# Mob Politics in Asia (12-13 March 2015)

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (Tower Blk, Level 10, Bukit Timah Rd)

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<th>12 MARCH 2015 (THURSDAY)</th>
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# 13 March 2015 (Friday)

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Panel 4 – Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement</th>
<th>Panel 5 – Seoul’s Anti-American Beef Candlelight Vigil</th>
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<td><strong>Liew Kai Khiun</strong></td>
<td>Nanyang Technological University</td>
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<td>10:00</td>
<td>Ethnographic Accounts of Student Movement Participants in Sunflower Movement in Taiwan</td>
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<td>The Politics of Representation: Media Discourses and “The People” in Sunflower Movement in Taiwan</td>
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<td>11:00</td>
<td>The Dialectic of Violence in Sunflower Movement</td>
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<td>QUESTIONS &amp; ANSWERS</td>
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<td>15:00</td>
<td><strong>PANEL 6 – BERSIH &amp; PEOPLE POWER</strong></td>
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<td>Jeroen DE KLOET</td>
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<td>15:00</td>
<td>Reimagining Collectivities: Making Sense of Malaysia’s Bersih Protests through Art</td>
<td>Fiona LEE</td>
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<td>15:30</td>
<td>Engendering Civil Resistance: Social Media and Mob Tactics in Malaysia</td>
<td>Joanne LIM</td>
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<td>16:00</td>
<td>Ousting a Pop Culture President: Joseph Estrada, EDSA MASA and The Philippine Uprising of May 2001</td>
<td>Teresita CRUZ-DEL ROSARIO</td>
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<td>QUESTIONS &amp; ANSWERS</td>
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<td>Asia Research Institute &amp; Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore</td>
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Building Image, Constructing Space: 
Space, Image, and Culture in Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement

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This photo essay illustrates the evolution of the relationship of the Occupy Central/Umbrella Movement to space as it moved from temporary occupations of space (e.g., scheduled marches and rallies) to long-term occupation of sites such as Mong Kok, Causeway Bay, and Admiralty. I focus my analysis not on images of confrontation or violence that have been played out in the media, but rather on the development of the Umbrella Movement as a social movement and occupier of space, and thus on the social practices that emerged in response to ongoing evolutionary processes and pressures both internal and external. In examining the way space has been coopted, utilized, organized, and ultimately contested during the course of the Umbrella Movement, this photo essay aims to better understand the confluence of socio-spatial relations within the context of the contemporary Chinese urban social movement.

Accompanying this photographic essay of approximately 12-18 images will be a brief corresponding analytical text. Utilizing photographs as a primary data source, I articulate specific points of development and their significance within the context of the (re)configuration of protest space, participation, and visual culture, such as the creation of simple infrastructure and the emergence of concentrated creative space paralleled by the expanding usage of utilitarian surfaces as expressive platforms. I also employ an interdisciplinary mode of analysis to situate the formation and evolution of the Umbrella Movement through the expressive, strategic, and symbolic occupation within the context of the broader phenomenon of contemporary urban social movements in Asia.
The umbrella movement of Hong Kong at first sight may look like a typical social movement, one in which a clear goal – democracy – manages to unite thousands of people. A closer look reveals, however, that this framing ignores the multiple aims articulated during the protest, aims that were also directed, amongst others, against the increased precarity of labour in Hong Kong, the unbridled power of real estate and increased levels of inequality that characterise the city. The absence of clear leaders, the constantly shifting goals, the refusal to unite around a coherent set of ideas, make it more fair to view the movement as a post-identitarian movement, one that during its struggle constantly reinvent itself. Aesthetics play a crucial role in this continues process of negotiation, at times a Situationist aesthetics, in which traffic signs for example are altered, or in which images of the Cultural Revolution are appropriated and given new meanings; at other moments we witness an aesthetics of cleanliness and proper behaviour, such as the establishment of study zones for students in Admiralty. What can we learn from the aesthetics as mobilised during the umbrella movement, how do these help us understand the poetics and politics of postidentitarian social movements, and how do they enable or disable new modes of cultural citizenship and belonging? These are the questions I aim to address in this paper.
Puckish Protesting in the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement

