



MONASH
University



2026 School of Social Sciences Research Symposium

Challenges of the Age

14 & 15 SEPTEMBER

21 SPORTS WALK, CLAYTON CAMPUS



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which much of the research being presented has taken place, and on which this symposium is being held; the Boonwurrung people of the Kulin Nations. We pay our respects to their elders, past and present and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

Australian First Nations peoples collectively form the oldest living civilisation in the world. The vitality and enormity of Indigenous knowledge holds vast potential in addressing the challenges that we face today. True progress cannot be achieved without the inclusion of First Nations' perspectives, experiences, and knowledge. We hope that, as researchers, we continue to learn from Indigenous communities and that our work supports the fight against the colonial systems which continue to oppress First Nations Peoples today.



ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM

CHALLENGES OF THE AGE

Every era has faced challenges that have required innovation, curiosity, creativity, and collaboration to overcome and progress towards a better future. In line with Monash University's Impact 2030 strategic plan, the theme for this year's Symposium, *Challenges of the Age*, reflects this concept. The Symposium is centred on the overarching challenges of: **climate change, geopolitical security, and thriving communities**. These challenges are experienced disproportionately within and across nations, and their scale and impact is felt most by those who are already disadvantaged and vulnerable. As researchers, we play a role in mitigating these inequalities. Whilst we grapple with an uncertain future, increasing dissonance and polarisation within populations, fragmented communities, new forms of insecurity, and more, we have a responsibility to imagine a better future and work collectively towards creating it.

The Symposium is therefore dedicated to exploring the many ways in which we at SoSS use our research to understand and address the challenges we are facing. Many SoSS research students are working towards changing the world for the better in meaningful and powerful ways, from grassroots to global scales. This Symposium is an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate our contributions to the *Challenges of the Age*, and a way to strengthen our connections and contributions even further.

SYMPOSIUM TIMELINE

DAY 1

9AM - 9:30AM | WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

9:30AM - 10:45AM | CLIMATE CHANGE

Xinyi Zhao | Unpacking Climate Resilience Initiatives' Interactions with Gender Dynamics in Southeast Asia

Siti Indriani | Tipping Points and Multi-system Interactions in the Acceleration of Sustainability Transitions

Edoardo Sperone | Optimising Sustainable Development Goals Progress Nationally and Globally through Machine Learning

Aditya Narayan Sharma | Governing the Water-Energy-Food Nexus: Institutional Barriers to Regional Sustainable Development

Bruce Mecca | Exploring the Concept of Policy Coherence: Reflections from Indonesia's Natural Resource Downstreaming (Hilirisasi) Experience

11AM - 11:15AM | MORNING TEA

11:15AM - 12:15PM | THRIVING COMMUNITIES: GENDER & SEXUALITY

Caitlin van Hoffen | Queer youth, social media and sex education

Jennifer Gray | Imagining Connection: The Pursuit of "Real" and "Organic" Connection

Iris Yuejiao Xu | Shaping Transnational LGBT Advocacy: Practices, Experiences and Identities between LGBT Advocates in Malaysia and Australia

12:15PM - 1:30PM | LUNCH

1:30PM - 2:30PM | GRADUATE PANEL: LIFE AFTER THE THESIS

We are excited to welcome back four recent PhD graduates who will share their experiences since graduating, and will answer all your questions about what life is like after submission.

2:30PM - 3:30PM | THRIVING COMMUNITIES: GENDER & MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Samira Nouri | Gender Dynamics and Ethnic Identity Negotiations among Second-generation Iranians in Australia

Ella Reed | "It's just a crushing kind of feeling": Maternal Regret and the Gendered Conditions of Motherhood in Australia

Isabel Dunn | The Experiences of Migrant and Refugee Women Accessing Domestic and Family Violence Support: A Tasmanian Service Assessment

3:30PM - 4:30PM | POSTER SESSION

With Bruce Mecca, Mirah Mahaswari, and Aditya Narayan Sharma

4:30PM | PRESENTATION AWARDS & CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Symposium Committee

SYMPOSIUM TIMELINE

DAY 2

9AM - 9:15AM | WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

9:30AM - 10:45AM | GEOPOLITICAL SECURITY: POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Amber Moffett | Crisis of Adaptation, Crisis of Survival: The Uneven Global Consequences of US Illiberalisation

Laura Woodbridge | Urgency, disruption, and change in response to COVID-19: Dilemmas of policy makers in crisis

M Meirizky Ikhsan | From Learning to Reform? Crisis-Induced Policy Learning in Indonesia

Ridwan Nugraha | The continuing influence of NPM: perspectives from a post-authoritarian spectrum

