine Intelligence and Neural Discovery (MIND) Institute. He is the author of “The Politics of Technology in Africa” (2016) and “China, Africa, and the Future of the Internet” (2019). His most recent work examines the international politics of Artificial Intelligence and the emergence of new imageries of technological evolution in Africa.

SCHEDULE

DAY ONE - 19th June

Time	Sessions	
Asia GMT+8	UK GMT+1	
9:45- 11:15	Discussion Panel 1 (Chair June Wang) • Luke Munn, University of Queensland: <i>Technical Territories</i> • I-Chun Catherine Chang, Macalester College: <i>Smart Re-territorialization: The Consolidation, Fragmentation, and Exterritoriality of Taipei Smart City Developments</i> • Jiang Xu, Chinese University of Hong Kong: <i>Data Metropolis: shaping sustainable cities with big data?</i>	
11:15- 11:30	Time for a break	
11:30- 13:00	Parallel session 1-1 (Chair Siyi Liu) Virtual Room A (1) • Digital Global Intimacies: Hyper Local, Hyper Global, and the Reterritorializing of Digital Space, Dewitt King • Do online on-demand food delivery platforms weaken or enhance community cohesion? An analysis through the lens of social infrastructure theory, Shuwen Zhou, Kaizhong Cao, Yiyang Zhang, Yufei Zheng, Yige Jiang, Ying Zhang, Hang Su, Yiyang Jiang, Siyuan Guo • Towards a geographical stack: reworking stateless and scaleless conceptions of the digital in China, California, and Singapore, Dylan Brady	Parallel sessions 1-2 (Chair June Wang) Virtual Room B (2) • Digitalising the Territorial and Deconstructing Borders Insights from Myanmar's Hybrid Resistance Networks, Wenjie DU, Zhiding Hu • Cyberspace Sovereignty and Digital Authoritarianism: Iran's Model of State Control, Hesam Nourooz Pour • Avoiding Digital Orientalism when Digitizing Culture: an 'Ethical and Sustainable Digitization Framework', Emma Duester, Michal Teague • Made in China 2025 and China's Techno-nationalism: Patriotism above Laissez-faire, Bhavna Singh
13:00- 14:00	Time for Lunch	
14:00- 15:30	Parallel session 1-3 (Chair Siyi Liu) • The Dual Edge of China's Digital Silk Road in Southeast Asia: Opportunities and Risks, Zeynab Farhadi • Reconfiguring Space and Power: The Data-Driven Greater Bay Area Smart City-Region, Siyi Liu • Navigating Digital Borders: Everyday Media Switching Across Digital Sovereignties, Mingyuan Ma • Digital Geopolitics and cybersecurity: Case of Oundersea internet cables in Africa, Rashmi Rani Anand, Kavita Arora	
15:30- 15:45	Time for a break	

15:45-16:45	8:45-9:45	Keynote 1 (Chair June Wang) <i>Fantasies of territorial calculability: Automated Ignorance (AI) in digitalising land in the global south</i> Ayona Datta, University College London	
16:45-17:00	9:45-10:00	Time for a break	
17:00-18:30	10:00-11:30	Keynote 2 (Chair June Wang) <i>Sovereign – yet still open and also civic? Discursive and Infrastructural Configurations of “Digital Sovereignty” in Europe</i> Georg Glasze, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität	
17:00-18:30	11:30-11:45	Time for a break	
	11:45-13:00	Parallel session 1-4 (Chair: Sammia Poveda) Virtual Room A (1) • A Geopolitical Economy Analysis of China and India’s Approaches to Transnational Data Governance, Yujia He; Ka Zeng • Rethinking Digital Health Infrastructure: Gendered Inequalities and E-Archiving in the COVID-19 Era, Chen Qu • Exploring the potential of Generative AI in nurturing learner empathy, pro-social values and environmental stewardship, Kenneth Y T Lim, Minh Anh Nguyen Duc, Minh Tuan Nguyen Thien • Territorializing Platform Labour: Migrant Work, Algorithmic Control and Urban Space in Lisbon, Nuno Rodrigues	Parallel session 1-5 (Chair: Harrison Smith) Virtual Room B (2) • Feeding growth: Agribusiness influencers and the digital promotion of meat and dairy consumption in Brazil, Ricardo Barbosa, Jr. • Respatializing Migration through the Digital Self: Data, Databases, and the Reconfiguration of Borders, Nicole M Bennett • Digitalizing Household Finance, Territorializing Debt and Investment: FinTech and Financialization of Households in Argentina, Kubra Melisa Altaytas • Sanctions-Locked and Internet-Locked: Digital Sovereignty and Infrastructural Dependency in Kazakhstan, Oyuna Baldakova
	13:00-14:00	Time for Lunch	
	14:00-16:00	Pre-organised panel: Geopolitics of digital sovereignty in global comparison (Chair: Harrison Smith) • Digital sovereignty under kinetic siege: The transformation of Ukraine's information sovereignty, Louis Pétiniaud • Iran’s strategy of Digital sovereignty: the strategic control of Internet routes, Frédéric Douzet & Kavé Salamatian • The evolution of the Cuban strategy towards connection and the affirmation of sovereignty, Margot François • Situating digital sovereignty in the material geographies of internet infrastructures: Lessons from Mediterranean interconnection hubs, Finn Dammann • An Imposed Sovereignty? Implementing European “Digital Sovereignty” in the Western Balkans, Amaël Cattaruzza • The Race for LEO. Fragmented Futures of Satellite Internet, Maja Warlich	
	16:00-16:15	Time for a break	
	16:15-17:45	Discussion panel 2 (Chair: Sammia Poveda) • Paul C Adams, University of Texas at Austin: State Sovereignty and Personal Sovereignty in an Era of Digital Media • Jordan Branch, Claremont McKenna College: Representing Digital Territories	

- Alexandru-Codru Preda, Lingnan University: The Data-Machine Duality
- Carwyn Morris, SOAS: *Xiaohongshu as an Infrastructure of Global China*

DAY TWO - 20th June

Time	Sessions	
<i>Africa+Middle East GMT+3</i>	<i>UK GMT+1</i>	
10:00-11:30	8:00-9:30	Keynote 3 (Chair: Nina Willment) <i>Digital sovereignty and networked sovereignty. A perspective from Africa</i> Iginio Gagliardone , University of the Witwatersrand
11:30-11:45	9:30-9:45	Time for a break
11:45-13:30	9:45-11:30	Parallel session 2-1 (Chair: Sammia Poveda) Virtual Room A (1) • Social Data Migration: Conceptualising Transborder Data Flows as Processes of Social Transformation, Anu Masso • Online bordering: (Re)creating national borders in digital spaces, Katrina Gaber, Michael Skey • Kill Switch as a Geopolitical Technique: Power, Disruption, and Digital Sovereignty in the Age of Infrastructure, Omer Abdulaziz Ozturk • An Analysis of the 19th Congress of the Philippines Through Digital Tools, Anton Isaac Lagasca Pascual, Nathan Henry Asikin, Kenneth Y T Lim • China's Digital State Capitalism and Its Impact on Africa's Digital Economic Transition, Qingxiu Bu Parallel sessions 2-2 (Chair: Harrison Smith) Virtual Room B (2) • Digital Shift of Mobility Experiences in Highly Constrained Urban Contexts, Pauline Baudens • Digital Borderlands: Technological Transformation and Territorial Politics in Divided Jerusalem, Ronen Eidelman Rescaling • Rescaling Digital Sovereignty: Digital Technologies and the Politics of Territory in Unrecognized Bedouin Villages, Batel Yossef Ravid, Erez Tzfidia • Spatial Reflection of Immigrant Density on Digital Platforms and Its Effects on Urban Planning, Ayşe Gizem Kılıç, Fatih Eren • Sharing insights from the Monograph "Geopolitics of Digital Heritage", Natalia Grincheva
13:30-14:30	11:30-12:30	Time for Lunch
14:30-16:15	12:30-14:15	Parallel session 2-3 (Chair: Sam Kinsley) Virtual Room A (1) • Rethinking Territorialization. Limits to the Regulation of Digital Capitalism, Max Münßinger, Yannick Ecker • Hybrid Territorialism: Spatial Differentiation and Digital Control in China's Parallel sessions 2-4 (Chair: Adam Packer) Virtual Room B (2) • The New Eyes of the City: Regeneration and Surveillance in Porto Alegre's 4th District, Isadora Zorzi • Creating a 'European' cyberspace: How spatial (b)ordering and ontological security drives have