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Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement has been marked by the civility of the protestors and this has tended to dominate international press headlines. Rather less known because of its more local nature are the more playful and witty dimensions to the protests. Humour has always been a familiar and febrile strand in Hong Kong protest culture: puns are immensely popular, as are parodies and moments of surreal comic juxtapositions and appropriations that then take a life of its own. This paper will examine a few examples of madcap levity in the recent Umbrella Movement including the use of the ‘Happy Birthday’ song to counter vocal on-site critics and the recent shift to the Shopping Revolution, with its play on the Mandarin phrase, 購物 gòu wù (to go shopping).’

I argue that these expressions of wit are not merely amusing but a means to keep the spirit of protest and a distinctive sense of Hong Kong identity alive. If ‘every joke is a tiny revolution’ as George Orwell has noted, then each instance of humour in the Hong Kong protests is a micro derailment of an official script and ideology and the creation of a pocket of freedom.
Protest Mobilization in Social Media:
A Case Study of Umbrella Movement

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The Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong has surprised many by the images of protesters defending themselves with DIY gas mask and umbrellas. Behind the low-tech gear, however, it is generally assumed that social media is a key factor in mobilizing support for the occupy actions, which eventually lasted for more than two months.

This study aims at mapping the deployment and changing uses of social media during the movement. Interviews are conducted with key student leaders to examine what social media they choose, and why. It discusses how they use various platforms to communicate symbolic actions with both insiders and outsiders, to forge solidarity as the movement unfolds, and to facilitate the kind of sociality they deem most desirable. Opponents of the Umbrella Movement are also interviewed to shed light on the roles of social media in mobilizing support from both sides.

The paper will review the assumption that social media is an increasingly important factor in social movements, and analyze the actual mechanisms at work.
Tech-Savvy Smart Mob: 
Exploration to an Integrated Resource Mobilization Process

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This paper investigates the movement mobilization which was majorly conducted by a group of secondary school students called "Scholarism", during the Anti-National-Education movement (ANE) in Hong Kong in 2012. For the first time, the activists called on over a hundred thousand citizens to occupy the government headquarters. The author attempts to argue that, entering the information age and networked society, the youths, who are tech-savvy, direct action oriented and armed with strong information literacy, change the traditional model of movement resource mobilization. They demonstrate a new movement generation - smart mobs.

The traditional resource mobilization model regards material resources and professionals are of great importance to mobilize the public. From the case of ANE, the young activists showed that, though short of financial resources, they obtain facilities by getting assistance from movement networks and by cloud-sourcing. They are equipped with the capabilities of mass-self communication – searching and integrating useful information, translating and visualizing academic language, and disseminating movement message in innovative forms. Rather than getting legitimacy through the mainstream media, with their own internet-based platform, the young activists present to the public their fresh image and movement frame. In this way, based on the traditional forms of movement resources, the young activists are able to amplify the movement message to gain larger support – an integrated model of resource mobilization.

Research methods include participant observation, in-depth interview and document study (e.g. facebook logs, posters, public statements and newspaper). Both qualitative textual analysis and quantitative content analysis are applied to document study.
Mob Communities: Ethnographic Explorations of Communal Re-Spatialization under the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong

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The Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong started out as an “Occupy Central” civil disobedience movement aimed at economic immobilization of the city-state through occupation of the financial district. In the event, these well-laid plans gave way to the street politics of the moment and led to the occupation of Admiralty, Mongkok and Causeway Bay instead. Over the span of about two months, these arterial roads were re-spatialized into makeshift hamlets of tent-dwelling demonstrators.

This paper constitutes an ethnographic exploration of the communities that have evolved, in particular, out of the Admiralty occupation area. It examines how communities have emerged to redefine the spaces they have occupied, from the “defense lines” to the “villages”, “main stage”, “self-study area”, installation art areas and creative workshops, among others. It looks at how communities relate to each other and the roles they play, as well as the life of the communities. These explorations are not limited to the occupiers, but seek to capture also how other Hongkongers participated in more transient ways, through the moral idiom of care, or through other forms of creative engagement.

