

International Symposium

東ユーラシアにおけるスロー・グローバル・リスクの検討—「社会問題」を超えて

Conceptualizing "Slow Global Risks": Navigating the Complex Layers of Transnational Social Phenomena in Eastern Eurasia

Date: Saturday 21 February 2026 1:00pm-5:45pm

Venue: Kobe University, Tsurukabuto 1st Campus, Building E, 4th Floor, Large Conference Room

<https://www.kobe-u.ac.jp/en/campus-life/maps/tsurukabuto1/>

Organizer: East Eurasian Studies Project (EES)

Research Institute for Promoting Intercultural Studies, Kobe University

<https://ees-kobe.com/>

Program:

1:00-1:15

Opening Speech: Hiroki OKADA (Kobe University)

1:15-2:45

Session 1. Infrastructures of Illicit Asia: Scam Centers and the Reordering of Global Risk

(Organizer: Masao IMAMURA)

Presentation 1 Sharon KWOK (Western Sydney University)

Presentation 2 XU Peng (University of Manchester)

Presentation 3 CHEN Yanyu (National Tsinghua University)

Comment Kota WATANABE (JSPS/Cornell University)

(Break 2:45-3:00)

3:00-4:30

Session 2. Connection and Disconnection in Digital Spaces (Organizer: Ami RAMIREZ)

Presentation 1 Aldrie Alman Diajat (Universitas Indonesia)

Presentation 2 Yosri RAZGUI (Waseda University)

Presentation 3 Mattias van Ommen (Doshisha University)

Comment Taichi UCHIO (Shizuoka University of Art and Culture)

(Break 4:30-4:45)

4:45-5:45

General Discussion

## Details of the conference

### Rationale

Various social issues in contemporary society have transcended spatial and geographical boundaries, manifesting in multi-directional rather than linear patterns. For instance, the demographic crisis of declining birthrates and aging populations—a severe issue in Japan and other East Asian societies—has catalyzed labor migration and the multiculturalization of society, extending far beyond national borders and traditional regional frameworks. Consequently, these issues have become interconnected, forming "complex systems" characterized by overlapping, multi-layered phenomena.

The primary objective of this symposium is to grasp these complex, layered situations. We will take as our starting points the transnational expansion of criminal networks (Session 1) and specific social phenomena within digital spaces (Session 2). Building upon these inquiries, we aim to examine the validity, limitations, and problematic nature of framing these complex-system risks—which extend from micro-level field observations to macro-level trans-border dynamics—as "Slow Global Risks."

The concept of "Slow Global Risk" is not yet an exhaustively defined term. Through this symposium, we intend to deepen and refine the utility of this perspective by engaging with specific ethnographic and empirical fields.

For the purpose of this symposium, the term is tentatively defined as follows: Generally, "global risk" refers to localized risks (such as wars, regional conflicts, or disasters) that escalate into global challenges due to advancing globalization. These may be termed "Fast Global Risks." Conversely, there are risks such as global warming, where the totality of human activity impacts the entire planet. "Slow Global Risk" pertains to the latter.

Crucially, individual human activities are not inherently risky, nor do they manifest as risks in the short term. Rather, these risks appear to be embedded within the very structures of the modern systems and societies that support such activities. While these actions often stem from individuals seeking a better quality of life, they slowly interconnect with other issues through the processes of modernization and globalization. Eventually, they emerge as political and social problems that transcend the nation-state. The process by which ambiguous factors evolve into risks through intricate pathways suggests that this is a problem of complex systems, akin to the "butterfly effect." Therefore, the perspective of "Slow Global Risk" serves as a

critical lens to scrutinize the underlying ideologies of modern society and modernity itself.

"Slow Global Risks" are not confined to traditional geographical or geopolitical divisions like "East Asia." While they spread globally alongside modernization, they tend to concentrate and overlap within specific spatial domains due to historical, geopolitical, and lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) trajectories. In this symposium, we identify "Eastern Eurasia"—a sphere of networks and events spanning East, Northeast, Central, and Mainland Southeast Asia—as a region where these layers of social phenomena densely overlap. We invite panelists, commentators, and all participants to engage in a profound discussion on the efficacy of the "Slow Global Risk" approach within this context.

