

## Archipelago Conference Schedule

March 20-22, 2025  
MIT, Cambridge, MA

### Panel 1

*21st March 2025*  
*Building 51 - 095*  
*9:00 AM - 10:15 AM*

**Title:** Separated by Proximity: Urban Archipelagos and the Politics of Space

**Description:**

This panel explores the geography of archipelagic thought in relation to the infrastructural, the urban, and the regional. The papers offer nuanced understandings of the separations that emerge from the anthropogenic transformation of territory, tracing how spatial, ecological, and social divisions shape interactions across human and non-human entities. Through cases spanning Central Africa, South Asia, and North America, the panel examines how fragmented geographies—whether produced through technology or racialized spatial management—mediate exchange, belonging, and exclusion.

The panel discussion would be moderated by **Jason Jackson**

## Papers:

- **On Nodes and Flows:** Radio Connectivity and an Archipelago of Villages in Central Africa
  - Scott Ross

*This paper thinks through flows, nodes, and other metaphors or models of connectivity amid discourse about connecting Africa's hinterland through information and communications technology. Drawing from research on a humanitarian intervention that reimagines a vernacular two-way radio communications system as a conflict early warning system, I ask what kinds of remoteness and connectivity are imagined, produced, or altered by different forms of intervention. If villages are imagined as isolated, bounded places, connecting them requires creating links across these archipelagos in the forest and savanna. Putting field research in rural central Africa in dialogue with the urban studies literature on infrastructure and moving across communications technology from the talking drum to the radio set to the cell phone, I show how connectivity and communication are contingent on the affordances of technology as well as geography and question the leap-frogging nature of connectivity.*

- **The Sea Ahead:** Reorienting Karachi's Urban Environmental Geography
  - Salwa Tareen

*Though it sits at the edge of the Arabian Sea's unruly waters, it is easy to forget that Karachi is a coastal city on the Indus River Delta. The water comes into view on rare occasions when residents traverse across the fast-paced traffic on Seaview Drive for an afternoon on its gray sand, speckled with candy wrappers and broken shell shards. Only when tsunamis and monsoons seasonally threaten to inundate the megacity do residents appeal to their local pelagic saint, Abdullah Shah Ghazi, to save them from devastation.*

*Despite its proximity to the Delta and its network of islands, Karachi remains artificially severed from its surrounding ecosystem. Decades of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and land reclamation displaced the archipelago's indigenous fishing communities and decimated its mangrove forests in favor of the city's growth. Although the causes of this destruction are well known, I seek to explore the impact of this urban-environmental alienation on local residents as a broader structure of feeling.*

*In this paper, I draw from Glissant's model of archipelagic thinking to consider the relatedness between these divergent physical landscapes. I also bring my ethnographic observations conducted in 2022-2023 in conversation with the work of artist Naiza*

*Khan. In particular, I examine Khan's imagined cartographies of the region in her recent exhibition, "Mapping Water نقش آب." In doing so, I seek to reorient Karachi's vast urban geography within its surrounding environment by reexamining the discursive and aesthetic boundaries between it and the Indus River Delta.*

- **Conditional Inhabitants:** Regional Legibility and Identity in Appalachia
  - Taylor Gilliam

*Inspired by McKittrick's (2006) extension of archipelagos of Otherness as theorized by Sylvia Wynter, this paper considers regional legibility and identity as practiced alongside, though not necessarily consistent with, dominant modes of spatialization. I use Central Appalachia as a vantage point; Appalachia's regional legibility can be directly traced to civilizationist claims of crisis dialogically structured by racial-sexual regulation. As argued by Roitman (2013), crisis claims work to legitimate dominant power structures. Appalachia as a geography of crisis presents a unique formation that is not just legitimated by, but a direct consequence of, hegemonic interventions for alleged crises. I argue that the region's spatial management is constitutive of the racial-sexual regulation that indexes these crises. This is reflected most prominently in the federal demarcation of what comprises Appalachia by the Appalachian Regional Commission. I attend particularly to the role of eugenicist population management and the anthropocentric manipulation of landscapes to evidence that the region is a paradigmatic case for the overrepresentation of Man's geographies. That is, Appalachia has been systematically organized in and through conservation efforts and resource extractivism that reify notions of (un)inhabitability. In the wake of this history, I explore the implications for regional identity as an organizing node for place-based practices that create friction with legible geographic boundaries. Immanent to this friction are the relationships and practices of belonging in the region that escape normative territorialization. For an analytical object, I take my own positionality as an ethnographer with fractally contested belonging to the region through diaspora.*

## Panel 2

*21st March 2025*

*Building 51 - 275*

*9:00 AM - 10:15 AM*

**Title:** Intersecting Isles: Transnational Archipelagos and Diasporic Exchange

### **Description:**

Each paper in this panel explores a case of how cultural practices exceed and engage with borders through migration and diaspora. Themes of community care, identity, and structural violence are woven through each panelist's work. The resultant conversation demonstrates that each of these themes is problematized differently across transnational contexts.

The panel discussion will be moderated by **Michael Fischer**.

## Papers:

- **Archipelagic Thinking and the Afro-Brazilian Experience** in the NYC Metro Area
  - Vasconcelos Dias Fernanda

*This paper examines Afro-Brazilian immigration to New York City and Newark, NJ, focusing on race relations and the lived experience of race as a social construct. While Brazil and the U.S. share histories of slavery and Black intellectual exchange, their distinct racial formations shape how Afro-Brazilian immigrants navigate identity and politics in the NYC metro area. This paper discusses: How do Afro-Brazilian immigrants experience race and race relations, and how do their understandings shift upon migration? Engaging with the conference's theme of archipelagic formations, this research conceptualizes Afro-Brazilian immigrants as part of a social and ideological "archipelago," shaped by transnational flows of racial discourse, culture, and labor. Like physical archipelagos that balance connection and fragmentation, these immigrants traverse multiple racial systems, carrying Brazilian racial ideologies while adapting to the U.S.'s rigid racial binary. This fluid negotiation reflects the ruptures and continuities central to archipelagic thinking. Additionally, this study examines the political economies of migration within an archipelagic framework, positioning the NYC metro area as a key node in Black mobility and labor networks. By incorporating ethnographic perspectives on education and work, it fills a gap in scholarship on the contemporary African diaspora from Brazil in the U.S. Ultimately, this research highlights how Afro-Brazilian immigrants' experiences of race contribute to broader discussions on sovereignty, social belonging, and the transnational reconfiguration of racial meanings.*

- **Transforming Ethnographic Navigation: From Principles of Azerbaijani Ontological Hospitality to Postures of Ethnographic Practice**
  - Calvin Tiessen

*Like the archipelagic traveler, ethnographers must be skilled in the art of navigation between and around places and times. This article is a narrated ethnography of my personal experience of navigation around Azerbaijani ways of life. It comes out of my doctoral research which led to discovery of the deep ontological hospitality which is at the heart of Azerbaijani ways of being. In my thesis, published in 2024, based on ethnographic research carried out over a period of 25 years, I explored the Azerbaijani concept of qonaqpərvərlik: a state of co-existence within which hospitable persons entrust one another with preservation of hospitable conditions. These conditions are experienced by Azerbaijanis as a shared commitment to interpersonal attentiveness and availability with the aim of assuring that hospitality roles are possible. In this paper I take some of the core elements of this observed attentive co-existence and explore how*

*these might provide a rich framework for ethnographic practice, facilitating navigation of an abundance of being required for positions of hosting, becoming on the way towards others which is characteristic of a guest, and a commitment to bearing witness which sustains conditions of mutuality. In taking this framework of hospitality from ethnographic observation to a set of research postures I propose a significant ethnographic perspective: that what we learn in our navigations can change the very way we navigate.*