Cas Maclean | Understanding Humanitarian Access in Armed Conflict

10:45AM - 11:15AM | MORNING TEA

11:15AM - 12:15PM | PANEL: AI & RESEARCH

Professor Michael Mintrom, Dr Charles Crabtree and Iris Nguyen will speak about the role and use of AI in research from a practical and ethical perspective, and will answer your questions about using it in your own research

12:15PM - 1:30PM | GEOPOLITICAL SECURITY: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ruby Sciberras | Disrupting sexualised deepfake abuse: exploring young people's perceptions of AI ethics and abuse

Beibei Wu | Empathetic Animals: Feminists and Anti-feminists under Conditional Visibility on the Chinese Internet

Chantelle Langdon | Between a rock and a hard place: When housing and domestic violence crises converge

Sara Agostino | Unmasking the perpetrator: exploring motivations behind online sexual harassment perpetration in Australia and the U.S

1:30PM - 2:30PM | LUNCH

2:30PM - 3:30PM | GEOPOLITICAL SECURITY: HEALTH

Anang Santoso | The Diffusion of Smoke Free Zone Policy in Indonesia, 2004 to 2026

Tiansi Chu | Knowledge about, and attitudes towards, resistance training in Chinese older adults

Pulkita Jain | Cultural Beliefs and Child Healthcare Utilisation in Rajasthan, India

Frenia Nababan | Challenging Efficiency: Platformized Labor and the Erosion of Agency in Indonesia's SATUSEHAT

3:30PM - 4PM | PRESENTATION AWARDS & CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Symposium Committee

THEME 1

CLIMATE CHANGE



UNPACKING CLIMATE RESILIENCE INITIATIVES' INTERACTIONS WITH GENDER DYNAMICS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

XINYI ZHAO

Despite expanding commitments to gender integration in climate resilience initiatives by multilevel actors, empirical evidence on what projects actually do to gender dynamics remains fragmented, uncertain, and sometimes contradictory. Southeast Asia's high climate exposure, governance diversity, postcolonial institutional complexity, and plural gender regimes intensify this puzzle of divergent interactions. The research pursues four cumulative objectives: (1) consolidating existing evidence and specifying gaps through a critical scoping review; (2) tracing initiative-driven condition reconfiguration and pathways through comparative case studies; (3) examining local people's gendered interpretation and negotiation through qualitative inquiry; and (4) synthesising implications for gender-transformative resilience theory and practice. Analytically, this research propose a novel framework that combines a vertical dimension spanning nested multi-level systems to individual experiences and a horizontal dimension distinguishing the formal and informal pathways through which gender operates in initiatives. The aim is to advance transdisciplinary theory on how initiatives encounter and influence local gender dynamics, and to generate critical lenses and actionable principles for gender-transformative resilience-building in diverse postcolonial developing contexts.

TIPPING POINTS AND MULTI-SYSTEM INTERACTIONS IN THE ACCELERATION OF SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS

SITI INDRIANI

Research on sustainability transitions (STs) has increased considerably over the last two decades. Despite major scholarly progress and growing recognition of STs' scholarship in policy circles, a key question remains: how do transitions accelerate? This question is gaining urgency, as the time window to remain within planetary boundaries is rapidly closing. Contemporary research on accelerating transitions frequently examines tipping points (TPs) in multi-system interactions (MSIs) as key mechanisms. However, as of today, there is limited understanding of the interplay between TPs, MSIs and acceleration in STs' studies. Hence, the aim of this study is to clarify this relationship and identify a research gap on these three interconnected themes. A qualitative literature review is conducted by examining academic literature spanning approximately 20 years (2005–2025). Findings indicate that although each notion is getting more attention, its integration remains limited in both empirical and theoretical terms. Despite growing attention to acceleration, TPs, and multi-MSIs in transition studies, the literature still leaves several important gaps. Four gaps found in the literature: (1) the limited theorisation of acceleration within STs' frameworks; (2) the fragmented discussion of TPs and MSIs as separate mechanisms in the acceleration; (3) the lack of integrated modelling approaches that capture tipping and multi-system dynamics in accelerating STs; and (4) the limited research on acceleration in Global South contexts. Future research can further explore the study through modelling to simulate and analyse the interplay between TPs in the context of MSIs in accelerating STs.