## Session Description

### Session 1

#### Infrastructures of Illicit Asia: Scam Centers and the Reordering of Global Risk

(Organizer: Masao IMAMURA, Yamagata University)

Scam centres have become a decisive site for understanding contemporary global risks through Asian perspectives. Their rapid expansion across China–Southeast Asia corridors demonstrates how digital infrastructures, enclave jurisdictions, financial intermediaries, and cross-border labour regimes can be assembled into powerful engines of transnational crime. These formations expose the vulnerabilities of regional economies, challenge existing regulatory regimes, and illuminate how illicit economies scale through both state and non-state infrastructures. For a symposium concerned with global risks, scam centres offer a particularly acute lens on the entanglement of cybersecurity, migration, organised crime, and geopolitical ordering in Asia.

An emerging cohort of scholars—across anthropology, geography, political science, sociology, criminology, and area studies—is now producing innovative work on these dynamics. Their research is beginning to outline a coherent field that links platform governance, borderland politics, diaspora networks, and illicit finance.

Theoretically, scam centres raise fundamental questions about infrastructural power, logistical capitalism, fragmented sovereignty, and the permeability between licit and illicit economies. This panel aims to consolidate these insights and clarify how Asian cases can reframe global risk debates.

## Presentation 1

Title: From Junkets to Scam Compounds: How Chinese Criminal Ecosystems Transplanted into Southeast Asia

Sharon Ingrid KWOK, Lecturer of Criminology, Western Sydney University

The rapid emergence of scam compounds in Southeast Asia reflects the evolution of long-standing Chinese organised-crime ecosystems rather than the sudden appearance of a new, isolated criminal phenomenon. Drawing on interviews, documentary archives, and comparative analysis across various complementary studies, this presentation argues that today's scam operations constitute a "second-generation" criminal infrastructure built upon the social networks, technologies, and territorial footholds first established by Macau's junket industry.

Macau junkets provided the initial blueprint: extensive agent hierarchies, offshore betting platforms, and informal financial networks developed to move people, money, and operations across borders. These networks expanded into Southeast Asia through established social ties within Chinese diaspora communities and relationships with local business and political actors. In emerging casino zones across the region, junket-linked actors repurposed existing facilities and digital systems into scam compounds, drawing on the same elements—white-label software, call-centre labour, underground banking channels, and enclave-style spaces—to scale high-volume criminal operations.

The spread of scam compounds thus illustrates the adaptive transformation of the offshore gambling economy into a mobile, embedded, and regionally interconnected organised-crime industry, offering new insights into transnational criminal adaptation in Asia's gray zones.

## Presentation 2

Title: Scam Logistics: Building and Governing the Digital Illicit Economy in China–Southeast Asia Borderlands

Xu Peng, Hallsworth Fellow at the Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute, University of Manchester

This talk shows how "scam logistics" are built and governed across the China–Southeast Asia borderlands, arguing that online fraud compounds are not aberrations but infrastructural regimes that couple platforms, militarised enclaves, and brokerage to move people, money, and persuasion at scale. Drawing on corridor-based analysis of flows between Myanmar's conflict-affected borderlands and regional hubs such as Yunnan/Thailand/Cambodia, I map

how brokers, zonal governance, and platform routines convert illegality into predictable circulation—producing uneven development through what I call a logistics fix. The analysis traces three interlocking circuits—commodities (digital services and kit), capital (settlement rails and laundering), and people (recruitment, coercion, and labour churn)—to show how centres and margins co-produce one another via “adverse incorporation,” and why security-first crackdowns often raise risk premiums, displace harms, and entrench the very economies they target. The talk closes with theoretical implications for regulating platforms, financial intermediaries, and corridor governance.