- **Archipelagic Kin Economies:** The (Re)production of Family and Business Across Borders
  - Garcia Miranda

*The 90-mile Florida Strait figures prominently in popular and academic discourse on Cuba and its diaspora – dividing communism and capitalism, revolutionary Cubans and anti-Castro exiles, and fragmenting families. Puncturing this fractious narrative is the recent phenomenon of informal business support between Cuba and Florida in the wake of economic reforms and resurgent private enterprise on the island. In following families as they regularly send money, materials, and information back and forth, Cold War paradigms start to break down, particularly the idea of “exporting” ideals and values from one side to the other. These transnational familial businesses wholly embody Glissant’s “archipelagic thinking” – entrepreneurial ventures ideated between Cuban and American shores, grown through the informal bridging of embargoed economies, and sustained via daily online exchange and regular commercial flights (since 2016). This paper explores the underlying motivations propelling this exchange: not only evolving obligations to care (materially and affectively), but also a shared familial identity as “entrepreneurs” and “business owners.” It considers how these kin-based business projects ultimately reconfigure the shape of the Cuban family, with transnational businesses as vehicles for care and sources of legitimacy amid economic and social precarity on both sides of the Straits.*

- **Disrupting Discourse in Touristified Islands:** PAR and the Politics of Subversion in Mallorca's Rural Urbanization
  - Rossello Xamena Miquel

*Tourism has driven the rapid urbanization of many islands in the Mediterranean Sea and the Caribbean, posing enormous challenges to spaces with limited resources. Yet, traditional critical research developed for studying touristification often fails to account for the unique dynamics of islands, where spatial limitations and land-use conflicts manifest differently. Grounded in Laclau’s discourse theory and Rankin’s “politics of subversion,” this paper challenges these approaches by proposing that research itself can function as a discursive practice that can infuse change. To exemplify this, we use a*

*Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework developed in Pollença, a town in northern Mallorca.*

*Since the 1980s, rural areas of Mallorca have been illegally urbanized with luxurious villas rented to tourists. Despite longstanding sustainability concerns, this informal urbanization has become a central economic activity. Around it, a spiral of silence has formed: no public narrative has challenged within the community the impact of those rentals on their land. Using this case of touristification, we apply PAR methodologies to uncover daily yet silent “subversions” within the dominant narrative around rural rentals. Ethnographic research within the community is the one called to identify those potential disruptions in the discourse legitimizing this form of urbanization. Then, quantitative data helps articulate these disruptions as a counter-narrative tool. Using PAR not just to engage but also to interpret social narratives allows us to orient the quantitative phase toward identifying where the spiral of silence can break, fostering change with new discourse possibilities.*

### Panel 3

*21st March 2025*

*Building 51 - 063*

*9:00 AM - 10:15 AM*

**Title:** Archipelagic Resistance and Solidarity: Indigenous and Decolonial Methods

**Description:**

From Brazilian quilombos to Shi'i women's seminars, the papers in this panel explore relationships between colonialism, resistance, and sovereignty. Colonial infrastructures are co-opted, rejected, or recontextualized, and the potential for radical solidarity through archipelagic thinking rises. Stepping back from the case study, each author interrogates hegemonic research methods and considers how archipelagic thinking might inform decolonial methodologies for learning from and with indigenous communities.

The panel discussion will be moderated by **Amy Moran-Thomas**.



## Papers:

- **Islands of Empire, Waves of Resistance:** Grassroots Movements Against U.S. Military Presence on the Japanese Archipelago
  - Hsieh Chu-Wen

*How has the Yokosuka Peace Flotilla, a group of Japanese anti-military activists, created a movement that critiques the U.S. maritime military empire in the Pacific region while still drawing on the practices and iconography of sea power? In part, the answer lies in the history of colonialism and imperial power in the Pacific. During and after the Second World War, the U.S. constructed an empire of bases, knitting together islands and littoral spaces that had once constituted Japanese, British, Dutch, Chinese and Russian colonial archipelagos. This new assemblage has been the ground for American actions and imaginaries, allowing policy makers in Washington to call the Pacific an "American lake," and exert a strange and complex sovereignty over those whose lives are led in these spaces.*

*It has also shaped the work of the Yokosuka Peace Flotilla as they protest the actions of the U.S. Navy in Japanese seaside villages and military harbors, in regions of archipelagic Asia that stretch out from now-American bases. It drives their monthly ship-borne demonstrations, monitoring American naval activities, exposing these actions to visitors, and directly addressing the American ships' crews at work. At the same time, there is an uncanny irony to their opposition, launched from piers that were once the home to the Imperial Japanese Navy, organized by citizens whose families once served on those ships, protesting American actions in a region whose earlier unities were grounded in Japanese imperial control. A world in which the resistance to maritime empires is still shaped by their forms.*

- **Refusal as "Romanticization" and/or Decolonization:** Accounting for Difficult Fieldwork Situations in the Islamic Republic of Iran
  - Tawasil Amina

*The 1979 Revolution created unprecedented opportunities for religiously conservative women to participate in building a Shi'i revolutionary state through expanded access to women's seminaries. I lived in Iran for 15 months to explore what being loyal to this project looked like for them. My interlocutors included five Supreme Leader students and over twenty Basij paramilitary members. While my book, "Paths Made by Walking" (September 2024), focuses on the women's educative experiences, I chose not to include my challenges conducting fieldwork. As part of my anthropological training, I also did not concern myself with writing about their motivations since these are assumed in social interactions. These methodological decisions represent a conscious*

*step toward decolonizing ethnographic practice and reinforcing archipelagic thinking, or what we have in common with those who have been historically Othered. Yet in avoiding these, I risk appearing to romanticize their participation in a state known for its repressive practices. In this paper I ask: How do we navigate the tension between decolonial methodological commitments and what critics dismiss as "romanticization" when writing about fieldwork situations? I challenge the reductive category of "romanticization," which inadequately captures the complexities of centering marginalized experiences, particularly when these align with state power. I look to decolonial scholars Harrison (1991) and Biehl (2007). Building on Tuck and Yang's (2014) proposition to "make settler colonial metanarrative the object of social science research" to prioritize the perspectives of targeted communities, I consider how this might extend to state actors like the seminarian women in Iran.*

- **"Our Brother Natives":** Archipelagic Thinking, Creolization, and Proto-Nationalism in Depression-Era Belize
  - Kray Christine

*Édouard Glissant envisioned the possibility of radical solidarity through archipelagic thinking. From one's vantage point on an island in an archipelago, one imagines other people on other, similar islands. There is a spark of re/cognition, tossing a rope bridge across a vast ocean of difference.*

*In the 1930s in British Honduras (Belize), sparks of re/cognition appeared in select editorials penned by Creole writers, igniting moments of solidarity with Indigenous people who were being forcibly displaced by a behemoth British-owned mahogany company that monopolized land and steered colonial policy through the ponderosity of its financial power. These flashes of affinity overcame British discursive efforts that had aimed to divide Creoles and "Indians" through practices of mythohistory, a bifurcated labor market, and the racialization of food. These flashes of recognition propelled a colony-wide, multiethnic labor movement and a "Natives First" nationalism that culminated in independence decades later.*

- **Navigating Archipelagic Thinking:** Reflections on Stepping Back from Indigenous Language Revitalization Research
  - Borgia-Askey Melissa

*This presentation examines the evolving dynamics between non-Indigenous researchers and Indigenous communities engaged in language revitalization efforts and other research. Drawing on personal experience and recent scholarship, it explores the complex process of researchers disengaging from active participation in community-led initiatives. The study is framed within the context of decolonizing methodologies and the*