OPTIMISING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS PROGRESS NATIONALLY AND GLOBALLY THROUGH MACHINE LEARNING

EDOARDO SPERONE

The UN Sustainable Development Goals form a system of interconnected elements, where progress in one has positive or negative cascading effects on many others. This is crucial for policy-making, because it is necessary to account for these interrelationships to find the policies or other types of interventions that maximise progress over time across goals. The existing literature analysing these interactions still faces two significant gaps, meaning accounting for patterns of causality and providing information for decision-making regarding optimal interventions and future scenarios. Therefore, this project aims to develop and apply a novel modelling framework that combines System Dynamics and Reinforcement Learning to identify optimal pathways for SDG progress under interacting synergies and trade-offs. Doing so will contribute to filling these gaps because System Dynamics models encode a notion of causal patterns between variables, while Reinforcement Learning algorithms are suitable to optimise actions in sequential decision-making problems. This combination will advance new methods and provide quantitative findings regarding how strongly different goals are connected, which are the interventions to prioritise and what are the optimal scenarios of sustainable development over time at national and global scales. These findings will provide robust, quantitative information for policy-makers to determine the extent to which it is ideal to make progress in each goal, leading to an optimised allocation of resources and identification of key policies or other interventions.

GOVERNING THE WATER-ENERGY-FOOD NEXUS: INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS TO REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ADITYA NARAYAN SHARMA

Climate change, rapid urbanisation, and growing resource demands are making it increasingly difficult to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to water, energy, and food. While these goals are closely interconnected, they are often governed through separate institutions and policies, limiting the ability to manage trade-offs and realise synergies across sectors. The Water-Energy-Food (WEF) nexus provides a valuable lens for understanding these SDG interlinkages, yet there is still limited understanding of how governance arrangements shape SDG interlinkages and influence regional SDG implementation. This study explores these questions through a qualitative case study from southern India. Drawing on policy analysis and semi-structured interviews with government agencies, public utilities, researchers, and practitioners, it combines the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework with the OECD's Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) framework to examine how institutions, policies, and decision-making processes shape interactions across the WEF nexus. The findings show that many sustainability challenges arise not simply from resource scarcity, but from fragmented institutional responsibilities, competing policy priorities, and limited coordination across sectors. These governance dynamics reinforce trade-offs between urban water security, agricultural production, and environmental objectives, creating barriers to achieving SDGs 2, 6, and 7 in an integrated way. By linking governance analysis with the WEF nexus, this research provides new insights into how institutional interactions shape SDG interlinkages and highlights the importance of policy coherence and cross-sector coordination for more integrated regional implementation of the SDGs.



EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF POLICY COHERENCE: REFLECTIONS FROM INDONESIA'S NATURAL RESOURCE DOWNSTREAMING (HILIRISASI) EXPERIENCE **BRURCE MECCA**

Indonesia is pursuing industrial competitiveness amid intensifying geoeconomic rivalry and weakening international cooperation on climate change. In this context, green industrial policy has emerged as a central strategy for securing participation in strategic value chains. The growing recognition of state-led industrial coordination, including by institutions that traditionally favored market-driven approaches, has renewed interest in how governments foster industrial transformation. As the world's largest holder of nickel resources, an essential input for stainless steel production and lithium-ion batteries, Indonesia has positioned itself as a key actor in the global green economy. Since introducing a nickel export ban in 2014, Indonesia has pursued an ambitious downstreaming (hilirisasi) agenda aimed at upgrading domestic industry and attracting investment into mineral processing and manufacturing. The policy has generated substantial growth in the nickel-processing sector, making Indonesia the world's largest nickel producer and a prominent case of contemporary industrial policy success. However, existing scholarship on green industrial policy often assumes that successful outcomes are primarily driven by the presence of policy instruments themselves, paying insufficient attention to the domestic political and institutional dynamics that shape their effectiveness. This research addresses that gap through the concept of policy coherence. While Indonesia is frequently criticized for regulatory inconsistency and governance challenges, its downstreaming strategy has nevertheless achieved notable results. This raises important questions about how policy coherence should be conceptualized and assessed. Drawing on institutionalist, governance, and power-relations perspectives, this study seeks to develop a clearer understanding of policy coherence through Indonesia's hilirisasi experience. It examines the domestic factors that enable coherent industrial policy implementation and explores whether extra-state influences also contribute to shaping policy coherence and industrial transformation.

THEME 2

THRIVING COMMUNITIES



QUEER YOUTH, SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEX EDUCATION

CAITLIN VAN HOFFEN

School-based Relationships and Sexuality Education is considered the most effective way to ensure the majority of Australia's youth population have adequate knowledge of sexual and reproductive health. However, four out of five queer secondary school students in Australia consider the school-based sex education they have received to be irrelevant to their needs. Furthermore, many do not feel comfortable talking to their parents or school staff about their queer identity. Instead, queer youth report valuing the advice and information provided by queer people through social media more highly than that provided by government or health authorities. Using youth-centred research methods, this paper will report back on preliminary findings from one-on-one and joint interviews with young queer Australians about their experiences using social media as a source of informal relationships and sexuality education, and if and how they actively participate in the informal sexuality education of their peers through sharing social media in private or public online spaces.