		Surveillance System, Qinyu Feng • The agency of provincial-level governments in China's digital foreign policy, Linda van der Horst • Placing Africa along China's Global Development Trajectory: From the Belt and Road Initiative to Chinese Platform Capitalism, Tom Narins, Maria Adele Carrai • Smart and/or Just Metropolis? Stratified Digital Citizenship in Beersheba, Oren Yiftachel, Rani Mandelbaum	underpinned the EU's evolution as a global actor, Julia Carver • Beyond Smartness: Toward a Post-Neoliberal Agenda in Digital Urban Becoming, Su Su Myat • Geoprivacy knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in contemporary China, Hongyu Zhang, Grant McKenzie • The Fragmented Stack. How States are Trying to Reshape Global Connectivity, Maurilio Pirone
16:15-16:30	14:15-14:30	<i>Time for a break</i>	
16:30-18:00	14:30-16:00	Discussion panel 3 (Chair: Jack Lowe) • Azadeh Akbari, University of Twente: Authoritarian Smart Cities • Mirjam de Bruijn, University of Leiden: African Mobile Communities • Sam Kinsley, University of Exeter: Troubling Realities: Thinking space for digital geographies • Norma Möllers, Queen's University: State of Extraction	
18:00-18:15	16:00-16:15	<i>Time for a break</i>	
	16:15-17:00	Magazine demonstration (Chair TDB)	
	17:00-17:15	<i>grid</i> , Sophia Leipert	
		Closing remarks	

Paper Abstracts Day One (19th June)

Parallel session 1-1:

Digital Global Intimacies: Hyper Local, Hyper Global, and the Reterritorializing of Digital Space

Dewitt King

UC Irvine

This essay uses industrial and labor practices in the pro wrestling industry to introduce the theory of Digital Global Intimacy. Digital Global Intimacy is predicated on the inverse relationship between hyper locality, hyper globality, and digital streaming technologies. Using conjectural analysis and framing the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) network as an “industrial disruptor.” This paper suggests that this disruption shifted not only hiring practices, but it changed the relations of power between the core and the periphery of professional wrestling industry across all scales. While the deployment of the streaming service increased the reach of the WWE beyond the national borders of the US, it inadvertently created a pathway for local, regional, and international wrestling companies to also utilize streaming service technology to collectively work together to mitigate some of the industrial hegemony of the WWE. Using the WWE’s brief takeover of the UK independent wrestling scene via its short-lived show NXT UK as a case study, I suggest that the WWE’s attempt to create “digital wrestling territories” has forever altered the relationship between the local and the global through its attempt to create a digital global intimate relationship between local wrestling practices and knowledges that are often plastic and flimsy as they are couched within rhetorics and practices of global cosmopolitanism which impact industrial power geometries as it flattens the local particular uniqueness of the local wrestling culture. Although the WWE is a global company that has retained dominance for almost 40 years, the deployment of streaming services has made the local US independent wrestling scene a viable market for smaller independent wrestling promotions, for the creation of new US wrestling companies i.e. All Elite Wrestling, and for international wrestling companies like New Japan and Stardom to have wrestling events in the US.

Do online on-demand food delivery platforms weaken or enhance community cohesion? An analysis through the lens of social infrastructure theory

Shuwen Zhou, Kaizhong Cao, Yiyang Zhang, Yufei Zheng, Yige Jiang, Ying Zhang, Hang Su, Yiyang Jiang, Siyuan Guo

University of Oxford, Communication University of China

During the COVID-19 lockdowns in China, civic groups and volunteers played a prominent role in coordinating resources and delivering essential supplies to communities. The significance of group administrators in community-based grocery group buying (CGB) emerged during this period. CGB is a form of online shopping facilitated by on-demand food delivery platforms (OFDP). OFDPs, as a manifestation of digital platform urbanism transforming urban life, have garnered increasing attention from researchers in recent years, enriching the literature on urban geography and digital urbanism. Popular themes include platform capitalism, labour conditions, and consumption behaviour.

CGB platforms, a subset of OFDPs, are distinguished by their deep engagement with owners of community-based grocery shops, setting them apart from platforms such as Deliveroo or Uber Eats. The expansion of CGB platforms underscored the indispensable role of administrators during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting an underexplored question: How do the CGB platforms engage with local communities and influence community connections? To address this question, this study adopted ethnography and employed a social infrastructure perspective, proposing a framework based on publicness, sociality, and encounter. It aims to contribute to critical debates on platform urbanism and community development.

Towards a geographical stack: reworking stateless and scaleless conceptions of the digital in China, California, and Singapore

Dylan Brady

National University of Singapore

The past decade has seen a dramatic re-scaling of digital geopolitics: in the place of stateless and scaleless imaginaries of the digital world, a new imaginary centers on a great power rivalry. Stacks—assemblages of platforms and infrastructures exercising governance over populations and space—and their relation to states have become central. Yet neither global nor bipolar imaginaries adequately capture the vast and increasingly heterogeneous typology of geopolitical arrangements between states and stacks. This paper pulls together studies of state territoriality, digital platforms and more-than-human infrastructures to reconceptualize the stack geographically: historically entangled with the state, but with its own distinct spatialities.

Attending to the territorial and infrastructural dimensions of the stack marks a stark break with how the stack has been imagined as inherently stateless and scaleless. This analytic necessarily differentiates between the distinct trajectories of the globe's two would-be hegemonic stacks, China's and the United States'—here termed the Californian Stack—to show how they are respectively less and more “stateful” than is typically assumed. This scalar specificity is further developed through an examination of Singapore: a small but extremely “stateful” stack which nonetheless takes part in a striking regional network. The paper argues that just as the old imaginary of a state-less and scale-less digital missed much, the new imaginary of a singular great power rivalry also falls short.

Parallel sessions 1-2:

Digitalising the Territorial and Deconstructing Borders Insights from Myanmar's Hybrid Resistance Networks

Wenjie DU, Zhiding Hu

East China Normal University

Amid the intersection of globalization and digitalization, traditional state-centric territorial control is increasingly reshaped by local, transboundary, and digital forces. Using the Myanmar Chin State conflict as a case study, this paper introduces the concept of a hybrid resistance network, highlighting how local armed groups leverage both ground logistical networks and digital platforms to establish a form of resilient territorial control. The findings demonstrate that VPN circumvention, social media mobilization, and cross-border logistical supply routes collectively enable resistance forces to extend their operations across both physical and digital spaces, challenging the conventional model of territorial sovereignty based on fixed borders. Unlike states, which territorialize the digital through the physical securitization of infrastructure, local networks exploit the fluidity of digital space to deconstruct territorial boundaries. By integrating geospatial modeling

with reasoning through large language models, this study argues that digital space is not merely a domain of narrative contestation but has become a critical arena for resource circulation and local governance. This work offers a new theoretical lens to understand how digital sovereignty conflicts and borderland reconfigurations unfold in the Global South

Cyberspace Sovereignty and Digital Authoritarianism: Iran's Model of State Control

Hesam Nourooz Pour

University of Malaya

Addressing the complex interplay between digital networks and territorial logics, this paper examines Iran's construction of cyberspace sovereignty through the strategic development and control of its digital infrastructure. Central to this is the National Information Network (NIN), a state-controlled IP-based network designed to assert national sovereignty by managing internal data flows, localizing digital services, and reducing reliance on global networks. This initiative exemplifies the "territorializing the digital," wherein state objectives are inscribed onto digital architecture to achieve enclosure and control.

The paper analyzes Iran's multi-faceted approach—encompassing proactive, reactive, and offensive-defensive strategies—driven by internal political dynamics and external geopolitical pressures. It details the regulatory framework, notably the Supreme Council of Cyberspace (SCC), which centralizes policymaking to govern digital content and infrastructure, reinforcing state control over the national digital sphere.

Furthermore, the study explores how digital technologies facilitate the "digitalising the territorial" by enabling new forms of spatial management and control. Tactics such as nationwide internet shutdowns during protests, extensive content filtering, the geo-blocking of domestic websites, mandated use of national platforms, and sophisticated surveillance systems illustrate how digital tools are employed to monitor populations, restrict information access, and reshape socio-spatial interaction within territorial boundaries. By investigating Iran's case, the paper contributes to understanding how states strategically territorialise digital spaces and digitalise territorial control, reflecting the ongoing tension between digital flows and state-driven enclosure in global digital geographies.

Avoiding Digital Orientalism when Digitizing Culture: an 'Ethical and Sustainable Digitization Framework'

Emma Duester, Michal Teague

Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Digital technologies have potential to re-orientate the global narrative on Vietnam, overcome an imbalance in representation, and help redress digital orientalism. Global digital technologies allow Vietnamese cultural professionals to reach beyond the borders of their nation and become part of the global art world. With this, they can participate in the production, dissemination, and circulation of discourses on art and culture globally. In doing so, they can redress digital orientalism by contemporizing narratives on Vietnam. However, there is an underlying tension, as the very means by which their voices are heard is achieved by using global (western) technologies, tools and platforms. This means that an ethical and sustainable digitization framework is an essential component of each digitization project at museums and cultural institutions – to ensure these cultures are represented accurately online. This research draws on 50 semi-structured interviews with art and cultural professionals in Vietnam alongside consultations with 3 museums to ascertain current state of digitization, their needs, and challenges. An ethical and sustainability framework

was developed and used in this study to ensure the inclusion of (1) local context, (2) local culture, and (3) local stakeholders' voices in digitization projects at Vietnamese museums. The findings highlight a "global digitization divide," where country-specific limitations affect the amount and pace of Vietnamese digital culture that can be produced as well as the quality of experiences when accessing, viewing, and engaging with the digital culture. This highlights the need to investigate Vietnamese museum professionals' capabilities and challenges as they undergo digital transformation and, in response, design an ethical and sustainable framework for museum digitization projects.

