

**Guest Lecture, MRTE Laboratoire de Géographie Mobilités  
Université de Cergy-Pontoise  
June 14, 2018**

**Airspace Stories: Aerial Infrastructuring in Singapore  
Weiqiang Lin**

**Abstract**

This talk interrogates the production of airspace as infrastructure in Singapore, taking into account the city-state's geographical emplacement in Southeast Asia. It joins aeromobilities research in re-understanding air transport as a socially produced fact of life, but contends, at the same time, that existing scholarship can adopt a keener sensitivity to the way aviation's infrastructures are non-uniformly created around the world. First, I note the tendency of aeromobilities—and, more generally, mobilities—research to nearly exclusively focus on empirical paradigms emanating from North America, Scandinavia, and parts of Western Europe. Second, I highlight the relative lack of attention to (aero)mobilities' specific routes of formation, and, within these, the possible interactions among plural geographies. I suggest that these shortcomings have blunted (aero)mobilities research's critical edge, by silencing the asymmetries of making move in a variety of contexts.

Drawing on assemblage theory, this presentation propounds a more relational understanding of (aero)mobile infrastructures. Informed by a wide range of investigative methods, including interviews, archival research and participant observation, it uses Singapore as an example to chart four different airspace constellations: namely, aircraft cabins, airline route networks, aerial capacities, and air territories. I evince how these formations, though nominally familiar, are compositionally different in the Southeast Asian context. They figure as contingent and contested re-assemblings of dominant types, filtered through established cultural norms, laws, technologies, and institutional set-ups that order the global aviation industry. These insights instruct a need to historicise how infrastructural spaces are produced, as well as point to the pertinence of learning about the latent geopolitics connecting different, and differently positioned, spaces and assemblages.

**Short Biography**

Weiqiang Lin is Assistant Professor at the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. His research interests lie at the intersection of mobilities, infrastructures, logistics, air transport, migration and transnationalism. Weiqiang's work straddles between social-cultural geographical approaches (affect, materiality, practice, assemblage and food) and geopolitical ones (critical logistics, supply chain capitalism and territorial contestations). Apart from his longstanding fascination with airspace production, he recently embarked on a project to trace the infrastructural underpinnings of air logistics in Singapore and China (especially along new 'OBOR' corridors). He has published in a wide range of journals, including *Mobilities*, *Environment and Planning D*, *Journal of Transport Geography*, and *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. He is also a member of the editorial board of *Mobilities*.