*growing recognition of Indigenous sovereignty in research practices (Guerrettaz & Engman, (2023).*

*The research considers the shift from researcher-led to community-driven language revitalization efforts, framing this transition within the concept of archipelagic thinking in its flexible and unpredictable outcomes. It addresses the ethical considerations and power dynamics inherent in this process, particularly focusing on the emotional and psychological impacts on researchers as they step back from established relationships.*

*By examining contemporary approaches to collaborative research, this presentation contributes to the ongoing discourse on ethical engagement with Indigenous communities. It addresses questions of value, social obligation and harm reduction within these relational formations, while also considering the potential for reparative practices in addressing historical traumas associated with colonial research paradigms.*

*This study aims to advance the discourse on ethical research practices in Indigenous contexts, aligning with the conference theme by demonstrating how archipelagic thinking can aid in analyzing and addressing pressing challenges in cross-cultural, interdisciplinary research methodologies.*

Panel 4:

*21st March 2025*

*Building 51 - 095*

*1:30 PM - 2:45 PM*

**Title:** Performance as a Site of Inquiry and Exploration

**Description:** How does performance, in the form of theatre, dance, and language, serve as a conduit of political and cultural identity? Through case studies spanning Chicago, Berlin, Suva, and Inner Mongolia, this panel will explore the role of performance in community-building, cultural and public diplomacy, and language revitalization. It will examine how performance, as practice, space, and metaphor, has been wielded to claim and contest notions of citizenship, solidarity, and survival.

The panel discussion would be moderated by **Christopher Fung**

## Papers:

- **Bodies, Chairs and the Spaces In-Between:** Materializing Violence and Futurity in Chicago's Improve Theatres
  - Charman Lauren

*What is the role of laughter, play, and imagination amidst political polarization? The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 inspired rapid political mobilization against racial injustice in the United States. That summer, street protests in Chicago reflected a continuing desire to dismantle structural racism across the racially segregated city. During ethnographic fieldwork at Chicago's iO Theater in 2024, I explored whether this political climate showed up on improv comedy stages. Marginalized performers describe improv as a place to escape or explore the self as "adults playing make-believe." On stage, performers manifested ongoing histories of racialized violence: a mob of white medieval guards surrounded a Black performer playing a magician, threatening to behead him. Improvisers also transformed the present: a Blackorican improviser disrupted this scene, shouting, "don't kill Black magic!" The primarily white audience sucked laughter out of the air and filled it with an awkward, uncertain silence. Just as in children's play, the imaginative substance of improv comedy materializes from bodies and their positions in the social world. At a time when identity politics seems inadequate to address civil turmoil and identity-based oppression, I follow Glissant's move away from discrete subjectivities to consider how "every identity is extended through a relationship with the other." Using this archipelagic approach, I turn to the quiet tension in the in-between and intersubjective. While violent histories swirl in these dire straits between us, I illustrate how transformative moments of queer and Black feminist futurity also spontaneously erupt when adults play pretend.*

- **Dancing Between Nations:** Banyans, Archipelagos, and Metaphors of Interconnection
  - Cox Nicole

*Rabindranath Tagore's metaphor of India's global presence as the banyan tree presents an intriguing conceptual framework for understanding the nation's contemporary cultural and public diplomacy programs, particularly those that connect embodied citizens around the world with India through the physical taking on of nationalized practices of the body such as dance, yoga, or wellness regimens. In my ethnographic research on India's public diplomacy programs, cases emerge in which research on (yet between) national identities probes the necessity of thinking both with and past models of the nation-state as a sovereign and globally interconnected entity. A core contingent of this multi-sited research project taking place in Suva, Fiji not only makes Epeli Hau'ofa's call for engaging a networked Pacific particularly salient but also presents distinct*

*ethnographic instances in which the metaphor of the banyan tangles with archipelagic claims to Oceanic citizenship. Through a combination of ethnographic vignettes and theoretical inquiries, this paper probes what the Banyan, Archipelago, and other metaphors of interconnection offer to the study of India's public diplomacy and geopolitical interests, especially as they operate in relation to South Pacific designs of multi-scalar dimension.*

- **From Movement to Movement:** Shifting Political Subjectivities on the Dance Floor
  - *Pierce Reid*

*Johan Andersson (2022) has described Berlin's queer nightlife spaces as archipelagic; rather than being huddled together in a 'gayborhood,' they are instead scattered across the city, taking root in neglected, in-between spaces. This could easily be extended to a global scale with DJs, promoters, and ravers traveling to make music and dance on floors scattered around the world. As such, dance floors are spaces where people and ideas intermingle, and novel social formations can be explored. How do dance floors facilitate these exchanges and what possibilities are there for building solidarity? In this paper, I build on research in queer nightlife studies, geography, and political anthropology to argue that the affective states created by the combination of sound and movement can be leveraged towards shifting political subjectivities. I draw on fieldwork conducted in New York's dance music scenes in 2023 and 2024 as well as some of my own experiences on dance floors in Berlin and Riga, LV to show how DJs, organizers, and others use the tools at their disposal to encourage shifting political orientations.*

- **Echoes of a Language:** Performing to Speak Mongolian in Inner Mongolia, China
  - Kaat Skylar

*On a scorching hot afternoon, in a community center in Inner Mongolia, China, twelve modestly-dressed elderly people come together to learn Classical Mongolian. It was the language of their parents and grandparents, but one that they never had the chance to learn due to over seventy years of state-led assimilationist agenda promoting Mandarin Chinese (Curdtt-Christiansen and Gao 2021). One might imagine that they strive towards fluency or hope their dedication ignites a broader revitalization for future generations. However, from six months of preliminary research, I found that learning Mongolian in their case has shifted in meaning from mastery of the language to its use in performance (Bauman 1993) and as a performative act (Austin 1962). The elderlies focus their meetings on cultivating the feel of speaking Mongolian, through repeating basic phrases and singing Mongolian songs to tourists, without understanding most of the Mongolian they utter. What can we learn from a case where language survival does not seek fluency or revival in the strict sense, but is about learning to do things with it in public to ensure its presence endures without threatening the dominant language, Mandarin Chinese. This project rethinks language continuity: In what forms beyond simple restoration to daily conversational use can language survival manifest? Like an archipelago—where isolated islands remain socially connected to the mainland—Mongolian persists in fragmented yet meaningful ways. This project foregrounds language survival, rather than revitalization, as an important notion in anthropological studies of minority languages.*

Panel 5

*21st March 2025*

*Building 51 - 275*

*1:30 PM - 2:45 PM*

**Title:** Health and Environment: Response and Adaptation In a Time of Global Crisis

**Description:** From the COVID-19 pandemic to climate change, contemporary global crises are reshaping our understanding of the interconnections between health and environment in localities around the world. This panel will explore responses to health and environmental challenges by state, non-governmental, and international actors in Brazil, Kenya, the Maldives, and Cabo Verde. It will analyze the challenges and tensions embedded in these efforts, as well as document attempts to advance community sovereignty and mobilization.