Made in China 2025 and China's Techno-nationalism: Patriotism above Laissez-faire

Bhavna Singh

Shaanxi Normal University

Nationalist aggrandisement based on technological prowess is not unheard of but the scale at which China is using its technological edge to manipulate the global market is certainly making the other actors wary of China's techno-nationalism. Not only is the defence and manufacturing industry aligned to the national interests but even China's mobile industry is driven by the rise of neo-techno nationalism. The Chinese government has a Comprehensive longterm industrial strategy to build internationally competitive domestic firms and replace foreign technology and products with domestic equivalents first at home and then abroad. Within this approach, technological development that supports national economic and security interests is pursued by leveraging the opportunities presented through globalization to gain national advantages. For China, this innovation race is a prime component of its Digital Silk Road and the new Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan.

It has sparked an innovation race especially between the US and China that is challenging the long-standing primacy of the world's open trading system. There is an apparent pull of the Chinese model which advocates increased state-activism and interventionism and is driven by a Mercantilist like behaviour that links tech-innovation to the national security, economic prosperity and social stability of the nation. Though the US wants to avoid the China innovation model, yet it is aware of the need to balance tensions between the MNEs (multinational enterprises), markets and techno-nationalism that would define the contours of the US-China technology war. This can be gauged with reference to the role of companies like the Huawei in China's techno-nationalist ambitions, Global controversies and Strategic implications. This paper aims to delve into the larger gamut of Chinese techno-nationalist endeavours through the study of its strategies via companies like the Huawei. It will attempt to decipher the underlying agendas and the modus-operandi used to further its nationalist ambitions.

Parallel Session 1-3:

The Dual Edge of China's Digital Silk Road in Southeast Asia: Opportunities and Risks

Zeynab Farhadi

Hong Kong Chu Hai College

The great power competition has entered a new phase, characterized by an expansive scope where achieving digital hegemony is a central objective for both China and the United States. This research examines China's efforts to expand its influence through the Digital Silk Road, with Southeast Asia as a case study. Employing a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the study investigates how China is extending its digital influence and the consequences of this infiltration in Southeast Asia.

The implications of China's Digital Silk Road in Southeast Asia are twofold: while Chinese digital platforms offer opportunities for economic prosperity and development, enhanced digital infrastructure, increased economic connectivity, and access to advanced technologies such as 5G and e-commerce platforms, which foster economic prosperity and regional development, they also pose risks such as cybersecurity vulnerabilities, data sovereignty concerns, enabling authoritarian regimes to suppress social freedoms and threaten democratic principles. Moreover, findings indicate that digital supremacy will grow increasingly critical in the coming years, and China's extensive initiatives position it as a formidable actor in this domain. Southeast Asia, a key region in China's strategic framework, is significantly affected by these efforts.

This research underscores the need for Southeast Asian nations to adopt balanced policies that maximize the benefits of China's DSR while mitigating its risks, ensuring sustainable development without compromising political and social freedoms. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the DSR's dual nature, this study contributes to the discourse on global digital governance and the geopolitics of technology in the 21st century.

Reconfiguring Space and Power: The Data-Driven Greater Bay Area Smart City-Region

Siyi Liu

University College London

The advent of the internet initially promised a borderless cyberspace, yet stakeholders have increasingly adopted bordering practices, fragmenting digital spaces and limiting data mobility. While open data is discussed as a driver of smart cities and city-regions, persistent challenges such as data silos and data islands hinder its potential. Existing research often frames these issues through a geopolitical lens, emphasizing digital sovereignty, national security, and infrastructure localization. However, this focus often overshadows critical dynamics such as institutional struggles, stakeholder conflicts, and the reconfiguration of power and space in the digital era on a subnational level.

Building on the argument that data-sharing activities are integral to regionalization and the advancement of regional digital futures, this paper examines how data-sharing reshapes power dynamics among stakeholders. It highlights conflicts of interests among multi-stakeholderism Internet Governance, and internal struggles within public administrations, while exploring how state actors reproduce the spatiality of data through networked governance, collaborative practices, and institutional innovations. The paper focuses on the role of platform urbanism in shaping these processes and recognizes the construction of confined cyberspaces for city-regional data sharing, appealing to bottom-up city-regionalism.

Through a case study of China's Greater Bay Area (GBA), the paper reveals how data-sharing redefines power dynamics and governance structures. It argues that platform urbanism serves as a key mechanism for integrating digital spaces, while state, private, and academic actors negotiate their roles in shaping the region's digital future. By unpacking these dynamics, the paper offers a nuanced understanding of how stakeholder networks and platform-driven governance reshape urban and regional fabrics, contributing to broader discussions on socio-economic shifts and digitalization.

Navigating Digital Borders: Everyday Media Switching Across Digital Sovereignties

Mingyuan Ma

University of Texas at Austin

Accessing media from one's homeland is not uncommon among the diaspora. This is especially true for overseas Chinese in the digital era. Since the Great Firewall blocks foreign media platforms, China has developed its own media ecosystem with alternatives to Google (Baidu), YouTube (Bilibili), X/Twitter (Weibo), and Instagram (WeChat). Whenever a Chinese individual resides abroad, their social media usage is often bifurcated: one set of platforms is used to engage with the local community, while another (China's domestic media ecosystem) is reserved for maintaining connections with home and other Chinese overseas. While the proliferated literature on digital sovereignty has illustrated how the overseas usage of media platforms expands extraterritorial sovereignty through data collection and surveillance, limited attention has been paid to examining how users switch between two media ecosystems. In media studies, researchers have explored how the digital inscription exemplifies the degree of intimacy of the user's social networks and how the overseas media consumption expands the extraterritorial sovereignty of the homeland. However, little research has connected digital inscription and digital sovereignty across different media ecosystems. This article focuses on how users strategically select specific platforms to engage particular contacts with different groups of people, thereby illustrating how media sovereignty conditions communicative agency at the individual level. Through in-depth interviews, this study investigates how overseas Chinese users selectively engage with two distinct media ecosystems for information access, interpersonal communication, and entertainment. It seeks to map out how these users navigate a delicate balance: turning to China-based platforms to cultivate a sense of fraternity and belonging, while also utilizing foreign platforms to evade censorship and maintain a degree of expressive freedom. In doing so, the article explores how diasporic users negotiate transnational connectivity, sustaining ties with their host societies and communities back home on different levels and kinds of intimacy.

Digital Geopolitics and cybersecurity: Case of undersea internet cables in Africa

Rashmi Rani Anand

Jawaharlal Nehru University

The geopolitics of undersea cables in Africa is emerging as a critical dimension of digital infrastructure, shaping the continent's strategic autonomy and integration into the global digital economy. These cables form the backbone of global data transmission, carrying over 95% of international internet traffic. The increasing reliance on digital infrastructure has placed undersea internet cables at the center of contemporary geopolitics. In Africa, where terrestrial digital infrastructure remains unevenly developed, submarine cables are not only crucial for connectivity but also for driving economic growth, regional integration, and digital inclusion. However, this critical infrastructure remains vulnerable to geopolitical contestation and cyber threats. The ownership, control, and routing of undersea cables are increasingly influenced by global power rivalries, particularly among major state and corporate actors such as the United States, China, and European. This has raised concerns about data sovereignty, surveillance, and the potential weaponization of digital infrastructure in Africa. Moreover, many African countries lack robust cybersecurity protocols, regulatory frameworks, and technological capacities to safeguard these assets from espionage, sabotage, or cyber-attacks. The lack of African agency in the design, governance, and security of undersea cable networks heightens the continent's exposure to both external control and internal vulnerabilities.

This paper explores the nexus between digital geopolitics and cybersecurity through a focused analysis of undersea internet cables in Africa. The study examines the implications of this contestation for digital sovereignty, national security, and regional integration across the continent. Drawing on geopolitical theories of infrastructure and digital governance, the paper analyzes case studies involving cable routes, ownership structures, and incidents of data breaches or cyber

vulnerabilities. It underscores the urgent need for African states to establish resilient cybersecurity frameworks, enhance regulatory cooperation, and assert agency in shaping the governance of digital infrastructures. The findings offer insights into how Africa can navigate the emerging digital order while safeguarding its strategic interests in the face of external dependencies and geopolitical rivalries.

