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3.30 – 5.30 PM SGT

HYBRID FORMAT

Online via Zoom & AS8 04-04

ARI SEMINAR SERIES

THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Through the Lens of Infrastructure

In the ever-changing digital economy landscape, the global expansion of digital platforms takes centre stage. This phenomenon is inextricably linked to the complex geopolitical context, notably the ongoing tensions between China and the United States. The outward expansion of Chinese technology companies was quickly circumvented by hawkish policies framed in terms of national security, and more recently, a push to counter the “asymmetric decoupling”. This scenario in China has given rise to two distinct approaches: the structural reform for technological self-reliance in domestic supply chains and, the Going-out scheme leaning towards individual makers and startups. The transnational infrastructure for transborder mobility of platforms is now under reconfiguration, where two currents of flow are co-existing: one of tech corporations, and the other of the bodily movement of makers, coders and startups. The first involves a complex interplay among statist actors, corporate interests, and transnational knowledge bodies. It presents a dynamic ‘cobweb’, where actors influence the other’s trajectory. The second type, in contrast, revolves around the biopower of startups, makers, and coders. It delves into their everyday lives and encounters in host cities, exploring aspects such as mobility, identity and subject-making in the contact zones.

Questions we explore in this panel are: How is the materiality of these transborder infrastructures, in terms of their ontological components and their interconnections? How do we capture the STS interpretation of infrastructure as “relations of things”, where infrastructures and the entities traversing them serve as mutual substrates? Likewise, how does the cross-border mobility of startups pave the path for the mobility of platforms, venture capital, and state effect, and vice versa? How do we understand the role of incubators as constitutive elements of the infrastructure, in particular, not just as nodes that grab moving things from the flow, but as interruptive object spaces that enact, facilitate and discipline mobility?

MODERATOR

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