This session would be moderated by **Cal Biruk**



## Papers:

- **Archipelagic “Global” Health?** Constructing and Contesting Globality at Africa’s Premier Population Research Center
  - Daniel Krugman

*Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the technocratic assemblage that has become known as “Global Health” has been in crisis. Grappling with the longstanding failure to create health equity among all people through scientific research and intervention, the past half decade has features unprecedented proliferation of critical reflection on the field’s structuring and calls for change coalescing around discourses of “decolonization.” But at the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) in Nairobi, Kenya—the largest, most renowned “African-owned, African-led” health think tank on the continent—the “centering” and “empowerment” of Global South technocrats that is parlayed as the salvation to the field’s structural issues by powerful practitioners and scientists in the North is an uneasy experience. Although the prominence of the center, opportunities for its staff, and financial security have reached unforeseen levels, APHRC’s researchers, policy experts, and leaders refuse the position of saviors of the ostensibly global apparatus called “Global Health.” Drawing from preliminary dissertation research, this paper thinks with the pragmatic constructions of “the global” by APHRC staff—often as a singular, centralized system, but increasingly as otherwise conceptualizations of being in relation to other peoples in other regions. Using archipelagos as an analytic to articulate relations between sovereign entities, I ask what would archipelagic thinking contribute to reimagining what “the global” is and technocratic assemblages that seeks to make vast populations healthier? Illuminating my interlocutors’ imaginations of autonomous “islands” of health infrastructures and technocratic action that they are increasing within a system that demands centralization and uniformity, this paper explores the boundaries of what “globality” is and different ways it can be made in a world in desperate need of new ways of thinking about our interconnectivity.*

- **Permission Structures:** Adaptation and the Archipelagic Geopolitics of Ocean Avoidance in the Maldives
  - Eric Hirsch

*The Maldives, a low-lying archipelagic nation, occupies a prominent position on the world stage of climate advocacy. A central theme of the Maldivian government’s climate advocacy since its viral 2009 underwater cabinet meeting has been its refusal to become a climate change “victim.” I propose that this refusal creates a permission structure for new economic growth projects to be launched in the name of climate adaptation that increasingly draw on its geopolitically strategic place in the Indian*

*Ocean. Drawing on recent fieldwork, I follow a series of massive urbanizing infrastructure projects requiring land reclamation, coastal armoring, and artificial island development that deny the ocean's ubiquitous presence in the Maldives while commodifying the country's key place on ocean trade routes. These projects promise to transform the country, already boasting South Asia's highest per-capita GDP, into a growth-ready, climate-adaptive hub for international trade, tourism, and transit. What started as an effort to alleviate overcrowding and flood vulnerability in the capital, Malé, with land reclamation and elevated artificial islands has given way to ambitious plans for a multi-island "Greater Malé" region that promises to multiply the wealth of this central node of Indian Ocean trade. Promising a new climate-proof metropolis, new projects are escalating thanks to a proxy influence war between China and India. Malé-based activists are contesting these ecologically and financially devastating growth projects, which one advocate I interviewed called "the great deformation." They argue that infrastructure projects premised on ocean avoidance ultimately exacerbate the risks of flooding and erosion, while when left alone, the Maldives' coral-protected atoll geomorphologies can withstand seasonal monsoons and even some sea level rise. This talk follows how debates about Maldivian prosperity, geopolitics, and climate precarity are refracted through infrastructural expansion.*

- **Isles of Victimhood:** COVID Denial and Struggles for Reparation in Brazil
  - Vinicius Cardoso Reis

*In the face of governmental denial and neglect, Brazil experienced a Covid-19 mortality rate exceeding 700,000, the world's second highest. Covid-19 victims—those who lost loved ones to the virus and those who survived with long-term effects—are now seeking justice and reparation. Their shared identity as victims wields a denunciatory power that defines the state and its agents as perpetrators who should be held accountable for their negligence and omission. Despite their common traits, such movements first emerged as isles of mutual support and mobilization. Through virtual meetings, their members forged spaces of shared suffering, grief, and revolt. Over time, they joined forces and articulated common demands, forming what they named the National Network for Accountability and Reparation to Covid-19 Victims. This archipelago of social movements, an alliance of many moving parts, seeks to affirm itself as the legitimate representation of a very diverse collective, many of whom have been affected by the mishandling of Covid-19 but do not belong to associations or support groups. This paper is based on fieldwork conducted among activists from such movements in Brazil, seeking to understand how Covid-19 victims have been struggling to build a common agenda against state violence despite their differences. In doing so, I seek to understand which tactics of mobilization they employ and what they mean by demanding reparation and accountability. Considering how Covid-19 affected Brazil and*

*the world, this article brings forth a struggle for the possibilities of building a future; as such, it provides an opportunity for reflection, justice, and healing.*

- **Surveying Perceptions of Climate Change and Health** in Santiago Island, Cabo Verde
  - Cindy Xie

*Global environmental changes, including heat and drought, are causing numerous, interconnected human health impacts that are borne out in individuals' lived experiences. This paper draws upon preliminary results from a community survey conducted in 4 neighborhoods of Santiago Island, Cabo Verde, in summer 2023 and January 2025, as part of a broader multidisciplinary study on climate change and health in Cabo Verde.*

*As a student researcher at Universidade Jean Piaget de Cabo Verde, I worked with a team of researchers to design a community survey, administered verbally to 50+ respondents, regarding the impact of the environment on nutrition, physical health, and mental health, as well as broader attitudes and awareness of climate change. I also conducted several interviews and site visits with farmers, fishermen, and civil society organizations, and examined the role of environmental crises and migration in the history of Cabo Verde and its global diaspora.*

*Our study revealed numerous perceived impacts of the environment, particularly prolonged heat and drought, on health. These impacts included rising food prices limiting access to fresh fruits and vegetables, worsening mental health symptoms (i.e. anxiety, heat stress), and the impact of housing on physical health conditions (i.e. hypertension, respiratory diseases). At the same time, we also observed a gap in awareness and education around climate change in the communities most impacted by climate-induced changes, especially in terminology aligned with local knowledge and lived experiences. Our team is now developing an environment-health literacy program to address these challenges.*

*Altogether, these findings illustrate the need for deeper community engagement and cultural responsiveness in small island nations around climate change and health, as part of emerging global research and policy discussions on this topic.*

Panel 6

*21st March 2025*

*Building 51 - 063*

*1:30 PM - 2:45 PM*

**Title:** Negotiating the Sacred: Religious Archipelagos and Conflict Mediation

**Description:**

This panel explores the geography of archipelagic thought in relation to how people navigate histories of marginalization, reform, and globalization through local practices—whether in religious education, urban networks of care, or contested claims to the past. Rather than passively receiving global ideologies, these communities actively reshape them to negotiate social hierarchies and establish new modes of coexistence.

The panel discussion would be moderated by **Dwai Banerjee**

## Papers:

- **Archipelagic Islam: Communal Agency in Zanzibar between Neoliberal and Salafi Reforms**
  - Caity Bolton

*The East African archipelago of Zanzibar has long been situated at the nexus of multiple geographies, empires, and projects of reform— from British and Omani imperialism, capitalist development, and Islamic reform groups from the oil-rich Gulf. This entrenched global connectivity has made the islands an icon of Indian Ocean cosmopolitanism. But in recent decades it has also contributed to a kind of Hamitic thesis that all advancements in Africa are brought by outsiders. Tanzania's 1985 post-socialist transition opened the islands to a flood of foreign capitalist investment and Euro-American development, prompting rapid social change and an anxiety of being economically and technologically "behind." The same decade saw new Salafi reformist projects presenting African Islam as polytheistic and muddled with superstition, preaching instead Saudi Arabian theological interpretation.*

*Set in between these opposing pulls toward Westernization and Arabization, this paper analyzes how teachers in Zanzibar's largest Islamic school creatively adapt the discourses of neoliberalism and Salafism to their own agendas, enacting a communal form of agency to address injustice on the islands. Despite its Sufi lineage, the school now trains its teachers in Saudi Arabia and teaches from their Salafi curriculum designed to reform African Islam. Rather than blanket radicalization, teachers describe their studies as a buffet where they "swallow the sweet and spit out the bitter," retaining many of their "polytheistic" Sufi communal practices. Teaching about "customer care" and describing spiritual virtues as "capital" that students "invest in" for the afterlife, teachers also redefine neoliberal discourses to serve Islamic communitarian ends, critiquing increased class stratification and individualist profit-seeking. Rather than passive recipients of global reforms, Zanzibari Muslims enact an archipelagic form of Islam to selectively adopt and adapt global discourses to serve local needs.*