Parallel session 1-4:

A Geopolitical Economy Analysis of China and India's Approaches to Transnational Data Governance

Yujia He; Ka Zeng

University of Kentucky, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Recent literature on the behavior of rising powers in digital trade and data governance highlights their discourses of data sovereignty and desire to preserve domestic policy autonomy against liberalization pressures from the US. This article contributes to the literature by employing a political economy lens that shifts the focus from the realist perspective of inter-state competition towards the dynamics of state-capital relations, allowing for a more historical and contextual understanding of the geopolitical economy of data governance for emerging economies. Using the cases of China and India, two of the largest emerging economies, and drawing on secondary data from government documents and other sources, the study shows that the state interests in promoting security and development objectives, along with the commercial interests of domestic companies, global Big Tech and transnational capital in data commercialization and market expansion, grounded in their respective political economic and geopolitical contexts, have shaped their evolving policy approaches to data governance in their digital transformation in the past decade. Domestic private digital platforms have grown with both the help of international capital and technology partners, and a domestic policy environment that enables market expansion and the gathering of user-generated data. These homegrown platform companies are also internationalizing, having built “ecosystems” that straddle domestic public and private services. While domestic platforms and their international partners are susceptible to state scrutiny in their internationalization, the state, viewing data as assets with economic and strategic value, has developed data regulations that seek to facilitate the capitalist accumulation of tech platforms and also guard against possible risks to political stability, including those brought by the platforms’ international linkages against the background of evolving global geopolitics. Consequently, key policy developments in both countries’ approaches to digital governance that could conveniently be attributed to geopolitics may instead have deeper roots in the evolving state-business relations. This study additionally echoes the call for a “geopolitical economy” research agenda moving beyond “geopolitical fetishism” and the narrow strategic/security focus in policy research to understand the interactive relationship between geopolitical and capitalist transformations. As distinct historical paths of national development and local socioeconomic realities continue to shape the government’s vision for digital economy and platform governance, instead of trying to fit analysis of data governance in Global South countries into one aligning with the “US”, “EU”, or “China” model, a contextualized approach can unveil on-the-ground forces mediating geopolitical considerations and shaping policy development.

Rethinking Digital Health Infrastructure: Gendered Inequalities and E-Archiving in the COVID-19 Era

Chen Qu

Despite advancements in digital health infrastructure, gendered health inequalities have worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. This transdisciplinary study, drawing from health research, feminist theory, and infrastructural geography, examines how these inequalities emerged or deepened in the UK. Using a novel web archive collection, Python-powered text analysis of over 200 million words, and thematic analysis, this study explores three key themes: vaccines, social minority groups, and women's self-care. Findings suggest that the pandemic exacerbated health disparities among British women and girls in ways that extend beyond gender, influencing both healthcare access and outcomes.

Beyond analyzing e-archives, this study reflects on the integration of e-archiving, coding, natural language processing (NLP), and generative AI/ Large Language Models (LLMs) for trans-temporal big data research. I propose a crisis-oriented geographical perspective that balances everyday health needs with emergency preparedness. By positioning digital health infrastructure as "actors," "facilitators," and "voicers," this study reimagines human-computer interactions and virtual communities as integral components of health infrastructure.

Exploring the potential of Generative AI in nurturing learner empathy, pro-social values and environmental stewardship

Kenneth Y T Lim, Minh Anh Nguyen Duc, Minh Tuan Nguyen Thien

National Institute of Education, Singapore

This session introduces a study in which electrodermal activity (EDA) was investigated as a non-invasive proxy to detect stress and emotional arousal. The study was designed to gain insights into the effectiveness of Generative AI in catalysing pro-environmental dispositions, and used image generation as a stimulus to understand the nature of participants' responses to environmental degradation.

Participants were first shown an image of a polluted environment. Immediately afterward, for one minute, participants completed a Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM) survey to assess their emotional response. Next, they were presented with an image of a pristine environment for fifteen seconds. They then completed another SAM survey. After a minute of resting, participants moved on to a Generative Fill prompt task. In this task, they were asked to select areas within an image that they wished to fill generatively in Adobe FireFly. The original image to be altered was one that depicted pristine environments.

As suggested by the results, the act of viewing images that convey environmental degradation mostly leads to higher emotional arousal and emotional valence. What was even more interesting was the fact that by involving themselves in the act of using Generative AI – specifically Generative fill – in altering images to convey environmental degradation, participants experienced more intense and negative emotions. These emotions could potentially be identified along the emotion spectrum from sadness to disgust.

Our study suggests that Generative AI could be an effective tool in eliciting negative emotions in humans. In combination with previous literature on the psychological effects of these emotions as an engine for change in perceptions and behaviours, Generative AI has the potential to play a crucial role in fostering environmental empathy and pro-environmental attitudes.

Territorializing Platform Labour: Migrant Work, Algorithmic Control and Urban Space in Lisbon

Nuno Rodrigues

This paper explores how digital labour platforms in the on-demand delivery sector are deeply embedded in urban territories, migrant labour regimes, and institutional infrastructures. Drawing on empirical research conducted in the Lisbon metropolitan area - the first Portuguese region to host delivery platforms in 2017 - the paper traces how platform labour both shapes and is shaped by urban space, socio-legal frameworks, and differentiated migrant infrastructures.

Since the pandemic, Lisbon has become a key site for the diversification of platform models, including the proliferation of dark kitchens, dark stores, and the consolidation of platforms such as Uber Eats, Glovo, and Bolt.

These platforms rely heavily on migrant labour. In Lisbon, platform-based delivery work is predominantly carried out by migrants from Brazil and, more recently, South Asia (particularly India, Pakistan and Bangladesh). Although all are subject to precarious working conditions and algorithmic control, they experience unequal access to documentation, mobility tools (e.g. bicycles vs. motorbikes) and institutional recognition. These inequalities reproduce spatial and racialised divisions of labour in the city.

Combining insights from labour geography, migration studies and critical platform studies, the paper argues that Lisbon exemplifies how digital labour geographies emerge through the intersection of algorithmic systems, colonial legacies and urban infrastructures.

The paper advances current debates by showing how platform capitalism does not transcend territorial dynamics, but actively reproduces and spatialises inequalities through them. Ultimately, the paper contributes to a situated understanding of how digital platforms reorganise urban labour and migrant precarity in ways that are both local and transnational.

Parallel session 1-5:

Feeding growth: Agribusiness influencers and the digital promotion of meat and dairy consumption in Brazil

Ricardo Barbosa, Jr.

Clark University

Social media has emerged as a crucial site for shaping consumer behavior and advancing political narratives, including within the agribusiness sector. In Brazil, agribusiness actors strategically employ digital platforms not only to promote products but also to assert a pro-growth ideological agenda. Campaigns such as Agro é Pop (essentially, agribusiness is cool), Coma Mais Carne (eat more meat), and Beba Mais Leite (drink more milk) champion increased meat and dairy consumption while pushing back against critiques tied to veganism, plant-based diets, and environmental concerns. These campaigns position agribusiness as central to Brazil's national identity and economic development. This paper explores how Brazilian agribusiness mobilizes social media to reproduce its growth imperative, with a focus on the role of "agribusiness influencers" as mediators of this discourse. Drawing on digital ethnography, the study examines both the ideological and material dimensions of agribusiness digital labor, showing how influencers translate political messaging into compelling content. Brazil, home to the world's second-largest influencer market, offers a critical vantage point to understand how agribusiness narratives gain traction online, shaping public discourse around food, agriculture, and nationhood. Grounded in Gramscian and Frankfurt School perspectives, the paper first analyzes the ideological strategies behind agribusiness social media campaigns. It then examines the material conditions of digital labor in rural contexts, revealing how influencers' work sustains both the economic and political

logics of agribusiness. These findings provide broader insights into how agribusiness narratives are perpetuated online and extend our understanding of digital labor beyond the urban world.

Respatializing Migration through the Digital Self: Data, Databases, and the Reconfiguration of Borders

Nicole M Bennett

Indiana University Bloomington

Migration governance is increasingly shaped by digital infrastructures that operate beyond territorial borders. Expanding on Louise Amoore's work on algorithmic border control, this research examines the digital self—the assemblage of biometric data, algorithmic categorizations, and database classifications that precede and often determine a migrant's mobility. Unlike physical borders, which operate at fixed territorial sites, digital borders are fluid, predictive, and embedded within vast data infrastructures. These systems claim to enhance efficiency and security, yet they encode biases, reinforce exclusionary logics, and shape migrants' access to asylum, aid, and citizenship.

This study critically engages with the role of databases, algorithmic risk assessments, and transnational surveillance networks in the co-production of digital borders. Systems such as Eurodac, PRIMES, and IDENT track and categorize migrants, determining their mobility based on fragmented and incomplete datasets. Algorithmic assessments, often framed as neutral, preemptively determine risk, creating barriers long before a migrant reaches a physical border. Additionally, humanitarian data collected for aid distribution can be repurposed for border enforcement, eroding protections and raising ethical concerns about consent and privacy.

Drawing from critical migration studies and digital geography, this work argues that the digital self is not merely a reflection of the migrant but a preemptive mechanism of control. As migration management shifts toward predictive analytics and automated decision-making, understanding the power of the digital self is crucial for challenging the expansion of digital border regimes and advocating for more transparent, ethical, and accountable data practices in migration governance.