### Presentation 3

#### Moving Bricks: Money-Laundering Practices in the Online Scam Industry

CHEN Yanyu, National Tsinghua University

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork of three money-laundering brokerage firms in Cambodia and in-depth interviews with several industry insiders, this essay examines the operations of some of the key actors facilitating financial flows for the online scam industry. The money-laundering operations for scams involve a diverse array of actors, such as account providers, money mules, and currency exchangers, typically dispersed across the globe. This essay focuses on brokerage companies and guarantee service providers, who serve as vital intermediaries connecting this illicit industry. Beyond offering diverse advertising services, they directly facilitate transactions between money launderers and scammers to earn commissions.

This brokerage process and its associated laundering practices are widely referred to by industry insiders as 'moving bricks'. By unpacking the multilayered social meanings of 'moving bricks', this essay demonstrates the agency of money-laundering intermediaries and their role in shaping illicit markets, as well as their reflections on ethics and legitimacy. I argue that while these businesses frame their involvement as simply 'matchmaking', their brokerage helps shape the rules and practices of the sector, regulating the distribution of both profits and risks. This essay also highlights how these money-laundering businesses occupy a liminal space between legality and illegality and between national and transnational financial systems, contributing to an expanding underground financial network that spans the globe.

Keywords: Money Laundering, Brokerage, Agency, Online Scams

## Session 2

### Connection and Disconnection in Digital Spaces

(Organizer: Ami RAMIREZ)

Although the "digital" is typically associated with speed and acceleration, this panel proposes that "slow modernism" offers a crucial lens for contemporary digital anthropology. As a concept, slow modernism challenges the view of modernity as a period defined solely by progress and rupture. Instead, it highlights the "slowing" forces and practices that have always resisted the relentless push for efficiency. This framework enables a critique of the digital world's fixation on immediacy, shifting the focus toward how digital infrastructures and data practices constitute a form of slow modernism which is characterized by long-term, incremental shifts rather than immediate crises.

This temporal perspective provides a foundation for understanding the simultaneous emergence of profound connections and acute disconnections within online communities. We contend that the digital re-spatialization of social life is not a series of rapid ruptures, but a gradual reconfiguring of human relationality and social belonging. Through empirical case studies from Japan and Southeast Asia, we demonstrate that digital spaces are active terrains where political subjectivities are steadily forged and collective rituals are adapted. By making these latent cultural shifts visible, the panel investigates how digital practices incrementally reshape the boundaries of political integration and social inclusion, fundamentally altering the fabric of collective life.

#### Presentation1

Inter(net)subjectivity in politics of Japan: Japanese and Indonesian youth civic participation on social media

Aldrie Alman Drajat, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia

This study aims to add a perspective to the contemporary political discourse in Japan by highlighting the role of the internet in youth civic participation. Survey-based research shows that Japanese youth have very low interest in politics, resulting in their low participation in general elections. In late July 2025, the right-wing Sanseitō party gained national and international attention by securing 14 seats in the upper house of the parliament, which can be considered significant for a conservative party. This study employs digital ethnography to observe how digital spaces serve as a political media for youth as part of their digital citizenship framed in globalism context. The observations indicate that young political

influencers in Japan rely on emotional familiarity and simplicity of expression to promote conservative views, which differ from the traditional conservative image portrayed in formal media. The promotion by Japanese conservative influencers for elections that favor Japan can be understood as a political tool in Japan that cannot be undermined. Additionally, non-Japanese influencers—in this case, Indonesians residing in Japan—also participate in constructing conservatism based on anti-globalism discourse by exploiting news about problematic migrants in Japan, which results in some Indonesian netizens supporting conservative parties in Japan. The analysis concludes that the rise of conservatism in Japanese politics not only influences Japanese society but also impacts communities outside Japan within the context of globalism. Anti-globalism can be seen as one of the intersubjectivities shared by Japanese and Indonesian youth, which is rarely visible in mainstream mass media because the political actors portrayed by mainstream media often do not represent the youth who are closely connected to digital life and express their political views through social media.