- **Archipelagic Possibilities of Networked Care Sites in Athens, Greece**
  - Hannah Howard

*Athens is often said to be a collection of villages - a city space punctuated with borders and ruptures that highlight the multiplicity of the urban experience. This was exceedingly apparent in the work I did from 2021-22 in various aid organizations and parish charities of the Orthodox Church of Greece. As I spoke with different priests, volunteers, and NGO workers about the missions in their neighborhoods, similarities and differences in approaches to care appeared deeply rooted in the layout of urban space. By creating an*

*ethnographic map, I noted the different encounters across ethnic, class, and religious lines that were made possible through the geography of the city. This presentation explores those connections and argues that thinking of the Athenian network of care as a resource archipelago that is simultaneously connected and disjointed may help us better understand nuanced distinctions in aid administration, demographic patterns, and the politics of belonging in the city.*

- **Comparative Modes of Historical Consciousness:** An Ethnography of a Neighborhood Dispute in Urban India
  - Nomaan Hasan

*This paper examines two distinct modes of inhabiting the past in contemporary India through an ethnographic study of religious conflict in a mixed-faith neighborhood of Lucknow. Drawing on fieldwork conducted between 2021-2023, I contrast what I term "the past as a problem-space of priority" with "the past as everyday and eternal." The first mode, aligned with decolonial discourse and Hindu majoritarianism, mobilizes chronological time to establish legitimacy through temporal precedence. This transforms the past into a ledger where claims of belonging must be measured and verified. The second mode, emerging from quotidian neighborhood relations, renders the past as so densely interwoven into daily life that it resists chronological accounting. Through careful attention to local responses to communal violence—from the compilation of property documents to informal gatherings attempting reconciliation—I demonstrate how these temporal orientations structure different possibilities for coexistence. While the problem-space of priority demands proof of provenance, the everyday opens onto the eternal through relationships too layered to parse. This analysis makes two broader theoretical contributions. First, it illuminates how decolonial thought's elective affinity with reactionary politics stems from its particular mobilization of the past. Second, it recuperates a mode of historical consciousness that challenges anthropology's discomfort with transcendence. This ethnographic case thus offers insights into both the role of temporality in contemporary religious nationalism and anthropology's own theoretical limits in engaging with alternative modes of historical consciousness.*

- **Racializing Development:** Maiming Mosques and the Logic of Islam's Sinicization in Contemporary China
  - Ruslan Yusupov

*Since 2018, thousands of mosques across China have witnessed their domes and minarets beheaded and amputated. The changes are due to the nationwide campaign of "Sinicizing" Islam that the government sees as exhibiting the so-called "Arabization" and "Saudization" trends. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and classified documents, however, I show that the "Arab style" mosques in China emerged in response to urban*

*renewal and redevelopment projects. Not only were they given official approval, but the authorities used to promote them as the legitimate way for the Sinophone Muslims to modernize and avoid the specter of eviction from Chinese modernity. In the wake of this archipelagic history, Sinicization emerges as the campaign that racializes development and progress: it maims mosques and, in so doing, reduces the communities that built them back to the archaic stereotypes that the Party-state holds about the minority communities. If the mosques stood to project the affluence of the communities that built them, their maimed yet functional state today effectively defines impairment and incapacitation as what it means for Muslims to be “Chinese.”*

## Roundtable A

21st March 2025

Building E14-674 | Multi-Purpose Room

1:30 PM - 2:45 PM

**Title:** Race, Caste, and the Global Rightward Turn

**Description:** This roundtable places race and caste at the forefront for understanding Glissant's call for 'archipelagic thinking' regarding enduring systems of stratification across geographies. Our roundtable brings together anthropologists whose work attends to how the categories of race and caste operate in dynamic relation in the present moment as right-wing political movements surge across the globe. We are particularly interested in the ways academic knowledge production—particularly, but not exclusively, in the Euro-American academy—reproduces an area-siloed approach to each and the repercussions of this in the age of right-wing revanchism. For example, the scholarly conversation on caste has tended towards “provincializing,” understood as only relevant to South Asia, India, and/or Hindus. This siloing has worked within Orientalist understandings of where and who caste is pertinent to and has allowed the Hindutva state to argue that caste is a culturally specific “internal matter” not to be discussed, debated, or challenged in global conversations on oppression. Similarly, race has only recently been taken seriously as a scholarly category in the context of South Asia, primarily because race has been largely understood in relation to the Americas while South Asia has remained captured in the colonial lenses of religion and caste. How do we attend to the implications of this siloed geographic legacy in ways that activate an attention to the connectedness and conceptual differences of these projects of hierarchical differentiation? How might, for instance, a global caste critique challenge right-wing politics and allow us to see aspects of caste that may operate in contexts not usually associated with it while, simultaneously, thinking through the ways racism functions as part of authoritarian projects?

This session would be moderated by **Arjun Shankar**

### **Presenters:**

- *Gabriel Dattatreyan*
- *Brian Horton*
- *Pinky Hota*
- *Renny Thomas*
- *Sareeta Amrute*



## Featured Panel Discussion

21st March 2025

Building Building E14 - 674

3:00 PM - 4:15 PM

**Title:** Archipelagic Methodologies

- ***Archipelagic History as Method: Vietnam, Palestine, and Guam during the Vietnam War Era and Today***
  - *Evyn Lê Espiritu Gandhi*

### **Abstract:**

This talk offers archipelagic history as one method for engaging wayward archives of global South solidarity. Unlike other models of writing history across multiple locales, such as world history, global history, transnational history, or diasporic history, archipelagic history is not organized around a particular empire, superpower, nation-state, or ethnic diaspora. Rather, it traces connections between spaces on the seeming margins of grand historical narratives to draw attention to South-South relations: the exchange of political knowledge, military strategy, solidarity rhetoric, and intimate relations between subjects of the global South who resist aggression from the global North. Archipelagic history upends linear notions of causal temporality and instead attends to the concurrent reverberations of war and imperialism across multiple sites. As a case study, this talk will model an archipelagic history of Vietnam, Palestine, and Guam during the Vietnam War era, noting how these three spaces became entangled in, and yet exceeded, circuits of US military empire between 1967-75. I end with some reflections on how Vietnam and Palestine have become newly entangled during the ongoing War in Gaza, as well as how the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War and the start of the Vietnamese refugee exodus to Guam has occasioned a praxis of archipelagic history as public history-making.

- ***Reclaiming Archipelagos of Collective Memory and Action: Mother Power, Black Power and the 'New Boston' (1962-1969)***
  - *Karilyn Crockett*

**Abstract:**

On April 23, 1962 a truck carrying debris from an urban renewal site in downtown Boston killed six-year-old Laura Ann Ewing as she attempted to cross a street in her neighborhood. Laura's death sparked massive demonstrations by local mothers enraged by the city's urban renewal plans and the daily threat these plans posed to their children's lives. This story looms large in the memories of Boston's grassroots activist communities yet the story itself is incomplete. This paper explores a public collaborative research and action project that brings together area residents, students, activists and archivists to explore 1960s-era social movements to repair collective memory loss and plan more liberatory urban futures. Called "Hacking the Archive" (HTA), this project theorizes urban social movements as communal moments of intergenerational dreaming, frustration, possibility, knowledge creation and action. HTA's experimental, gamified approach demonstrates that research exploring past social movements and seeking future social change requires a methodology that is collective, intergenerational and attentive to data disharmonies between lived experience, archival records, social memory and government-authored histories. For wealth-extracted populations battling land loss, displacement and death due to capital penetration, reclaiming cross hemispheric, transoceanic, time-expansive and multi-generational archipelagos of memory holds the seeds of durable pedagogies for self-determination and survival.