Digitalizing Household Finance, Territorializing Debt and Investment: FinTech and Financialization of Households in Argentina

Kubra Melisa Altaytas

FLACSO Argentina (Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences)

The expansion of FinTech in Argentina has reconfigured the financialization of households, embedding digital financial services into everyday transactions while reshaping debt relations and investment practices across socio-economic strata. This paper examines the differentiated territorialization of FinTech in two structurally distinct neighborhoods in Buenos Aires, one middle-to-upper-income and one low-income, demonstrating how digital infrastructures, state interventions, and local financial practices interact to produce uneven financial geographies. Currently, nearly 70% of Argentina's adult population holds a FinTech account, using these services for transfers, payments, savings, investments, and credit. However, FinTech adoption is not merely about technological access but is embedded in historical distrust of financial institutions, state policies, and household financial strategies. In higher-income areas, FinTech serves as an extension of financial repertoires, particularly through digital investment tools. Yet, rather than pursuing capital accumulation, households use these tools defensively to shield their income from inflation, transforming investment into a form of financial protection rather than wealth generation. Conversely, in lower-income areas, FinTech does not replace traditional banking but complements

it, providing short-term liquidity while embedding users into automated debt repayment structures. This process depersonalizes debt, shifting it into impersonal, algorithm-driven repayment systems, detaching borrowing from its previous social and relational dimensions. By examining these dynamics, this paper contributes to the symposium's theme by demonstrating how FinTech simultaneously digitalizes the territorial and territorializes the digital, embedding households into distinct financial landscapes that reflect broader patterns of financialization.

Sanctions-Locked and Internet-Locked: Digital Sovereignty and Infrastructural Dependency in Kazakhstan

Oyuna Baldakova

King's College London

As Beijing strengthens its regional influence, neighbouring states are becoming increasingly reliant on China's infrastructure, finance, and digital networks. For landlocked countries like Kazakhstan—China's neighbour and the world's largest landlocked state—this dependency is especially acute. With limited access to oceanic trade and global fiber-optic networks, Kazakhstan's Tier 1 internet connectivity is shaped by its dependence on neighbouring China and Russia, both of which control the terrestrial fiber-optic routes that link Kazakhstan to the global web.

This study examines how China's expanding digital footprint is reshaping Kazakhstan's technological landscape, revealing the tension between efforts to assert digital sovereignty and the persistent pull of infrastructural dependency. Kazakhstan's connectivity is shaped by three key dynamics: first, technological complexity, limited expertise, and domestic capital pose significant barriers to developing the infrastructure required for Tier 1 connectivity, reinforcing external reliance. Second, Kazakhstan's emerging role as a Central Asian tech hub introduces contradictory pressures—generating opportunities for digital advancement while deepening reliance on foreign, particularly Chinese, investment. Third, the state's authoritarian regime seeks to maintain control over information flows, balancing political control with the need for foreign investments and expertise.

Despite initiatives like national satellite launches and the proposed Trans-Caspian fiber-optic route, alternatives remain constrained by geopolitical realities and technological limitations. Satellite internet options such as Starlink offer partial solutions, but remain economically and technically insufficient as substitutes for terrestrial infrastructure. Kazakhstan, thus, remains both sanctions-locked and internet-locked, exemplifying the infrastructural entanglements that shape digital geographies in the Global South.

Drawing on 15 semi-structured interviews with telecommunications professionals and industry stakeholders in Kazakhstan (2022–2023), this study contributes to debates on infrastructural geopolitics and digital sovereignty. Kazakhstan's case underscores how global power dynamics—especially between China and Russia—are territorialised through digital infrastructure, challenging the autonomy of smaller states in the evolving global order.

Pre-organised panel: Geopolitics of digital sovereignty in global comparison

Digital sovereignty under kinetic siege: The transformation of Ukraine's information sovereignty

Louis Pétiniaud

Université Paris 8

In response to persistent cyber and information threats from Russia, Ukraine's concept of information sovereignty has strategically evolved, emphasising the need for a robust defence against foreign influence. The presentation outlines the country's focus on information sovereignty rather than digital sovereignty, tracing its development since the 1990s, with this focus intensifying post-2014 due to Russian actions. The multidimensional attacks on Ukraine's digital space, encompassing cyber operations, routing manipulations and extensive influence campaigns, prompted the re-evaluation of information sovereignty as something critical for the country's survival. The presentation explores how Ukraine has implemented infrastructural measures, including blocking Russian internet resources, as part of an "infrastructure-embedded control" model. The conclusion underscores the interconnectedness of digital, informational and physical realities in shaping Ukraine's national identity, with civil society remaining vigilant about potential human rights implications amid heightened security measures during conflict.

Iran's strategy of Digital sovereignty: the strategic control of Internet routes

Frédéric Douzet & Kavé Salamatian

Université Paris 8, Université Savoie Mont Blanc

This presentation offers insights into why the concept of digital sovereignty is not utilised by policy-making and Internet governance actors in the United States, despite the growing number of federal policies to protect and promote the nation's digital marketplace and technologies. Discourses on digital sovereignty usually tend to be framed as defensive postures by states that feel threatened in their ability to exercise their powers and privileges. The United States' supremacy in cyberspace has long benefited the country and remains a strategic goal. Indeed, the perception and promotion of cyberspace as a borderless space, similar to the high seas, serves the purpose of asserting topological power to achieve dominance. Moreover, the concept of sovereignty has little emotional resonance in the United States given its history, its culture of local autonomy, and its federal structure with limited centralization. The concept of digital sovereignty is also at odds with the representation of an open, free and secure cyberspace among U.S. policy makers and Internet governance actors, an Internet that is "given to the world" to ensure human prosperity and protect American democracy. The concept of digital sovereignty is therefore seen as a threat to the Internet model they promote and thus a danger to liberal democracies, despite the rise of protectionist measures in the United States that could fall under this label.

The evolution of the Cuban strategy towards connection and the affirmation of sovereignty

Margot François

Université Paris 8

Cuba's approach to digital sovereignty has been shaped by its geopolitical conflict with the United States and the constraints of the long-standing economic embargo. Historically cautious about internet connectivity due to concerns over foreign interference, Cuba has gradually shifted towards a strategy of controlled digitization, prioritizing technological sovereignty and the development of national digital infrastructure. This paper examines Cuba's evolving digital policies in three key dimensions: (1) safeguarding state sovereignty to maintain political stability, (2) fostering an impossible technological independence in response to restricted access to foreign technology, and (3) aligning with a sovereigntist bloc in international internet governance discussions. By analyzing official discourse, legal frameworks, and historical context, this study highlights how the Cuban regime's digital sovereignty representations balance national security concerns with the necessity of integrating into the global digital economy.

Situating digital sovereignty in the material geographies of internet infrastructures: Lessons from Mediterranean interconnection hubs

Finn Dammann

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

This presentation focuses on a material infrastructure of digital communication that has received little attention in social and political science research on internet infrastructures: the interconnection of digital networks. Through an exploratory mapping study of interconnection facilities, data centres, terrestrial and submarine cable systems, I point to the embeddedness of these Internet infrastructures in uneven geopolitical power relations and postcolonial path dependencies between Southern European Interconnection Hubs and Northwest African telecommunication spaces. Against this background, I discuss the silence on this issue in political and academic discourses on digital sovereignty within Europe – and outline possibilities for a stronger analytical situating of problematisations, desires and ideas of sovereignty in the material geographies of Internet infrastructures.

An Imposed Sovereignty? Implementing European “Digital Sovereignty” in the Western Balkans

Amaël Cattaruzza

Université Paris 8

This presentation examines the complex interplay between digital sovereignty policies in the Western Balkans and the region's European integration process. While local actors rarely invoke the concept of digital sovereignty, its principles are embedded in EU recommendations. However, these policies do not always align with local priorities, which primarily focus on digital development strategies. The growing influence of China and Russia in the 2010s has introduced alternative development opportunities, compelling the EU to respond by launching the Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans in 2018. This initiative reflects the EU's effort to assert leadership in the region's digital transformation. More broadly, the presentation will discuss the extent to which the implementation of digital policy in Europe reflects the dynamics between center and periphery, highlighting the tensions between external regulatory frameworks and local digital aspirations.

The Race for LEO. Fragmented Futures of Satellite Internet

Maja Warlich

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

The race for low-earth orbit (LEO) satellite constellations is in full swing. Plans for new LEO constellations are announced every month, and dozens of satellites are launched into orbit every week. Governments, government alliances and private tech giants are carving up their territories in this increasingly crowded space, with some constellations expected to include thousands of satellites. While the demand for high-speed global broadband access certainly plays a role in this development, technological sovereignty and digital hegemony appear to be even more crucial factors. Using a case study of the use of the “Starlink” network in Europe, the presentation will discuss the role of geopolitical tensions in this competition for LEO Satellites as nations and corporations stake their claim to space.