IMAGINING CONNECTION: THE PURSUIT OF "REAL" AND "ORGANIC" CONNECTION

JENNIFER GRAY

As digital technologies have become a prevalent part of contemporary dating, questions about what constitutes meaningful connection remain central to how people experience and evaluate relationships. This paper presents findings from the first results chapter of my thesis, which explores contemporary dating culture and examines how participants understood connection and how these understandings informed their experiences of app-mediated dating. Based on 35 qualitative interviews with adults aged 18–40 living in Australia and employing thematic analysis, the findings reveal that participants understood connection as a relational process grounded in trust, authenticity, mutual recognition and shared values. Connection was imagined as something that develops gradually through vulnerability, communication, embodied interaction and shared everyday experiences. Participants also consistently idealised spontaneous, "organic" and "real" encounters, revealing enduring cultural imaginaries of romance that persisted despite widespread engagement with dating apps. Drawing on existing understandings of intimacy, app-mediated technologies were evaluated against these pre-existing relational ideals. By identifying the shared understandings of connection that underpin participants' experiences, this paper provides a foundation for explaining how people interpret, negotiate and often become disillusioned with app-mediated dating. In doing so, these findings contribute to ongoing debates about intimacy and contemporary dating by showing how shared understandings of connection continue to shape relationship formation and experiences of belonging in an increasingly digital society.



SHAPING TRANSNATIONAL LGBT ADVOCACY: PRACTICES, EXPERIENCES AND IDENTITIES BETWEEN LGBT ADVOCATES IN MALAYSIA AND AUSTRALIA

IRIS YUEJIAO XU

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities frequently experience discrimination, exclusion, and aggression at the hands of those who tenaciously uphold cisheteronormative ideologies for vested interests. In response, LGBT advocacy characterized by organizability, collectivity, and sustainability emerges in myriad ways and on varying levels to challenge and reverse oppressive discourses of gender and sexuality. This project undertakes a comparative study of LGBT advocacy in Malaysia and Australia due to a keen recognition of their shared colonial legacy of anti-homosexual laws. At the same time, it ventures beyond the confines of historical affinity and investigates the claim that LGBT advocacy in post-colonial Malaysia and Australia is conditioned and shaped by unique manifestations of political ideology, socio-economic achievement, ethno-cultural struggle, and human rights rhetoric with indisputably independent and disparate outcomes. However, LGBT advocacy is no longer subjected to discrete geopolitical limitations. Propelled by digital technology, transnational flows promote mutually beneficial exchanges of knowledge, skill, and experience among LGBT advocates through transnational LGBT advocacy. Drawing inspiration from LGBT advocates in Malaysia and Australia who interrogate, resist and defy anti-LGBT beliefs and practices in their respective political and social environments, this paper examines how LGBT advocates in Malaysia and Australia experience, practice, and negotiate their identities in everyday life. Through a comprehensive ethnographic comparison across two distinct environments, the study captures the fluid, permeable, and mobile nature of advocacy cultures—ultimately offering a more expansive, intersectional, and collective vision for LGBT advocacy and liberation.

GENDER DYNAMICS AND ETHNIC IDENTITY NEGOTIATIONS AMONG SECOND-GENERATION IRANIANS IN AUSTRALIA

SAMIRA NOURI

This study explores how second-generation Iranian migrants in Australia negotiate their ethnic identity and experiences of gender across Iranian and Australian cultural contexts. While previous research has examined Iranian migration and ethnic identity, less attention has been given to second-generation Iranian Australians, particularly to how ethnic identity intersects with gender. The study examines how second-generation Iranian Australians understand and self-identify their ethnic identity, the factors that shape their sense of belonging and cultural connection, and how they negotiate their Iranian identity in relation to Australian society and ongoing connections with Iran. It also considers how gendered cultural expectations, family relationships, and ideas about masculinity and femininity may shape these processes, with attention to similarities and differences between men and women. The study draws on Mobilities Theory and Bauman's Liquid Modernity Theory to understand identity as fluid and continually negotiated through mobility, social change, and transnational connections. A qualitative approach will be used, combining semi-structured, in-depth interviews and life mapping to explore participants' experiences and identity journeys. The data will be analysed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes across participants' accounts. The study aims to contribute to research on migration, ethnic identity, and gender by providing a deeper understanding of how second-generation Iranian Australians navigate cultural expectations, belonging, and identity across different social and cultural contexts.