**Moderator:** Doreen Lee

Panel 7

*22nd March 2025*

*Building 66 - 154*

*9:00 AM - 10:15 AM*

**Title:** Material Memory: Archipelagic Remembrance, Commemoration and Contested Landscapes

**Description:**

This panel explores themes of remembrance, commemoration, and contestation as they relate to archipelagic reorderings of time, history, and place. Through the material artifacts of war, heritage, and displacement, the presentations examine how memory is inscribed, erased, and reconfigured across landscapes and diasporic spaces. From war memorials that shape national narratives to bioarchaeological sites that mediate historical reckonings and museum collections that complicate institutional authority, this panel considers how objects, bodies, and monuments function as sites of political struggle.

The panel discussion would be moderated by **Erica James**

## Papers:

- **Monumental Silence: War Commemoration as Erasure**
  - Jelena Golubović

*Most war monuments commemorate the victims on one's 'own' side, acknowledging suffering endured while remaining silent about suffering inflicted. Yet the task of coming to terms with the violent past requires mutual (even if asymmetrical) recognition. A monument recently erected on the outskirts of Sarajevo had the potential to change the commemorative landscape of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where victim commemoration tends to map onto exclusionary ethno-nationalist victim narratives. It is the first official monument to commemorate civilian victims killed not by the besieging Bosnian Serb Army, but by armed criminal gangs militarized by the wartime Sarajevo government and incorporated into the official structure of the Bosnian Army. But what could have been a pivotal step towards transitional justice has turned out to be a resounding failure. This article discusses how a monument that purports to commemorate murdered civilians instead erases their histories and protects their perpetrators.*

- **Straddling the Disciplines: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection as Case Study**
  - Paulette Curtis

*The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection (VVMC), the visitor-donated materials from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (VVM) in Washington, DC, is arguably the most important collection of items related to the Vietnam/America War experience in the world. It includes military clothing and insignia, letters, photographs, family heirlooms and collectables, and much more, materials which have been "selected" by memorial visitors, rather than museum curators. My work has focused on one decade in the Collection's history, 1982-1992, which spans the dedication of the Wall and various milestones, including a VVMC exhibit at the Smithsonian in 1992. In analyzing this fascinating collection, scholars and journalists have taken an individual actor/object approach, rather than an institutional one. My work, in contrast, centers the National Park Service (NPS) of the National Capital Region, which I argue shaped the object phenomenon at the VVM, and by extension, the VVMC, through policy, management, and relationship-building, reflecting post-war sentiments about power and control. Analyzing the institutional footprint in/of the Collection and getting at complex, sometimes submerged ideological and historical factors has required thinking outside disciplinary boxes and adopting a nimble conceptual and methodological approach that is archipelagic in nature, incorporating historical analysis, museum/curatorial studies, and an orientation to people, places, and things that is often theoretically bespoke in nature. In this presentation, I touch upon the benefits and challenges of going out on*

one's own while tying research and writing to the familiar approaches and tropes of one's home discipline.

- **Archipelagos of Sound: Collective Music Practice in East LA**
  - Stainova Yana

*Collective music making produces vibration: of instruments, voices, people, and the spaces between them. It can bring complete strangers into intimate relationships of collaboration. I think of music as connecting people across disparate localities and generations, forming an archipelago of sound. Son jarocho, a traditional music genre from Veracruz, Mexico, which is practiced amongst Latinx communities in East LA, is one such sonorous chain of islands, linking people across space and time. As Martha Gonzalez, a scholar of music and musician theorizes, the concept of convivencia is central to the practice of son jarocho. Derived from the Spanish convivir, meaning "to live with," convivencia centers relationships between people rather than self-sufficiency, collaboration rather than competition. In convivencia, players resist the impulses of capitalism and colonialism that generate hierarchy and opposition. Through its archipelagic connections between East LA and Veracruz, son jarocho raises questions about immigrant identity, memory, and nostalgia. Considering these questions, I evoke the ways that collective music performance can transform its interpreters, even including in its archipelago my own body and the folk musical traditions of Bulgaria, the country where I was born.*

### Featured Panel A

*22nd March 2025*

*Building 66 - 160*

*9:00 AM - 10:15 AM*

**Title:** Drifting Boundaries: Archipelagic Thinking and the Reimagining of Knowledge

**Description:**

Edouard Glissant invites us to consider our worlds with “archipelagic thinking” as a way to reimagine the uncertainty, diffraction, and diversity that make up our lives. This way of thinking embraces the process of detour—not in the sense of evasion but rather as a way to create relations outside the rigid boundaries of continental and systematic thought. Building on Glissant’s idea, this panel seeks to address how archipelagic thinking reconfigures and reimagines anthropological epistemologies, not only in their relationality but also through the circulation of knowledge across disciplines and communities. What happens when the flow of anthropological knowledge trespasses the borders of existing discourse, reinscribing them along the drifting shores or archipelagos? How do knowledge and ideas get into tension with one another, and what are the possibilities at these points of friction? As we work through these questions, our panel aims to chart the subtle interplay between the bounded and the fluid and invites a reimagining of knowledge as relational, porous, and transformative.

The panel discussion would be chaired by **Christopher Nelson**

## Papers:

- **Afterlife of Closure:** Victimhood and Redress after Toxic Exposure in Japan
  - Shoko Yamada

*In 2013, residents of the Jinzū river basin in Toyama, Japan made headlines by signing a settlement agreement with a mining company that had long wrought a public health crisis across the region through the heavy metal pollution of land and water. While this “comprehensive settlement” (zenmen kaiketsu) marked a historic closure to the residents’ search for redress since at least the 1960s, the two parties also stressed in the signing ceremony that the pain inflicted on the watershed was ultimately an irrevocable one. This paper takes this seeming tension between the performance of finality and the lived reality of irreparable injury as a starting point to explore what settlement might mean in a “permanently polluted world” (Liboiron, Tironi, and Calvillo 2018). I ask: what does it mean to stage a closure despite knowing its ultimate limits? What might a settlement still accomplish? Through a historically informed ethnography of local responses to the 2013 settlement, I argue that closure can be a potent ground through which affected groups demand and enact future redressive work to come. Specifically, I situate Toyama’s environmental movement within larger politics surrounding public memories of the Asia-Pacific War and the remaking of Japan from a multiethnic empire to an archipelago-based nation-state in 1945. By unsettling the historically dominant notions of victimhood embedded in such public memories, I show how the watershed residents have effectively reimagined the entailments of redress in the wake of irreversible loss.*

- **Bridging Empire:** Jeju Island in Japan’s Colonial Vision
  - Youjoung (Yuna) Kim

*In this project, I examine the triangulated relationship between Jeju Island, Japan, and mainland Korea, with particular attention to how Japan’s colonial vision placed Jeju as both part of the Korean Peninsula and an extension of the Japanese archipelago. In my juxtaposition of Saishuto Annai (Guide to Jeju Island, 1905) by Aoyagi Tsunataro and government reports in subsequent years, I discuss how Japan strategically called upon cultural proximity, historical relations, and geographic proximity to legitimize its colonial ambitions. In so doing, I argue that this construction rendered Jeju both familial and distinct simultaneously—culturally proximate to Japan but distinct from the Korean mainland. It is from this vantage point that I illustrate how the island had become a “treasure trove” ready to be migrated to and developed, a space where both Japanese imperial aspirations and development activities could converge. I also trace how these rhetorical constructions of Jeju influenced the island’s development plans in the 1920s, revealing the material incarnations of Japan’s colonial ambitions. By situating Jeju within*