**Keywords:** Youth civic participation, digital citizenship, conservatism in Japan, discourse of globalism

## Presentation2

When the ritual goes digital: Japanese football supporters in times of Covid-19

Yosri Razgui, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Waseda University

The outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 profoundly disrupted social practices that had long been taken for granted. The human body, the primary vehicle of social agency and interaction, went through a temporary redefinition as risky vector of contagion, prompting a radical renegotiation of physical proximity, social norms, and collective life. Consequently, fundamental domains such as education, work, leisure, and conviviality had to be rapidly reconfigured. Within this context, digital spaces were further consolidated as an alternative to physical interaction, enabling the continuation and transformation of cultural practices under conditions of restricted mobility and contact.

Among the activities most affected by pandemic regulations were large-scale collective events such as concerts and sporting fixtures. In particular, football matches rely heavily on embodied participation and collective ritual performance for the production of meaning, identity, and emotional engagement. In Japan, professional football stadiums, understood here as sites of contemporary ritual embedded within capitalistic leisure culture, were initially closed and later reopened under strict sanitary regulations, significantly altering supporters' modes of participation.

This study examines how Japanese football supporters adapted their ritual practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the displacement and reconfiguration of matchday rituals into digital spaces. Drawing on the notion of ritual as a source of collective well-being and shared purpose, the analysis reveals how digital platforms became alternative ritual arenas, enabling the continuation of affective engagement with football despite physical absence from the stadium. Particular attention is paid to processes of ritual individualization within a context of neoliberal re-symbolisation of contemporary practices, a phenomenon that is deeply entangled with the ritualization of the digital self.

By exploring the shift from stadium-based to digitally mediated supporter rituals, this study highlights how digital spaces functioned not merely as substitutes for physical interaction, but also as sites for restoring well-being of and renegotiating the relationship between body, ritual, and community in times of crisis.

Keywords: COVID-19, Digital arenas, Mega-events, Rituals, Individualization

### Presentation3

Slow Approaches to Digital Connection: Chokketsu, Blacklists, and Gendered Intimacy in Japanese Online Games

Mattias van Ommen, Doshisha University

This study contributes to the panel's engagement with slow modernism by examining how digital intimacy is negotiated through competing temporal expectations in a Japanese online game community. Drawing on long-term digital ethnography among Japanese players of Final Fantasy XIV, I focus on players who use the game-world to pursue romantic connections, particularly those who attempt to leverage the internet's capacity for rapid contact, information exchange (including verification of offline gender identity), and swift transition to offline meetings. While such practices align with popular imaginaries of digital speed often associated with dating apps, my ethnographic data reveals a strong local culture that privileges "slow" intimacy built through sustained interaction over time.

In this community, valued connections emerge through the long-term repetition of everyday activities like dungeon exploration parties, casual chit-chat, and sending digital gifts. Practices framed as chokketsu (direct connectors), approaches perceived as moving "too fast" toward romance, are often sanctioned through self-policing mechanisms such as social exclusion and public exposure. As a result, disconnections frequently arise not from disagreement over whether virtual worlds can foster romantic intimacy, but from divergent views on how quickly and in what manner such intimacy should develop. The dominance of slower approaches

grounded within in-game contexts demonstrates that new technological affordances do not necessarily accelerate social relations, but may instead reinforce temporal norms of restraint and care.

By situating these dynamics within the panel's focus on slow modernism, I show how online games function as spaces where human relationality and social belonging are gradually reconfigured. Players often contrast these digital communities with offline institutions such as school, work, or family, emphasizing their relative freedom from status markers and player agency in creating and changing communities to suit their own purposes. Finally, the study reflects on methodology, showing that—much like the intimacies it studies—digital ethnographic fieldwork remains slow, messy, and relational, underscoring the enduring value of long-term engagement in virtual fields.

Keywords: digital ethnography, online games, Japan, gender, intimacy