It will be argued that through this movement, an imagined community came face to face with itself and recognized itself. At the same time, this transformation of roads and other public spaces into meaningful communal spaces presents images of a utopian Hong Kong as well as a critique of Hong Kong’s political plight and neoliberal excesses, often through irony and humor.
Prostrating Walk of Post-1980s Youth Activists: 
A Symbol of Native Social Movements in Postcolonial Hong Kong

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Occupation, blockage and storming are not rare in social movements a decade after China resuming sovereignty in Hong Kong. The organizers and participants usually involve locally born young people. Some of them are secondary school students in their teens. They are known as the fourth generation or post-1980s born Hongkongers. The paper examines the cultural context of social movements involving these youth activists. It mainly studied the case of Tsoi Yuen Village resistance movement in 2010. The campaign was ignited as the Sino-Hong Kong Express Railway development project called for the demolition of the small rural village located on its route. Since then, post-1980s generation in social movements has been generally recognized. Social media are widely employed in all stages of the movements with citizen journalists actively involved. The impressive “prostrating walk” imitating Tibetan pilgrims becomes the symbol of these youth activists. It keeps appearing in other campaigns including Occupy Central in 2014. Ethnography method was used. This paper argues that the rise of nativism, advancement in ICT technology and shifting towards new social movements contribute to the dominant role of post-1980s in recent social movements of Hong Kong. Collective identity of Hongkonger in response to the top-down assimilation by China, strengthens the movement.
This paper argues that the Chinese Communist Party’s increasing control over media industries in Taiwan and Hong Kong has provoked strong social dissatisfaction, made anti-media monopoly movement a major social issue, and galvanized the Sunflower Movement in Taiwan and the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong in 2014. Compared to the smothering mainstream media is the emerging alternative media in two societies and the increasing interaction between alternative media activists from two places. I first analyze the radical expansion strategy the Chinese Communist Party adopted for its “Cultural Go Global” policy after the 2008 Olympics through building alliances with Red Capitalists in Taiwan and Hong Kong. For example, the richest Taiwanese businessman Tsai Yen-ming who publicly supports CCP had purchased the biggest media conglomerate China Times in the end of 2008 and continually expanded his media empire since then. Second, I compare two big anti-media monopoly protests in Taiwan and Hong Kong in 2012 which attracted 10,000 Taiwan citizens in September and 70,000 Hong Kong citizens in October. Some of the major leaders of the Sunflower Movement started their social movement career from this protest and gradually became experienced activists through organizing anti-media monopoly campaigns. Third, I dissect the phenomenon of the emerging alternative media in Taiwan and Hong Kong and classify it into four categories. Last, I use G0V and Code4HK as an example to examine the cooperative relationship in the alternative media organization between Taiwan and Hong Kong.
Ethnographic Accounts of Student Movement Participants in Sunflower Movement in Taiwan

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NGOO Hing-ju
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Wei YANG
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The sunflower movement is the largest citizens' Movement in Taiwan since the 1990s. In this social movement, participants’ activities represented the strength of the people against the government. This paper investigates movement novices and the protesting student organizations on how they cooperated during the sunflower movement. The Occupy Parliament on March 18 and the Occupy Executive Branch on March 23 were the turning point in this movement which led to the establishment of the Citizens' Deliberation Forum (公民審議論壇) and the Dalit Liberation Areas (賤民解放區) and the Large Intestine Flower Forum (大腸花論壇).