Paper Abstracts Day Two (20th June)

Parallel session 2-1:

Social Data Migration: Conceptualising Transborder Data Flows as Processes of Social Transformation

Anu Masso

Tallinn University of Technology

Data migration, much like human mobility, is never neutral. It is shaped by infrastructures, institutions, standards, and social imaginaries. This presentation is based on an article ‘Social Data Migration Concept’ by Anu Masso, Andrew Grotto, and Tracey Laurialt, published in *Social Media + Society* (2025). This paper proposes the concept of social data migration to examine how transborder flows of data function as a dynamic force of social transformation in the post-industrial digital economy. Building on parallels with human migration studies—particularly the work of Stephen Castles—it reframes global data movements not merely as technical transfers but as socially embedded transformatoin processes influenced by context, agency, and governance. By synthesising empirical cases and theoretical insights, this presentation offers a framework to understand how data movements across platforms, institutions, and borders are shaped by political decisions, legal architectures, and historical inequalities. It explores how data changes as it migrates—how its epistemic value, use, and meaning are reconfigured depending on the receiving environment. This perspective helps identify the gatekeepers of data migration and the material and symbolic “passports” that data must carry to cross borders. In doing so, the paper contributes to a historically and politically grounded understanding of data migration as a socio-technical process with far-reaching consequences for knowledge production, governance, and global inequality.

Online bordering: (Re)creating national borders in digital spaces

Katrina Gaber, Michael Skey

Loughborough University

This paper introduces the concept of "online bordering", a novel framework for understanding how national borders are symbolically (re)constructed on digital platforms during socio-political crises. Using the Covid-19 pandemic as an extreme case study, the paper examines the Torne Valley, a region straddling the border between Sweden and Finland, to explore how ordinary people actively participate in shaping these borders. As the pandemic unfolded, digital platforms became key arenas for reinforcing national identities and (re)drawing symbolic borders in a region historically characterized by cross-border cooperation and a shared regional identity. Through a purposive sample of online interactions among borderlanders, this study highlights the process of "heating nationalism", where the online exchange of ideas fosters divisions, escalating tensions, and the use of "us" vs. "them" narratives. This leads to scapegoating and the erosion of long-standing cross-border solidarity. By exploring the concept of online bordering, the paper underscores how digital platforms have emerged as pivotal spaces for the negotiation and redefinition of borders, enabling the rapid spread and contestation of narratives surrounding identity, belonging, and otherness.

Kill Switch as a Geopolitical Technique: Power, Disruption, and Digital Sovereignty in the Age of Infrastructure

Omer Abdulaziz Ozturk

Royal Holloway, University of London

This paper explores the "kill switch" as a geopolitical technique that helps us understand how sovereignty, territoriality, and decision-making are being reshaped in the era of digital infrastructure. Instead of viewing kill switch mechanisms as purely technical or operational tools, the paper examines how the ability to turn digital services on or off becomes a form of political power and spatial control, especially during moments of crisis or uncertainty. Using current examples such as Starlink's role in Ukraine, service restrictions in Iran, and other instances of infrastructure denial, the paper reflects on how privately owned digital infrastructures—including satellite networks, cloud platforms, and undersea cables—have become strategic assets in geopolitical struggles. These systems are often beyond direct state control, and yet they play a key role in shaping access, communication, and authority. Their disruption can act as a form of coercion, deterrence, or defense, with implications far beyond the technical domain. Rather than offering a detailed case study, the paper uses these real-world situations to reflect on the vulnerability of digital sovereignty, especially when essential infrastructures are managed by private actors. It also considers how the ability to shut down or restrict digital connectivity may challenge traditional understandings of borders, territory, and geopolitical control. By approaching the kill switch as a technique of infrastructural geopolitics, the study contributes to ongoing debates in political geography, digital governance, and the spatial dimensions of sovereignty. It highlights how decisions made at the infrastructure level—often outside the formal reach of the state—can shape how power is organized and exercised in the digital age.

Analysis of the 19th Congress of the Philippines Through Digital Tools

Anton Isaac Lagasca Pascual, Nathan Henry Asikin, Kenneth Y T Lim

National Institute of Education, Singapore

In this paper, we explore and analyse the legislative hearings and actions in the Philippines through Natural Language Processing, particularly those of the ongoing 19th Congress as it has contributed to various significant local events. Our study into the use of topic modelling and sentiment analysis to broadly analyse the 19th Philippine Congress demonstrates the value of NLP to the humanities and its possibilities for usage in political analysis. Similar to Grimmer (2009) we show how topic modelling can identify the priorities of the legislature, however, we used the BERTopic model and Bills and Republic Acts as our corpus. This shows BERTopic's viability to government legislation in addition to law cases as shown by Rawat, Sunil, and Dixit (2022). We further analyse their priorities by comparing them to the current Philippine context, determining that they focus on many pressing issues, but leaving out a few key issues such as corruption. Moreover, we show that sentiment analysis can reveal which issues the legislature has a more positive and negative attitude towards. Salah (2014) and Choi, Park, Baek, and Lee (2023) analyse sentiment and attitudes in politicians to a greater extent and with a focus on individual political actors as opposed to our evaluation of the legislature as a whole. We encountered limitations such as translational difficulties which stem from the lack of advanced Filipino to English translation algorithms. Linguistic features of Filipino such as code-switching or 'Taglish', colloquial short forms, and slang used in meetings and conversations are yet to be correctly translated by translation algorithms (Lesada, 2017). However, this study can still be conducted comprehensively as the Legislative Branch of the Republic of the Philippines writes its bills, acts, and laws in English and often converses in meetings and hearings in a mix of English and Filipino (Constitutional Commission, 1986).

China's Digital State Capitalism and Its Impact on Africa's Digital Economic Transition

Qingxiu Bu

University of Sussex

The rapid growth of digital capabilities and big data is reshaping business processes and global data governance, positioning them as key drivers of Africa's economic transformation. This paper critically examines the interplay between China's digital state capitalism (DSC) and Africa's data governance frameworks, with a focus on cross-border data flows, sovereignty, privacy, and security. China's DSC, a model blending economic growth with national security and social control, underpins its Digital Silk Road (DSR) initiative, which extends Beijing's geopolitical influence by fostering digital ecosystem interoperability across African participating nations. In Africa, the interaction of China's DSC with diverse socio-political contexts raises challenges of path dependency, economic control, and political influence. Using securitisation theory, this study explores how state capitalist ideologies manifest digitally, offering a critique of frameworks that marginalise African agency in global governance debates. Preliminary findings reveal divergent African interpretations of privacy, sovereignty, and security, with authoritarian regimes aligning with China's values. This research highlights the ideological underpinnings of digital technologies and the inadequacies of current global frameworks in regulating cross-border data flows. It calls for a nuanced balance between open internet principles and governance challenges, advancing theoretical debates on Africa's agency under Agenda 2063 in a fragmented global consensus.

Parallel sessions 2-2:

Digital Shift of Mobility Experiences in Highly Constrained Urban Contexts

Pauline Baudens

Taltech University

In metropolises worldwide, increasing access to digital technologies, and its adoption, generate a multitude of evolving effects across different scales. These effects reshape everyday practices, create new spaces and spatialities, and change urban dynamics. This research, contributing to the field of digital geographies, explores how digital platforms (e.g., e-hailing, MaaS, safety, and navigation apps) designed to address mobility challenges reshape the experience of navigating time and space, as well as transport planning, in highly constrained and rapidly expanding urban contexts. As a result of integrating several studies, the methodology combines observations and semi-structured interviews with up to fifty interviewees in Pune (India), Abidjan (Ivory Coast), and Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo), along with up to twenty experts mostly from these cities. The results from these three very different cities provide an interesting cross-sectional view of three cases from the Global South that are rarely compared. They present different levels of access to digital platforms and varying degrees of adoption. Thus, this comparison between cities and the triangulated methods allows for an understanding of how digital platforms redefine mobility practices and perceptions, and reshape transport planning in growing cities of the Global South. By creating new mobility possibilities, several digital platforms have become indispensable tools for organising and facilitating daily mobility. However, their adoption raises a multitude of paradoxes and ambiguities at the individual, societal, and urban levels, for instance, questioning the actual benefits in terms of autonomy.

Digital Borderlands: Technological Transformation and Territorial Politics in Divided Jerusalem

Ronen Eidelman Rescaling

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Jerusalem's digital transformation offers a nuanced lens for understanding how technology interacts with urban divisions. Our research examines in details the city's implementation of digital systems and practices for urban governance. It reveals how the city's complex landscape—with its ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic divides, as well as Israeli occupation and partial annexation—serves as an important case study for examining digital geographies in politically contested cities.

Digital urban citizenship projects in Jerusalem are neither inherently liberating nor oppressive. In some instances, digital platforms create unprecedented spaces for access to the city's resources and rights and can even facilitate cross-community interaction, while in others they mirror and magnify existing political and social divisions (bordering?) and oppressions. Technology can help overcome bureaucratic borders and obstacles, but can also erect new ones. It also often fails to address inequalities, with technological systems and projects merely reflecting the city's fragmented political reality. By mapping municipal digital ventures against the residents' digital behaviors, we illustrate how digital infrastructure can deepen existing political boundaries and sometimes perpetuate discrimination through technological means of digital services, surveillance, and infrastructure.

Our research also documents a new phenomenon we term 'digital regression,' where smart city initiatives often face limited adoption or reversal to analog alternatives, particularly along Jerusalem's spatial and ethnic divides. In particular, Palestinian Arabs and ultra-Orthodox

communities experience significant barriers to digital citizenship, highlighting how technological implementation follows and deepens patterns of existing inequality.