“IT’S JUST A CRUSHING KIND OF FEELING”: MATERNAL REGRET AND THE GENDERED CONDITIONS OF MOTHERHOOD IN AUSTRALIA

ELLA REED

Motherhood is frequently idealised as a natural, selfless, and universally fulfilling role. However, the lived experiences of many mothers reveal a far more complex reality. This presentation examines the intersection of gender inequality and motherhood through the lens of maternal regret, a phenomenon that remains under-researched and socially taboo. Drawing on qualitative research with eleven mothers living in Australia, the study explores how gendered expectations shape women's experiences of motherhood and contribute to feelings of regret. Using in-depth semi-structured interviews, participants shared nuanced accounts of the emotional, social, and practical realities of parenting. While all expressed love and care for their children, they also described experiences of anger, guilt, isolation, exhaustion, and ambivalence. Thematic analysis identified three interconnected influences on maternal regret: gendered societal and cultural expectations, the unequal division of labour within families, and idealised representations of motherhood that conflict with the realities of everyday parenting, particularly during early parenthood. The findings demonstrate that maternal regret is not simply an individual emotional response but is deeply embedded within broader structural and normative conditions that constrain women's choices and shape their expectations of motherhood. By foregrounding mothers' lived experiences, this research challenges dominant narratives of normative motherhood and highlights the importance of recognising the complexity and diversity of maternal identities. The study contributes to growing scholarship on gender, parenting, and inequality, while underscoring the need for policies and social supports that better reflect the realities of contemporary motherhood and promote greater gender equity in caregiving.

THE EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN ACCESSING DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT: A TASMANIAN SERVICE ASSESSMENT

ISABEL DUNN

Migrant and refugee women in Tasmania face unique and intersecting challenges when navigating domestic and/or family violence (DFV). While research has increasingly highlighted the prevalence of DFV among migrant and refugee communities, there remains limited understanding of how these experiences are shaped by Tasmania's distinctive social, geographic, and service landscape. This project addresses that gap by drawing on a feminist intersectional methodology. Through in-depth qualitative interviews, the study examines how DFV and migration specialist services respond to migrant and refugees in Tasmania. Findings will illuminate both the strengths and shortcomings of existing responses, offering evidence-based recommendations for improving service accessibility, cultural safety, and systemic effectiveness. This research seeks to inform policy and practice that better supports refugee women's safety and autonomy.

THEME 3



GEOPOLITICAL SECURITY

CRISIS OF ADAPTATION, CRISIS OF SURVIVAL: THE UNEVEN GLOBAL CONSEQUENCES OF US ILLIBERALISATION

AMBER MOFFETT

The US has taken a decidedly illiberal turn, with democratic backsliding that is creating a geopolitical rupture whose consequences fall unevenly across the globe, exacerbating existing inequalities between states. As a hegemonic state that is simultaneously creator and primary manager of the current liberal international order (LIO), the US turn to illiberalisation is categorically distinct from other instances of democratic backsliding. The US promoted liberal ideals of the LIO as universal, but the global impacts of US illiberalisation highlight the contradictions around universality of the order's principles and structural inequities that deliver uneven benefits. This turn is producing both material disruptions (loss of aid funding, uncertainty in security guarantees, unreliable trade relationships) and ideational disruptions (loss of faith and institutional legitimacy, changing norms, heightened nationalism, lack of predictability). States are not simply losing a partner; they're losing the scaffolding they've built their foreign and domestic policies around. However, not all states experience these impacts equally. A state's position in the global hierarchy and its degree of US dependency determine how and to what degree disruptions land. Western states, with greater institutional resources, alliances, and proximity to order building, have more tools to adapt, making their struggle a "crisis of adaptation." Non-Western states, incorporated into the order on uneven terms or excluded entirely, have fewer buffers, resulting in a "crisis of survival." Understanding this uneven distribution matters: it determines which states and populations absorb US illiberalisation as a manageable adjustment and which face existential threat.

URGENCY, DISRUPTION, AND CHANGE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19: DILEMMAS OF POLICY MAKERS IN CRISIS

LAURA WOODBRIDGE

Policy scholars have shown unprecedented interest in 'crisis' in the wake of COVID-19. However, during the pandemic, studies of COVID-19 policy were necessarily limited to arms-length analyses of leadership, discourse, and policy logics and effects. Interpretive study of intra-government decision making was empirically difficult given the inaccessibility of key actors. This paper takes the opportunity to investigate policy makers' reflections upon COVID-19, and explore how these actors experience and respond to crisis. Crisis events are defined commonly by their urgency (see Boin et al. 2016; Spector 2019). The paper asks how policy actors constructed and responded to this urgency in COVID-19. The cases of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are compared, and interviews with senior policy actors are analysed to draw out dilemmas of policy making in urgency. Key dilemmas include those tensions between speed versus process, proximity versus distance, intensity versus boundary, and insiders versus outsiders. I find that constructions of urgency interacted with, and in some cases reshaped, key traditions of Westminster policy making, including: the form and role of Cabinet, the role of the bureaucracy, and the use of experts and advice. By rerouting our site of investigation to actors' experiences, beliefs and reflections (per Bevir and Rhodes 2003), this interpretive analysis also furthers our understanding of 'crisis' in public administration, and crisis' relationship with structure and change in Westminster governance.