The time of analysis starts from March 18, 2014, the day the students occupied the parliament and ends on April 11, the day after the occupation. We choose to Interview 運動素人 and members or organizers of the protesting student organizations who play a significant role in facilitating social movements. In terms of 運動素人, we focus on those who did not appear on television news or political talk shows. The three major student organizations are: National Taiwan university labor union (台大工會)、Blackislandyouth (黑色島國青年陣線)、National Cheng Kung University khòng-gī siā (成大零貳社)。
“The people” is a central problematic in political theory and cultural studies. Both social movements and the ruling state try to mobilize and make their own people for legitimation. This paper investigates media discourses on who “the people” are and how they are constituted during the sunflower movement. To legitimize their actions of Occupy Parliament and the Executive Branch, protestors call themselves citizens while the state delegitimizes them as mobs. These naming politics are played out in the domain of media in order to call into being the multiplicity of human beings into “the people” of the nation. This paper analyzes the language politics that are embedded in the mobilization of the people. The time of analysis starts from March 18, 2014, the day the students occupied the parliament and ends on April 11, the day after the occupation. We choose to analyze mainstream media (television and newspaper) and social media as mainstream media reach the majority of the people while social media play a significant role in facilitating social movements. In terms of television, we focus on political talk shows as they set the agenda and influence the way people think about protestors and movements. Three political talk shows are included, with different political orientations: News Hurricane 新聞龍捲風 (pan-blue), New Taiwan, Go! 新台灣加油 (pan-green), and Digging News, Wa! 新聞挖挖哇 (middle). The four major newspapers under investigation are: Liberty Times, Apple Daily, China Times, and United Daily News. In terms of social media, we choose to analyze those with more than 500 likes.
The Dialectic of Violence in Sunflower Movement

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A salient aspect of the Sunflower Movement in Taiwan, March 18-April 10, 2014, was the constant tension between the more radical wing of activists that believe in the necessity of violent confrontations, and the “peaceful, rational, non-violent” (PRNV) doctrine demonstrated by the mass supporters. Discontent and blaming on other side of participants is often heard.

I shall in this presentation demonstrate the complexity of participants in this incident, discuss the changing dynamics in its four chronological phases (divided by the four major incidents on weekends), and to elaborate how the idea ‘dialectic of violence’ can be employed to illuminate the phenomenal success of this movement.

I will argue: it was the two major, violent confrontation— the 318 Occupation of the Parliament and 324 blood-shedding conflict at Executive Yuan (government headquarter)—that elicited the level of public attention needed to create the political pressure; but it was the PRNV outlook of this movement that successfully won the social sympathy and support to keep this pressure on the side of the government. The two seemly opposite approaches, in effect, collaborate in ways similar to the “good cop, bad cop” tactics.
Social Movements via Internet: Participations of the Online Community during the Anti-Beef Protests in South Korea

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The anti-beef protests began in early May 2008 in response to the government’s decision to resume U.S. beef import, which had been partially suspended since 2004. On 6th June, about 100,000 citizens participated in nationwide candlelight vigils, and people called for “re-negotiation,” claiming that the Korean government was failing to protect its citizens from so-called mad cow disease. The protests expanded into other areas of social movements, including alternative media and consumer rights. The protests reached the peak around the early June, and ended in August 2008. Mass participations in these social movements also indicated people’s concerns and discontents with the incumbent government and its neoliberal orientation.

By following the activities of the online community, this study discusses four ways of participation in the protests mediated by the Internet: 1) posting news and information innovatively, 2) participating in the candlelight vigils both online and offline, 3) donating money for placing ads in nationwide newspapers, and 4) conducting alternative media movements against the conservative newspapers. As a method, it employs multi-sited ethnography, including Internet ethnography on the online community, entitled MLBPARK (www.mlbpark.com) as the primary site between May and August 2008. Additionally, I joined the candlelight vigil in August.
Looking Back at the Candlelight Demonstrations of 2008, South Korea: Reflection on Its Multiple Implications and Lessons

Keehyeung LEE
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The candlelight protest of 2008, South Korea was a highly memorable social event with far-reaching socio-political effects and serious intellectual implications which drew hundreds of thousands of participants from all walks of life and various forms of cultural performances.

The Lee Myung-bak government’s decision, in April 2008, to import US beef products created massive civic discontent, resentment, and resistance which generated the emergence of new and alternative forms of networked civic actions and political imagination. Criticism of the beef agreement escalated into broader discontent and much heightened “cyber-talks.” It activated highly visible and potent networked demonstrations in the streets, including Seoul’s main squares, against the pro-business policies and authoritarian responses by the Lee government. Many South Koreans criticized him for putting diplomatic and political relations with the US ahead of public health concerns amid the mounting fears of ‘mad cow disease.’ This heated issue ushered in series of massive protest rallies, extensive networking and alliances among different social subjects, as well as new forms of articulations between online flows of politically charged emotions and off line collective actions.