Jerusalem represents a hyper example of how digital urbanism becomes entangled with territorial contestation and political control. The city's experience reveals how even well-intentioned technological solutions aimed at serving all residents can unintentionally become tools of oppression when confronting entrenched spatial, ethnic and legal inequalities. Effective digital governance must explicitly confront these political realities rather than mask them behind neutral technological rhetoric

Rescaling Digital Sovereignty: Digital Technologies and the Politics of Territory in Unrecognized Bedouin Villages

Batel Yossef Ravid, Erez Tzfadia

SCE - Shamoon College of Engineering

Our research focuses on "digital displacement" and "digital Sumud" within the broader discussions of digital geographies, indigeneity, and gray urbanism. We specifically examine these issues through the lens of unrecognized-informal Bedouin villages located on the outskirts of the Beer-Sheva metropolitan area in Israel. Our analysis highlights the vulnerable status of these communities and their modes of resistance in both territorial and digital realms.

Using a qualitative visual content analysis methodology, we investigate the disparities between state-sanctioned digital representations and grassroots digital mapping initiatives. This examination highlights how the competing territorial logics of the state and indigenous communities inscribe themselves into digital infrastructures, data, and representations. It transforms digital spaces and offers a methodological framework for understanding the dynamics of displacement and resistance in the digital realm, aiming to reflect these findings in the physical domain.

Our findings reveal a stark contrast between the official representation of unrecognized villages on government platforms—often linked to digital surveillance and displacement efforts—and the initiatives of Bedouin communities and civil society to map their villages digitally. The digital presence of the villages on official government sites is frequently associated with displacement practices such as monitoring informal housing construction through drones and 3D mapping systems that track and identify unauthorized buildings. However, this issue extends beyond merely displacing villages digitally. This 'rescaled digital sovereignty' approach reinforces the physical and legal precariousness of Bedouin settlements, intensifying displacement through the use of digital tools.

In contrast, grassroots efforts employ digital technologies to increase visibility in the digital realm, aiming to improve services and assert the Bedouins' right to territory - what we term "digital Sumud" - the ways Palestinians use digital technologies and online platforms to resist oppression and maintain their presence in the face of Israeli oppression.

We argue that digital geographies are rooted in terrestrial politics, which redefine the political and institutional dynamics between the state and Indigenous communities. Both parties utilize digital tools to erase or acknowledge indigeneity by claiming territory. In these dynamics between 'digitalising the territorial' and 'territorialising the digital', 'digital sovereignty' is rescaled, claimed, and challenged. This results in a better understanding of digital-territorial dynamics in a neo-settler-colonial context and contemporary digital geographies.

Spatial Reflection of Immigrant Density on Digital Platforms and Its Effects on Urban Planning

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This paper discusses how digital platforms shape the spatial traces of immigrant populations and the effects of digitization on regional development processes. Immigrant traces in Istanbul have been analyzed using data collected from platforms such as Google Maps, Yandex, and Instagram. These digital traces offer a new tool for understanding the geographical distribution, functional structures, and socio-economic relationships of immigrants. Spatial analyses conducted with Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) highlight how digital platforms transform the interaction between local and global processes. Data collection focused on extracting location-based references from user-generated content through keyword searches and geotag analyses. The extracted data was then spatially visualized and analyzed using GIS tools to identify patterns of immigrant concentration. Digital sovereignty and data management form the key discussion areas of this study. The data gathered from digital platforms plays a critical role in shaping local governments' migration policies. Beyond analyzing the spatial distribution of immigrants' representations in digital spaces, the paper also explores how this data can be integrated into regional development strategies. The integration of digital data into local and regional development strategies presents a significant opportunity in managing demographic changes within cities. By examining the effects of digitization on regional development, digital sovereignty, and data management, this paper aims to offer a new perspective on the intersections between digitization and regional development. It contributes to the broader discussion on how digital platforms can influence urban planning and migration policies by exploring the spatial distribution of immigrant populations in a digital context. The study not only provides insights into the transformation of urban spaces but also offers new avenues for leveraging digital tools in the planning and management of cities.

Sharing insights from the Monograph "Geopolitics of Digital Heritage"

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LASALLE, University of the Arts Singapore

My presentation will share key insights from the Monograph "Geopolitics of Digital Heritage" (2024: Cambridge University Press). The book analyzes and discusses the political implications of the largest digital heritage aggregators across different scales of governance, from the city-state governed Singapore Memory Project, to a national aggregator like Australia's Trove, to supranational digital heritage platforms, such as Europeana, to the global heritage aggregator, Google Arts & Culture. These four dedicated case studies provide focused, exploratory sites for critical investigation of digital heritage aggregators from the perspective of their geopolitical motivations and interests, the economic and cultural agendas of involved stakeholders, as well as their foreign policy strategies and objectives. The monograph employs an interdisciplinary approach and combines critical heritage studies with the study of digital politics and communications. Drawing from empirical case study analysis, it investigates how political imperatives manifest in the development of digital heritage platforms to serve different actors in a highly saturated global information space, ranging from national governments to transnational corporations.

Parallel session 2-3:

Rethinking Territorialization. Limits to the Regulation of Digital Capitalism

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While some theories diagnose an abstract, unified capitalism driven by digital technologies and global transformations, a critical countercurrent has emerged, particularly in geography. This perspective calls for understanding digital technologies as socio-spatially embedded and argues that a "terrestrial grounding" of digital technologies is required to render their material and concrete dimensions tangible. Accordingly, embeddedness is proposed as an antidote to capitalocentric narratives, instead emphasizing the potential to shape digitalization.

In our paper, we critically reflect on these calls for embedding analyses of digital capitalism using the European regulatory debate. First, we discuss recent contributions that explore EU attempts of "territorializing the digital" through the creation of a regulated, "better" version of digital economies. In a second step, we identify a central risk inherent in these affirmative comments on embedding digital technologies and "terrestrial politics". They risk losing sight of the specific refiguration of "economic power" in digital capitalism, i.e. the mute compulsion enacted through reorganizing the environment and social relations of production: Digital capitalism is characterized by "digitalizing the territorial" through a dialectic of decentralization of spatio-temporally fragmented production processes and a centralization of control and power-over. Even within the boundaries of a tighter European regulation, digitalization introduces an abstract logic that fundamentally challenges existing "hegemonic labor regimes" and power relations between classes and fractions of capital. We thus close our paper with a reflection on the need for a dialectical perspective that considers "territorializing the digital" and "digitalizing the territorial" as mutually mediated movements to raise attention to the specific characteristics of digital capitalism shared by it throughout its various embedded instantiations.

Hybrid Territorialism: Spatial Differentiation and Digital Control in China's Surveillance System

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This paper introduces the concept of "hybrid territorialism" to conceptualise China's surveillance system as a multi-scalar, socio-technical assemblage that spans physical and digital spaces. Rooted in traditional governance mechanisms such as the hukou system and community grid management (CGM), but increasingly reinforced through digital infrastructures like the social credit system (CSC) and the Skynet project, China's surveillance architecture simultaneously territorialises and deterritorialises governance practices. This hybrid model contrasts with Western theories of control, maintaining strong state anchoring amid digital fluidity and prioritising political stability and ideological conformity over market profit. Drawing on interviews with twenty migrant workers from diverse urban-rural and north-south contexts, the study explores how surveillance practices are spatially differentiated. By foregrounding "place" as a dynamic site mediating the interaction between territorial logics and digital governance, the paper argues that China's surveillance system amplifies socio-spatial inequalities. Migrant workers, positioned at the intersection of territorial and digital governance regimes, face multi-layered surveillance that restricts both physical mobility and virtual agency. This study contributes to global digital geography debates by showing how

digitalisation does not dissolve territoriality, but rather reconfigures and intensifies spatialised governance, offering a critical perspective on the entanglement of place, technology, and power.

The agency of provincial-level governments in China's digital foreign policy

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Leiden University

Analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's digital and technology strategy has often focused on Xi Jinping and on the international activities of tech giants such as Huawei. This article explores the need to investigate the role of sub-national governments in the implementation of the Digital Silk Road (DSR). This article focuses on Guangxi and Ningxia, two unusual suspects in becoming an international digital hub. The article demonstrates that these sub-national governments developed international digital ambitions before the DSR/BRI, but their ambitions evolved in tandem with the DSR/BRI and the central Party-State's national digitization and informatization ambitions. Looking through the lens of sub-national governments, rather than the central Party-State and its plans, will enhance our understanding of how different actors shape the digital cross-border eco-system.

Placing Africa along China's Global Development Trajectory: From the Belt and Road Initiative to Chinese Platform Capitalism

Tom Narins, Maria Adele Carrai

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Over the last decade, the evolution of China's global political economic expansion has been directly connected to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - a set of Chinese government-led, predominantly Eurasia-focused, "traditional" (transportation and logistics) infrastructural projects. While Africa has been tangentially incorporated into the Belt and Road imaginary via depictions of the ancient Silk Road, contemporary cartographic accounts of China's development trajectory have been slow to accurately reflect the extent of Africa's role as host to many BRI projects. Along with the increasing number of BRI projects in Africa in recent years, there has also been a shift in emphasis from traditional BRI infrastructure projects toward digital infrastructure projects - a trend associated with China's Digital Silk Road (DSR). Concurrently, and in spite of tensions between the two, there has also been a trend toward the Chinese state working with Chinese digital platform firms (e.g. Alibaba and Tencent), contributing to the rise of State Platform Capitalism (Rolf and Schindler 2023). This presentation examines these political economic developments as part of China's global development trajectory from East Asia toward Africa.