FROM LEARNING TO REFORM? CRISIS-INDUCED POLICY LEARNING IN INDONESIA **M MEIRIZKY IKHSAN**

Crises are often expected to stimulate policy learning by exposing existing weaknesses and increasing pressure for governments to implement policy change. Yet learning does not necessarily translate into coherent or lasting reform. This paper examines this relationship through three major crises in Indonesia: the 1997/1998 Asian Financial Crisis, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with government officials, policy practitioners, academics, and non-government actors, complemented by documentary analysis, the study compares how crisis-induced learning developed and translated into policy and institutional change. Findings suggest that crises increased government receptiveness to new policy ideas, encouraged experimentation, and accelerated reforms that might otherwise have progressed more slowly. However, the resulting changes varied considerably. Some lessons became embedded in institutional arrangements, while others were implemented unevenly, fragmented across institutions, or weakened once crisis pressure ceased. The research argues that crisis-induced policy learning should not be treated as a linear direction to reform. Crises can intensify learning and create opportunities for change, but translating those lessons into coherent and sustained reform remains contingent and uneven. Indonesia's experience therefore highlights the importance of examining what happens between learning from crisis and institutionalising what has been learned.

THE CONTINUING INFLUENCE OF NPM: PERSPECTIVES FROM A POST-AUTHORITARIAN SPECTRUM **RIDWAN NUGRAHA**

While New Public Management (NPM) had been proclaimed 'dead' and was deemed irrelevant to addressing policy problems, other commentators claim that NPM-type reform persists and continues to be practised today. About 40 years ago, such a paradigm emerged to problematise the old bureaucracy, seeking to import pro-market ideologies and business-sector principles into government. From the 'core NPM countries', this doctrine spread to the OECD countries and emerging economies, gaining its traction worldwide and reaching its peak around the 1990s. However, NPM is widely recognised to bring problems for public policy in the 2000s, leading to the development of alternative paradigms, challenging NPM in navigating the public sector reform under the post-NPM umbrella. But even today, despite its limitations, NPM continues to influence the public sector and goes hand in hand with those complementary ideas in dictating day-to-day government activities. How NPM influence could persist remains unclear. Hence, this project offers a new understanding of the dynamics of NPM-type reform. Developed in a mixed-method approach, this research collected nearly a thousand clean survey responses and more than 40 interviews, engaging civil servants in the Indonesian public sector as practitioners of post-authoritarian public policy. The result reports that, despite its agreed limitations, indeed, NPM-type reform still exists. The empirical findings suggest that public practitioners tend to view NPM shortcomings as tolerable or 'better than nothing'. Thus, NPM tenets may not be perfect, but they are still considered necessary, especially in the spectrum of bureaucracies facing systemic problems such as corruption.



UNDERSTANDING HUMANITARIAN ACCESS IN ARMED CONFLICT

CAS MACLEAN

International humanitarian organisations (IHOs) operating in conflict zones face major challenges, including diversion of food aid, access denial, and violence against personnel. While humanitarian access literature systematically examines the interaction between conflict broadly and humanitarian aid, genocide scholars argue that genocidal violence follows a distinct logic. Genocide targets the essential foundations of the life of national groups which humanitarian aid seeks to uphold. Thus, we might expect that IHOs face fundamentally different obstacles during genocides, rendering the traditional armed conflict lens of humanitarianism insufficient. This study addresses this problem using a mixed methods design. First, a qualitative review of operational and academic literature to identify recurring challenges that aid agencies face in genocidal conflicts. This is complemented by semi-structured interviews with humanitarian aid practitioners experienced in such conflicts. Second, conflict and security datasets will be used to test whether genocidal conflicts are associated with higher levels of aid diversion, harm to aid workers, and access denial, controlling for overall conflict intensity and related factors. By bringing genocide studies into conversation with the humanitarian aid literature, this study aims to uncover whether, and to what extent, genocidal patterns in conflict affect the humanitarian access environment. The expected results are the identification of recurring themes in humanitarian access during genocidal conflicts, and the extent to which genocide affects the humanitarian access environment, mediated by other variables such as the state's international standing, government capacity, and overall conflict intensity. These results can help inform humanitarian actors assessing and responding to such crises.