This work will reflect on this momentous and highly significant event from a cultural studies perspective by employing discourse and conjunctural analysis. Put differently, this paper critically and self-reflexively explores the complex unfolding and implications of this historic event from various inter-linked analytic standpoints. Among other things, I will illuminate main socio-spatial features and areas of contention regarding this monumental event by South Korean intellectuals, scholars, and cultural critics. In doing so, I will provide an informed and nuanced analysis and re-reading of the candlelight protest of 2008 in the light of its intellectual significance and political lessons for cultural politics and critical pedagogy.
Reimagining Collectivities: Making Sense of Malaysia’s Bersih Protests through Art

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From 2007 to 2012, Bersih, a coalition of non-governmental organisations calling for reform in the Malaysian electoral system, held three rallies that gathered hundreds of thousands in Kuala Lumpur. These protests are largely viewed as a people’s movement and as signaling a transition from an authoritarian to a more democratic social political order. This paper examines the significance of the Bersih protests by considering how artists engaged with these events and the artworks they created in response. I focus on two artists, Sharon Chin and Fahmi Reza, both of whom devised performance and visual pieces for the rallies that were subsequently featured in art institutions, the former at the 2013 Singapore Biennial and the latter in the Klang Valley. In their own ways, both artists invited fellow protestors to reflect on their relationship with one another as they participated in collective action, and on their relationship with authority figures. Their artistic interventions complicate the idea that Bersih reflects the rise of people’s power by implicitly questioning the hierarchical models that governed the protest’s terms of participation. Moreover, given that their artworks were situated both in the street and in cultural institutions, these artists incite conceptual questions on the relation between art and politics in analyses of political movements and contemporary art. Going beyond notions of art as political propaganda, or as reflecting the political ideologies of the times, these artists invite a consideration of the process of constituting collectivity not just in political, but in aesthetic terms as well.
Engendering Civil Resistance:
Social Media and Mob Tactics in Malaysia

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The revolutionary potential of mass movements in the form of flashmobs and smartmobs have become a powerful (even creative) tactic for political protests, particularly under repressive conditions that call for new ways to organize and mobilize. In line with the ‘strength in numbers’ dynamic, these movements result from a friend-to-friend network topology which take place on social media, where ideas become viral through Facebook posts, hashtags, v-logs and other forms of online tools. This paper highlights two significant mob movements that were organized in relation to Malaysia’s 13th General Elections held in May 2013 – the Bersih rallies (which took place locally and abroad) advocating for free and fair elections, and the post-election Black 505 rallies held in protest of electoral fraud – both declared illegal by the State. While there were claims of mobile service disruptions during the rallies, online updates and live videos were streamed on various social media platforms, attracting numerous comments and further dissemination of information/materials via likes, shares and retweets. By documenting contestations of the events on social media – from the ‘call to participate’ though to its occurrence – this paper discusses the ‘success’ of the rallies by questioning its implications and significance on the current socio-political landscape of the nation. Did these mob tactics affect actual ‘changes’ within existing regulatory and legislative regimes? Were there significant changes to society’s political knowledge and subsequently, electoral votes? A discourse analysis of the online contestations are juxtaposed alongside interviews conducted with Malaysians who have participated in and/or contributed to these mob movements. Finally, this paper critiques the changing dynamics of social and political protest in the new media ecology.
Ousting a Pop Culture President: Joseph Estrada, *EDSA MASA* and The Philippine Uprising of May 2001