*the broader context of Japan's colonial archipelago, I examine how geographic, cultural, and political imaginaries were entangled to serve imperial purposes, ultimately remapping Jeju's position within the colonial hierarchy*

- **Plantation Archipelago: Newfoundland Salt Fish and Caribbean Sugar**
  - Katherine McNally

*In 2022, royal visits to North America retraced a British plantation archipelago in the Atlantic. In March, William and Kate's tour of Jamaica was met with protests and widespread calls for reparations for the British crown's orchestrating role in transatlantic slavery. Two months later, then-Prince Charles and Duchess Camilla visited Quidi Vidi, a fishing village in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In preparation for their visit, Newfoundland officials quietly removed the word "plantation" from a seaside building the royal were scheduled to visit. Use of this word in Newfoundland, dating back to early British colonizers who called themselves "planters" and their settlements "fish plantations," had persisted into the 20th century and remained on some historic buildings. What was meant to be a silent erasure ignited fierce debate among settler Newfoundlanders, some of whom argued it inaccurately implied Newfoundland was a site of enslavement like Jamaica. While Newfoundland fish plantations were indeed sites of colonial extraction and Indigenous dispossession, their labor system was one of debt peonage, not the system of enslavement people endured on Caribbean sugar plantations. Rather than quietly erasing the word "plantation" from Newfoundland's history or refusing to consider the confluences of the North Atlantic and the Black Atlantic, I look to the routes by which Newfoundland fish plantations were connected to transatlantic slavery and the Caribbean. Highlighting that salt fish was a primary protein for enslaved people on British Caribbean sugar plantations, this paper links Newfoundland salt fish and Caribbean sugar to illuminate a network of plantation formations extending into the North Atlantic. Drawing from Ruth Wilson Gilmore's concepts of "unfreedom" and "organized abandonment," I consider the ways these disparate sites of extraction were networked to drive imperial expansion and shape conditions of modernity*

- **Archipelagic Repair: Psychodramatic Knowledge and The Concept of the Human After Mass Violence**
  - Talia Katz

*How does catastrophic violence invite the re-configuration of psychiatric knowledge production? When and under what contexts do psychiatrists experiment with new forms of knowledge? This paper pursues an answer to these questions by returning to the well-studied trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem (1961). However, I approach the trial through the perspective of a minor character, the psychodramatist, Dr. Shlomo Kulscar.*



*Psychodrama is a form of psychotherapy that makes intentional use of theater and role-play for healing (Moreno 1946). Drawing from archival materials collected across Tel Aviv University, Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and the Harvard Countway Library, this paper explores how a theatrical vocabulary of role-play gains currency within Israeli psychiatry vis-à-vis the pressures that the Holocaust exerts on everyday life in Israel. I show how, as the legacies of catastrophic violence infuse the concept of the human with a skeptical quality, Dr. Kulscar retrieves the therapeutic potential of role-play to rehabilitate the damage and corrosion that violence does to concepts. By tracing psychodrama's fraught life within Israeli forensic psychiatry, this paper sheds light on how archipelagic thinking generates new modes of repair in the shadows of mass violence*

## Featured Panel B

*22nd March 2025*

*Building 66 - 168*

*9:00 AM - 10:15 AM*

**Title:** Archipelagic Thinking and Relational Politics

### **Description:**

Linked theoretically by the productive concept of archipelagos, these papers work to think across scales, considering the politics of theorizing difference and sameness as these are mobilized by diverse actors: Malaysian governmental actors addressing multispecies encounters, Tibetan nomads' tribal identities in the face of Chinese state policies that disrupt shared histories and connections, national myths of inclusion to which Indonesian women's pious fashion is recruited and through which it is contested, and notions of Japanese national-cultural identity which emerge, through an archipelagic lens, as shifting and discontinuous. Together, these papers highlight moments in which hierarchy and power are revealed as socially and politically relevant and the moments in which differences are (sometimes forcefully) erased and the ways insider and outsider status play out across ontological and epistemological boundaries, which themselves are ever-contested.

The panel discussion would be moderated by **Goldfarb Kathryn**

## Papers:

- **Navigating Island Geographies** in Malaysia's Human-Monkey Interfaces
  - *Kymberley Chu*

*Through a mixture of state and corporate-led development activities such as urban expansion and tourism, government officials, scientists, land developers, and free-ranging monkeys actively alter local socio-ecological formations in Penang Island's peri-urban landscapes, rife with uneven multispecies interfaces (Govindrajan 2018, Paredes 2023, Jegathesan 2021). In my preliminary fieldwork, I examine how Penang's state government and land developers govern a hybrid vision of Islamic-Malay and Malaysian-Chinese cosmopolitanism through the island's urban development narratives, often at the expense of facilitating unexpected and sometimes contentious human-monkey interactions in urban landscapes. Scientists position human-monkey encounters as situated modes of ethical practices that content, mediate, or push back against state politics of Malaysian governance (Zawawi Ibrahim 1998). Unsettling the situated position of Malaysia's island landscapes as isolated regional containers or extractivist spaces of colonial knowledge production, I propose reframing island and archipelagic landscapes as shifting modes of praxis, communal and institutional modes of political orientation (De Leon et al. 2024, Maniam 1996, Wynter 2003).*

- **Reconnecting and Reclaiming** Tibetan Kinship and Identity among Nomads
  - *Sanggay Tashi*

*This ethnography, informed by archipelagic thinking, explores how Tibetan nomads—legally tied to different jurisdictions in Tibet—reconnect and reclaim their tribal identity beyond official and geographical constraints. Despite historical fluidity in nomadic movement, Chinese state policies, including jurisdictional divisions and the hukou system, disrupted nomadic movement and kinship networks. Many were separated mid-migration, unable to return or move forward. Today, social media and improved transportation enable them to trace shared tribal names, recount histories, and revive kinship ties through annual gatherings.*

- **Contrasting Compasses:** Between and Among Styles of Piety in Indonesia
  - *Carla Jones*

*Although the Indonesian term for archipelago nusantara (“between islands”) intimates a flat universe in communal relation, its Javanese etymology hints at a different feature that helps explain the term's revival in recent theological and political debates in Indonesia: the assertion of a powerful center. In this paper, I ask how a term that emerged as a concept of hegemonic attraction and authority by Javanese empires to*

*outer islands during 14th century has been revived in the last decade to promote a global image of Indonesian Islam as exceptionally tolerant and inclusive, and therefore an alternative to presumably less flexible religious regimes in the Arab Gulf, the birthplace of Islam. Strikingly, women's pious appearances have been recruited in this project, through political and financial institutions aiming to make Indonesia the kiblat of a Muslim global style community. Equally strikingly, pious fashion designers who stand to benefit from these initiatives may not find this vision consistent with their own networks of aesthetic and ethical inspiration. In contrast to both a fashion system that continues to center Western capitals and capital and to national initiatives, I argue that Indonesian modest fashion figures find themselves seeking other connections of communal relation within and beyond Indonesia that refuse the fundamental allure of center(s).*

- **An Archipelagic Japanese-ness: Mixed and Multicultural Claims to Japanese Identity**