DISRUPTING SEXUALISED DEEPPAKE ABUSE: EXPLORING YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF AI ETHICS AND ABUSE

RUBY SCIBERRAS

With the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has come the proliferation of sexualised deepfake abuse (SDA) as a relatively novel form of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA). Young people, particularly within marginalised groups, are experiencing SDA at higher rates than other age groups. This is occurring within a context of high rates of misogyny online and in schools among young people. However, legal and policy responses to IBSA in Australia fail to acknowledge the role and realities of young people's digital sexual image creation and sharing practices in prevention. This paper will present on initial findings from arts-based and online focus groups with young people aged 16-24 based in Melbourne, Australia and London England, exploring young people's sexual ethics and consent attitudes within the context of sexualised deepfake creation, consumption and sharing. This project will draw upon strengths and rights-based approaches to SDA prevention and Carmody's ethical erotics. This approach aims to incorporate young people's existing (post)digital sexual 'ethics' into SDA prevention, moving beyond risk-based approaches to IBSA prevention, toward an acknowledgment of youth sexual agency and their potential for positive digital sexual interactions.

EMPATHETIC ANIMALS: FEMINISTS AND ANTI-FEMINISTS UNDER CONDITIONAL VISIBILITY ON THE CHINESE INTERNET

BEIBEI WU

In recent years, gender politics on the Chinese internet has hardened into open antagonism: feminist and anti-feminist communities treat one another as adversaries across a fixed divide, and both are saturated with political feeling. This thesis examines the puzzle at the centre of that antagonism: why a conflict so charged with feeling has produced so little durable political change. It asks how feminist and anti-feminist discourses are constructed and disseminated on Rednote (Xiaohongshu) and Baidu Tieba, and how these discourses, and the communities that circulate them, interact.



BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: WHEN HOUSING AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CRISES CONVERGE

CHANTELLE LANGDON

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children in Australia with over 9,000 women annually becoming homeless after leaving their homes due to DFV. The intertwined cost-of-living and housing crisis in Australia is forcing victim-survivors to make impossible choices between safety and shelter. The data tells a devastating story. In 2022 nearly 8,000 women returned to an abuser - not because the violence stopped but because they were unable to secure long-term accommodation. In 2024 this number rose to 13,000 women. This presentation will present a timely critical stocktake of state and federal policies and practices that impact victim-survivors' decision making processes to leave an abusive relationship. Preliminary findings from the current PhD research will be presented, based on thematic analysis of focus group findings with DFV practitioners. I will argue that the illusion of 'choice' is very much an oxymoron as victim-survivors may be faced with deciding whether to reside in unsafe, sub-par accommodation offerings, or to return to an abusive partner.

UNMASKING THE PERPETRATOR: EXPLORING MOTIVATIONS BEHIND ONLINE SEXUAL HARASSMENT PERPETRATION IN AUSTRALIA AND THE U.S.

SARA AGOSTINO

Online sexual harassment (OSH) is a pervasive form of gender-based violence (GBV). While OSH research has increased over the last decade, it focuses heavily on the experiences of victims and impacts. Less is therefore known about perpetrators or their motivations for engaging in OSH. This research seeks to address this gap by analysing how an individual's beliefs about power and sexism impact their likelihood of perpetuating OSH using qualitative and quantitative survey data. This research focuses on everyday women experiencing OSH by strangers, in contrast to the literature's focus on the harassment of high-profile women, such as politicians. Further, this research offers a novel comparative analysis of OSH perpetration in Australia and the U.S., with a focus on younger adults (18-39 years), as research indicates higher perpetration amongst these cohorts. It aims to increase understanding of OSH to inform digital safety policies across both jurisdictions.

THE DIFFUSION OF SMOKE FREE ZONE POLICY IN INDONESIA, 2004 TO 2026

ANANG SANTOSO

Indonesia has not ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Local smoke free zone regulation is therefore the main instrument available to local health agencies and tobacco control advocates. This article examines the diffusion of smoke free zone regulations across 509 Indonesian jurisdictions between 2004 and 2026. Using discrete time event history analysis on a jurisdiction year panel, it models two transitions separately, the hazard of adopting a smoke free zone regulation and the hazard of adding provisions beyond the national minimum once a regulation is in place. Of the 509 jurisdictions, 401 adopted a smoke free zone regulation, but only 55 of the 401 included provisions on advertising, sponsorship, retail display or enforcement capacity that national law does not mandate. Basic adoption is driven by advocacy and by peer influence from neighbouring jurisdictions. Upgrading is driven by local advocacy alone, with no measurable peer effect. Qualitative interviews show that upgrading is harder in practice than the models suggest, because a city that strengthened its regulation was taken to court in an attempt to annul the stronger provisions. Diffusion in Indonesia is therefore wide but shallow. The findings show that in unratified settings the depth of local adoption matters more than its extent, and that subnational venues operate as the primary site of tobacco control rather than a fallback.