Teresita CRUZ-DEL ROSARIO  
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The 1986 people power uprising in the Philippines is considered a defining moment in Philippine history. Yet two other uprisings in 2001 are largely forgotten and rarely recognized as possessing any analytical, let alone historical, value. The first occurred in January 2001 which deposed duly-elected President Joseph Estrada on grounds of plunder and culpable violation of the Constitution. The second occurred four months later, the participants largely from the urban poor and lower classes --- a distinctly far cry from the urban-based middle-class elites that took to the streets both in 1986 and in 2001. What provoked the normally quiescent lower classes to embark on a political project of demanding to reinstate the deposed president whom they considered as truly representing their interests? In this essay, I discuss the notion of the “hidden transcript” among subordinated groups. Considered as a “subterraneal discourse” (Scott 1990), the central themes that constitute this discourse are persecution, execution and retribution ---- themes that are largely derived from the Biblical Passion (*Pasyon*), the Filipino film (*pelikula*) and the telenovela. These themes were reworked from the Pasyon and were readjusted and exported to the film and the telenovela. It is from these cultural sources that former president Joseph “Erap” Estrada assiduously cultivated his political image derived from his celluloid character on film. Erap’s multiple “dramaturgical selves” as “president-cum-social-rebel-cum-Robin-Hood-cum-street-smart-bully-cum-action-hero” blended into a seamless whole, thus giving rise to a particular political persona which redefined the meaning of the Philippine presidency in subsequent years.
ABOUT THE SPEAKERS & CHAIRPERSONS

Albert TZENG is now a media consultant, a public commentator, and a university teacher in Taiwan. He is the chief curator of CNEX Studio, a leading documentary film archive in greater China. He writes columns for Commonwealth Review, UDN Forum and Prometheus Fire Review and is a frequent public speaker. He also teaches in Tunghai University and in Feng-Chia University, Taiwan.

CHUA Beng Huat is currently Provost Professor and Head, Department of Sociology and Cultural Studies in Asia Research Cluster Leader, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. His major research foci are comparative politics of Southeast Asia, urban and housing studies, consumerism in Asia and East Asian pop culture. In Cultural Studies, he has published Consumption in Asia: Lifestyles and Identities, Life is Not Complete without Shopping, Elections as Popular Culture in Asia, (with Koichi Iwabuchi) East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing The Korean Wave in Asian Pop Culture, (with Chen Kuan-Hsing) An Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Reader and Structure, Audience and Soft Power in East Asian Pop Culture. He is founding co-executive editor of the journal, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies.

Donna CHU born and educated in Hong Kong, graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and obtained her Master degree in University of Sussex. She completed her doctoral research with Faculty of Education, the University of Hong Kong in 2003. Now an associate professor in the School of Journalism and Communication in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, her major research interests are in youth media culture, gender and media literacy. She has also published about social media phenomena ranging from collective behavior on YouTube, interpretive communities in journalistic blogs, and fansubbing in digital media. She is an advocate of media literacy education in Hong Kong and has launched a Marsmedia Media Literacy project since 2012.
Fiona LEE is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Cultural Studies in Asia cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. She earned her PhD in English and a Women’s Studies Certificate at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) in 2014. Her current research focuses on the role of translation, understood as a form of aesthetic mediation, in shaping the postcolonial racial imaginaries of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

Hope Reidun ST. JOHN is currently an M.A. Candidate in Chinese Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her previous education includes a B.A. in Urban Studies and Global Studies from the University of Washington Tacoma, where she was recognized for her research as an undergraduate. Current research interests include the sociocultural implications of urbanization and urban development, electronic governance and dissidence, and the emergence new forms of power and resistance in the Chinese context. She is also deeply interested in the exploration and utilization of visual ethnography. In the future, she intends to pursue doctoral studies in anthropology.

HUANG Chia-yu

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Jeroen DE KLOET is Professor of Globalisation Studies and Director of the Amsterdam Centre for Globalisation Studies (ACGS) at the University of Amsterdam. His work focuses on cultural globalisation, in particular in the context of East Asia. In 2010 he published China with a Cut - Globalisation, Urban Youth and Popular Music (Amsterdam UP). He wrote, together with Yiu Fai Chow, Sonic Multiplicities: Hong Kong Pop and the Global Circulation of Sound and Image (Intellect, 2013) and edited together with Lena Scheen Spectacle and the City – Chinese Urbanities in Art and Popular Culture (Amsterdam UP, 2013). See also www.jeroendekloet.nl.
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