Smart and/or Just Metropolis? Stratified Digital Citizenship in Beersheba

Oren Yiftachel, Rani Mandelbaum

UCL, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

In this paper we ask: given the growing diffusion of digitalized urban governance, can there be 'smart' and just? Can digitalization reduce inequality, colonization and marginalization, or does it have the opposite effect? We explore these questions through an in-depth study of metropolitan Beersheba, the capital of Israel's peripheral and poorest southern region, which is also the historic center of indigenous Bedouin people of southern Palestine.

The chosen methodology maps the main digitalization plans and strategies 'from above', in order to facilitate the analysis of its impact 'from below'. These plans and strategies include crafted large scale national and regional plans, as well as urban initiatives and special 'smart' urban projects, most

notably a high-profile international 'innovation district' and new urban and regional infrastructures. We then employ the three conceptual optics allowing a rich analysis 'from below' of the various impacts of digitalization, focusing on marginalized population, such as migrants, the elderly, low-income, and indigenous groups. Special attention is given to the change in social and ethnic inequalities resulting from the introduction of digitalised urban policies and practices. The findings are mixed and point to inherent difficulties in developing inclusive urban digital citizenship. They highlight structural tensions in simultaneously promoting both 'smart' (rapid digitalization) and just governance in the rapidly shifting digital and political landscapes. While digitalization has improved infrastructure, data usage, security and economic development in Jewish urban centers, it has stratified further urban citizenship by widening the gaps between various Jewish groups, and most notably further marginalized and colonized vast indigenous groups in the contested territories of the southern metropolis.

Parallel sessions 2-4:

The New Eyes of the City: Regeneration and Surveillance in Porto Alegre's 4th District

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This paper investigates the intersection between urban regeneration and technological policing strategies as new modes of urban social control, focusing on the 4th District of Porto Alegre, Brazil. The analysis is based on an emerging case study involving the implementation of the Smart Policing Lab, a project of the state military police operating in partnership with the municipal government and the private sector through the Instituto Caldeira innovation hub. Framed by the recently approved +4D Urban Regeneration Program and connected to the local governance network "Pacto Alegre," the Smart Policing Lab is currently developing a project named Smart Shield, which combines artificial intelligence with public and private video surveillance for predictive policing purposes. Grounded in a technopolitical framework that understands technologies as co-producers of territorial, social, and subjective dynamics, this study maps how public-private partnerships reconfigure urban spaces and intensify mechanisms of surveillance and control. Methodologically, the research combines exploratory analysis of institutional documents, public consultations, and digital communications (e.g., official websites and social media), with a critical review of urban planning policies and the legal framework underpinning the +4D Program (notably, Complementary Law No. 960/22). This work constitutes a preliminary phase of a broader master's research project that will be developed until 2026. Initial findings suggest a growing alignment between urban redevelopment agendas and preventive policing strategies informed by data-driven technologies. The inclusion of surveillance demands in public participation reports and the central role of innovation-oriented private actors in shaping the security agenda reveal a shift toward technocratic and punitive approaches to urban governance. This paper contributes to understanding how smart city narratives and predictive policing tools legitimize selective control and urban exclusion, particularly in historically marginalized neighborhoods undergoing regeneration processes.

Creating a 'European' cyberspace: How spatial (b)ordering and ontological security drives have underpinned the EU's evolution as a global actor

Julia Carver

University of Oxford

The last decade has seen the global rise of territorialising moves in and through cyberspace. However, extant international relations scholarship has tended to privilege the material and structural drivers of actors' geostrategic behaviour, thereby struggling to explain the European Union's recent embrace of these ambitions in its global approach to cyberspace. To address these theoretical and empirical gaps, this paper asks: how has the EU's engagement with spatial (b)ordering practices in cyberspace shaped its evolution as a strategic cyber actor, and to what extent have ontological security drives underpinned this relationship? This paper develops a novel theoretical framework centered around the relationship between state-based capacity, territoriality, and ontological security, which diverges from classical IR accounts of cyber-geopolitics. Drawing upon documentary evidence and over two dozen elite interviews, my discourse analysis reveals how, over the 2009-2024 period, EU actors have deployed various spatial (b)ordering moves to manage the Union's ontological security needs in a constantly evolving global environment. The paper's critical ontological approach foregrounds the co-constitutive relationship between the environmental features of cyberspace and global actors' ontological security in and through cyberspace. Ultimately, by bridging theoretical and empirical gaps between ontological security and critical geopolitics scholarship in IR, this paper contributes to an emerging IR research agenda on the spatio-temporal liminality of 'cyberspace' and its relationship to the EU's development as a foreign policy actor.

Beyond Smartness: Toward a Post-Neoliberal Agenda in Digital Urban Becoming

Su Su Myat

University of Lausanne

Studies of smart urbanism have proliferated over the past decade, but remain largely confined to rhetorical critiques of neoliberal technological applications. This paper argues that the analysis of digital technologies embedded in urban contexts requires conceptual tools that go beyond critique. Drawing on my ethnographic research in Geneva, Switzerland, and informed by a critical review of smart urbanism initiatives in different global contexts, I propose the concept of 'digital urban becoming' to understand smart urbanism as an ongoing process through which technologies are integrated into urban environments across multiple temporal and spatial scales. My analysis of smart urban development in Geneva, from a perspective informed by southern urban theory, provides an empirical basis for understanding how smart urbanism - the use of digital, AI and IoT technologies in urban governance - is occurring in ways that both confirm and challenge patterns identified in existing literature. The case study reveals multiple pathways of implementation that transcend formal smart city frameworks, shifting the focus from defining smart urbanism to examining its ongoing (re)making through socio-technical practices and material arrangements that simultaneously digitise urban spaces and territorialise digital infrastructures. Building on these empirical findings, I develop a theoretical approach that transcends the techno-optimism versus techno-pessimism binary prevalent in the existing literature and instead focuses on critical questions of urban technological politics: who controls digital systems, whose interests they serve, and how they might be reconfigured for more democratic and equitable outcomes. By bringing the Geneva case into conversation with broader theoretical debates, the paper suggests that post-neoliberal possibilities emerge not from rejecting technological governance, but from reimagining

the socio-political configurations through which urban technologies are deployed and experienced. This intervention contributes to the theory of digital urban geography, while providing analytical tools for understanding potential futures of digital urban becoming in different contexts.

Geoprivacy knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in contemporary China

Hongyu Zhang, Grant McKenzie

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China has an Internet penetration rate of over 70 percent and a massive user base of social media. However, the topic of privacy attitudes among Chinese individuals remains understudied. We analyzed geoprivacy concerns in China through an online survey and regression analysis. Our findings suggest a positive relation among privacy knowledge, attitude, and behavior, consistent with related literature. Declarative knowledge (such as privacy rights), on the other hand, was found to have a negative relation with privacy concerns, which has not been reported previously. In terms of demographic moderators, females had less privacy knowledge but more privacy protection behaviors, while the impact of age on privacy concerns was inconclusive. A notable discovery was the regional difference in privacy concerns within China, suggesting the potential geopolitical influence on individuals' values and beliefs. Combined with the uncovering of behavioral change in response to involuntary location disclosure, the results of this article challenge the conventional notion that Chinese individuals are indifferent to their online privacy, thus reintroducing an underexplored perspective from the Global South into geoprivacy studies.

The Fragmented Stack. How States are Trying to Reshape Global Connectivity

Maurilio Pirone

University of Bologna

This presentation examines the tensions between digital flows and national sovereignty, focusing on how global supply chains underpin digitization and complicate efforts at securitization. While a decade ago the paradigm of connectivity (Khanna, 2016) envisioned a borderless world driven by seamless digital exchanges, the internet served as a powerful metaphor for this transformation. Theoretical models like Bratton's Stack (2015) largely sidelined the role of the state in shaping digitization and globalization. However, growing critiques (e.g., de Seta, 2021) emphasize that interactions between these layers are far from frictionless and are often influenced by state interventions. Additionally, challenges such as resource access and logistical conflicts reveal digitization as an uneven and fragmented process.

This analysis argues that recent global crises—including the COVID-19 pandemic, the wars in Ukraine and Palestine—have disrupted this vision, exposing vulnerabilities in digital infrastructure. States have prioritized the securitization of supply chains and the militarization of digital technologies, yet achieving these goals remains elusive due to dependencies on transnational elements such as device manufacturing, raw material access, and network effects.

Ultimately, this presentation contends that the ongoing tensions between capital's spatial dynamics and state territoriality are unlikely to lead to decoupling or independence. Instead, they risk exacerbating global instability.