KNOWLEDGE ABOUT, AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS, RESISTANCE TRAINING IN CHINESE OLDER ADULTS

TIANSI (THEODOSIA) CHU

One of the biggest causes of declining health and disability in older adults is sarcopenia, which is a significant decrease in muscle tissue and muscle strength due to aging that dramatically accelerates after the age of 50. Recent research suggests that Resistance Training (RT) is the most effective for halting and reversing sarcopenia symptomatology in older adults. Moreover, RT interventions have been found to significantly reduce falls and the associated harms among older adults. The Chinese government has recently recognised the importance of RT for healthy aging and has recently implemented a series of policies to encourage more people to participate in RT, including a range of support structures such as affordable community gyms within walking distance. However, only few older adults in China participate in RT or go to the gyms built up by government. This could be largely affected by unique Chinese social norms and cultural beliefs. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate Chinese older adults' (50+) knowledge of, and attitudes towards RT, as well as the psycho-social, and cultural factors that motivate or hinder their participating in RT. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analysed by hybrid deductive-inductive codebook thematic analysis applying the Capability Opportunity Motivation Behaviour (COM-B) model (Mitchie et al., 2011). This study provides a theoretical framework for comprehending how Chinese-specific psycho-social and cultural factors might influence older Chinese adults' involvement in RT, offering possible ways to encourage RT and prevent sarcopenia among this community.

CULTURAL BELIEFS AND CHILD HEALTHCARE UTILISATION IN RAJASTHAN, INDIA

PULKITA JAIN

In India, socio-cultural beliefs often shape child health outcomes, particularly the uptake of child healthcare services. Deeply rooted generational beliefs continue to influence practices related to child nutrition and immunisation. Among marginalised caste groups in India, these beliefs often vary across communities and social contexts. To better understand these perceptions and the factors underlying them, we conducted in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with mothers and at Anganwadi centres in selected areas of Rajasthan. The study includes 30 health workers and 107 mothers from different caste groups of Rajasthan. The findings showed a transition from deep-rooted disbelief in medical interventions to trust in them. Trust in government healthcare is more prevalent among the Scheduled Castes than among the Scheduled Tribes. Furthermore, financial incentives tied to specific gender outcomes, such as receiving government funds upon the birth of a second girl child, have fundamentally shifted cultural behaviours and increased maternal engagement with healthcare systems. The heavy influence of mothers-in-law and traditional family hierarchies heavily dictates child-rearing practices, prompting health workers to directly engage these elders to ensure compliance with modern nutritional advice. Health workers explained that some families resist vaccinating their children mainly due to fear of side effects.



CHALLENGING EFFICIENCY: PLATFORMIZED LABOR AND THE EROSION OF AGENCY IN INDONESIA'S SATUSEHAT

FRENIA NABABAN

Digital health transformation is often promoted as a solution to the global healthcare workforce crisis, promising that AI and data integration will eliminate inefficiency and allow clinicians to work "at the top of their license." This paper challenges that ideology, arguing that digitalization may instead exacerbate burnout and redistribute clinical authority.

Guided by the Culture-Centered Approach (CCA), this ethnographic study examines SATUSEHAT, Indonesia's national integrated health platform, by foregrounding voices at the margins of digital infrastructure. Data were generated through interviews with six health system stakeholders and twenty-five people living with HIV (PLHIV). The analysis reveals three systemic tensions. First, Platformized Labor: rather than reducing administrative burden, the system transforms clinicians into "data clerks" navigating redundant platforms to maintain licensing and accreditation. Second, Redistribution of Authority through Task-Siloing: the platform's architecture fragments the clinical encounter, displacing the "Master View" of the patient journey from the clinician to the administrative infrastructure. Third, Erosions of Agency: mandatory compliance imposes an "ethical double burden" that strips clinicians of discretion and removes the ability of PLHIV to negotiate how sensitive data is handled, undermining the trust that underpins care. This research argues that the pursuit of efficiency in digital health operates as a form of structural control, systematically weakening the agency of both medical professionals and patients. These findings suggest that health information systems must be re-evaluated in contexts where marginalized populations depend on clinician discretion for safe and dignified care.