- Jessica Hiroshima Misiorek

*Despite its literal archipelagic geography, the nation-state of Japan has been understood to be largely ethnically, linguistically, and culturally homogenous across its nearly 7000 islands. However, Japan and Japanese identity have been historically and presently diverse and shifting. Archipelagic thinking encourages us to disrupt ideas of unity and coherence, and allow understandings of identity as multiple, discontinuous assemblages. In this paper, I take up the archipelago as not only constituted by its land formations, but also defined by water, as a way of understanding the in-betweenness of mixed and multicultural Japanese identity. I argue that mixed and multicultural claims to Japanese-ness remind us to take seriously the liquid waves and flows of identity as never static, shaped by that which it touches, and creating connection.*

## Featured Workshop

22nd March 2025

Building E14 - 674

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

### **Title:**

**Making Canoe, Kin, and Place:** Archipelogics of Indigenous Watercraft and Ecological Knowledge

- *Vicente Diaz,*
- *Troy Phillips*
- *Cassius Spears*

### **Description:**

Why and how are Indigenous Peoples across Oceania and Turtle Island restoring their traditional watercraft and water-related traditional ecological knowledge systems, and to what political and analytical effects? How do Indigenous watercrafts and the craftwork of Indigenous knowledge systems embody and materialize Indigenous cultural and social relations and self-understandings, and how do these technologized relations shape how we interact with the environment? In this workshop, leaders in Oceanic and Massachusetts-based American Indian tribes and Indigenous peoples talk shop about waa (Micronesian Carolinian) and mishoon (Nipmuc; Narragansett) to conjure up the deep social, historical, cultural, political, spiritual, and analytical stakes involved in making canoes for distinctly Indigenous aims and purposes.

**Moderator:** Ping-Ann Addo

Featured Lecture

*Building E14-674*  
*Multi-Purpose Room*  
*1:30 - 2:15 PM*

**Title:** Designing land and seascapes for climate change

**Abstract:** Low-lying islands are least responsible for the climate crisis but they are at the frontlines of its impacts. Professor Christina Gerhardt, Leir Chair of Comparative Literature and Co-Founding Co-Director of the Environmental Humanities at Clark University, will share research related to her book, *Sea Change: An Atlas of Islands in a Rising Ocean*, which shares both these impacts and the solutions to them. Centering the voice of Indigenous Pacific Islanders and Afro-Caribbean Islanders, *Sea Change* shares the actions they are undertaking to ensure environmental justice.

**Discussant:** Gediminas Urbonas

Panel 8

*22nd March 2025*

*Building 66 - 154*

*2:30 PM - 3:45 PM*

**Title:** Oceans Across Borders: Transnational and Trans-Species Interactions

**Description:** Oceanic territories have long served as sites for inter-exchange as well as conflict and oppression. Through case studies of the mangrove and “rayo” tree species as well as fishing jurisdiction and regulations in Puerto Rico, as well as linguistic exchange in the Pacific, Indian Ocean, and Tasman Sea, this panel will explore how oceans can help us both better understand the forces of colonization and imagine alternative narratives and futures.

The panel discussion would be moderated by **Mimi Sheller**

## Papers:

- **Botanical Approaches to the Opaque Landscape**
  - Carlo Cubero

*This presentation draws on Édouard Glissant's approach to culture as an opaque substance. Central to the notion of opacity is to acknowledge the inherent complexity and irreducible density of each individual and culture. This framework emphasizes the fluid nature of identity and the inclusive character of intercultural interaction, moving away from a static, self-contained view of "the human" towards an understanding of individuals as interconnected within a constantly expanding network of recognized opacities.*

*This presentation applies these concepts to the specific context of Caribbean island landscapes. The paper proposes that Caribbean islands function as a gateway, fostering interconnectedness and offering opportunities for new relationships. Instead of a map depicting distinct entities defined by their colonial past, a Glissantian cartography would illustrate identity as a dynamic archipelago of signifiers, where each island's experience is shaped by its interactions with other spaces.*

*The presentation contextualises this material by discussing two prominent trees in Culebra, Puerto Rico: the mangrove and the "rayo" (lead tree). These trees are presented as tangible examples of the island's networked nature, embodying and informing the ways in which the landscape is shaped by movement.*

*By examining the mangrove and the rayo, the presentation seeks to deconstruct ongoing colonial projects rooted in linear histories, notions of territorial ownership. The narratives surrounding these trees reveal an interconnected island, a product and a creator of an archipelago of relations. This approach offers an alternative to colonial narratives, highlighting the dynamic and interconnected nature of Caribbean identity and landscape.*

- **Puerto Rican Fishers: Archipelagic Orientations to the Sea**
  - Hanna Garth

*This talk draws from ethnographic research conducted in Puerto Rico's fishing villages since 2021. Puerto Rico's fishing villages lie at the nexus of several converging and contested issues facing the island today, including Puerto Rico's political status as a US Commonwealth. The spatial and jurisdictional issues relating to Puerto Rico's status as a commonwealth complicate how fishers relate to the sea. Puerto Rican state waters*



*extend 9 miles from shore. US federal jurisdiction covers waters from 9 to 200 miles out. While Puerto Rican state and US Federal regulations are drawn along these lines, my research shows that Puerto Rican fishers, though aware of these boundaries, tend to think archipelagically when they move through the sea. As fishers move from Borinquen, the main island to Vieques or Culebra the Puerto Rican trench—the deepest part of the Atlantic. The trench is where the find deep water, fast swimming pelagic species. Passing over that profundity, the shallower waters of the Caribbean and North American plate are brought into relieve. Those who seek reef fish, or the species that feast on reef fish know to follow the underwater ridges that link Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Following the fish as they move archipelagically, these fishers think archipelagically along this ridge that connects them to the rest of the Caribbean. This talk will analyze these different ways of orienting spatially to the Caribbean Sea, illuminating the complex jurisdictional issues that fishers face as they navigate these different spatial paradigms*

- **Lands of Life, Factories of Dreams: Theorizing Trans-Oceanic Island Geographies**
  - *Gabrielle Robbins*

*Cognates for “life” and “land” float between Hawaiian and Malagasy languages – a lingering echo of waves of Austronesian migration. A slaughterhouse, disassembled in Tasmania, once stood reassembled on the northern Madagascar coast – an infrastructural hallucination of French colonialism that one worker described as a “factory of dreams.” Indian Ocean scholarship has thoroughly interrogated Madagascar’s relationship with surrounding islands like Mauritius and Reunion. How, though, can the frame of the archipelago help account for submerged yet still-resonant links between island communities of the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, and the Tasman Sea? How can archipelagic thinking help trace “the intimacies of five oceans,” forged in successive tides of migration and assimilation, colonization and decolonization, linguistic creativity and industrial intensity? This paper uses the fluid cognate and the dreamlike factory as points of departure to ask how ethnographic attention to the ways that fundamental categories like life, land, or dream reverberate and resurge can offer new vantages on forms of relation that transcend geographical, temporal, and conceptual boundaries.*

## Roundtable B

*22nd March 2025*

*Building 66 - 168*

*2:30 PM - 3:45 PM*

**Title:** Thinking with diabetes: An archipelagic approach to bodies, technologies, care, and sugar

**Description:** Drawing together a variety of ethnographic and embodied perspectives on diabetes, this roundtable aims to spark conversations that demonstrate the potential of diabetes as a critical methodology that might call into being new worlds and relations that exceed the narrow confines of conceptual containers like the body or the island. Thinking with diabetes and the figure of the body-as-archipelago, we suggest, provides a conceptual toolkit for forging connections and solidarities across space, time, and species.

This session would be moderated by **Cal Biruk**

### **Presenters:**

- *Lyndsey Beutin*
- *Amy Moran-Thomas*
- *Erin Moore*