



YOUNG SINGAPOREANS CONFERENCE 2022: UNCHARTED

Monday & Wednesday, 5 & 7 September 2022

CONCEPT

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, youths were emerging into adulthood in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. With the pandemic, the world has changed even more. The possibility of lockdowns, the shift to remote work, and the disruption of vital supply chains are but only some aspects of the “new normal”. As we approach this turning point in history, the pursuit of building Singapore for the next decade and beyond must be reassessed. Can the youth of today still look to the generations before for career and life roadmaps, or is this the time for them to think about — and chart — their way forward?

In this year’s Young Singaporeans Conference (YSC 2022), we adopt the theme of “Uncharted” as a reflection of the uncertain path that lies ahead for today’s youths, which may bring both turbulence and a wealth of new opportunities. In support of the Forward Singapore movement, YSC 2022 will serve as a platform for youths to convey their concerns and aspirations about the broader society, as well as to collectively commit to building the Singapore they envision. Some broad areas we propose to explore in the conference include:

(1) Diversity, Inclusivity and Well-Being: Given the challenges faced by youths today, it is perhaps unsurprising that mental well-being and resilience have emerged as focal areas within public policy and the collective conscience. Worryingly, the second [Singapore Mental Health Study](#) highlighted youths as the most vulnerable group in this regard, with the highest prevalence rates across the board for all mental disorders. This situation is likely to have been aggravated by the challenges of dealing with the pandemic, with a [youth survey conducted by TODAY](#) suggesting that 58 per cent of respondents felt fearful about the future, while 54 per cent became less sociable, with “stressed out” and “anxious” being endorsed as their top two mental states. Yet, at the same time, the same survey found that 59 per cent of youths still had a positive outlook for the future, and that the [majority of respondents](#) would not judge individuals who sought professional support, or hesitate to do so themselves. This greater emphasis on well-being has been extended to areas involving inclusivity and diversity, such as with [more accepting attitudes towards homosexuality](#) and attention towards [inclusive spaces](#) in [urban planning](#). How can we harness these positive mindsets in co-creating a future that is both diverse and inclusive? What are some ways in which youths can thrive mentally and emotionally in this age of uncertainty, and how can they help others in more marginalised communities to achieve these goals? Can we reframe our views of success and create alternative pathways to include these fewer tangible components, in accordance with our changing life trajectories and priorities?

(2) Social Media and the Online Space: Singaporeans between the ages of 18 and 30 have grown up with the internet. While they might be digital natives, it has become increasingly important for them to be equipped with the necessary skills to navigate the online world. Young adults, in particular, may turn to social media as a source of news and information, increasing the threat of being exposed to online falsehoods and misinformation. [Research](#) has shown that those who cite Facebook as a source of news are more likely to accept fake news as accurate as compared with those who depend less on the social media site for news. That aside, increased polarisation has been observed on social media platforms. A [survey done by YouGov and CNA](#) in 2021 reported that 64 per cent of respondents have witnessed rising polarisation in online discussions. More importantly, 27 per cent were involved in personal attacks through these discussions. Furthermore, [whistleblowers have revealed](#) that big tech companies have historically chosen profit over safety when it comes to building their social media platforms. As the challenges put forth by the digital world continue to grow, what role can youths play in helping to safeguard the online well-being of users? What policies, in line with the values of our youths, are necessary to regulate the online commons in view of the players involved? In the era of fake news, partisan news, and online misinformation, how can we best discern which information sources are reliable?

(3) Climate Change and Sustainability: A recent [international study](#) of 16 to 25 year-olds found that anxiety about climate change has a negative impact on the daily lives of the respondents. Sixty-five per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that governments are failing young people. Encouragingly, local youths are already taking matters into their own hands, rather than waiting for the authorities to make a change. In 2019, the youth-led movement SG Climate Rally, held its [first physical climate rally in Hong Lim Park](#). Despite the unprecedented levels of environmental awareness among our youths, the path ahead is daunting. Faced with the uncertain future of the planet, how should young people engage with issues of climate change and sustainability? How does the uncertainty over the future of the environment impact the plans and goals of Singaporean youth? How do they want society to respond to the real and present threat of climate change? What are they doing about it and what *can* they do about it? What are some roadblocks (e.g., economic, lifestyle-related, etc.) that need to be overcome in tackling issues of climate change?

(4) Life Priorities and Values: The [2019 National Youth survey](#) revealed that strong family relationships, home ownership and acquisition of new skills were the top three priorities for the youth. In comparison, having a successful career was ranked as the fourth priority. The cultural script of getting a degree through higher education, a professional job, and a nuclear family may no longer be the ideal for many Singaporean youths today. The pandemic has also caused major disruptions to career trajectories and aspirations. While some have successfully pivoted to remote or hybrid work, others have lost their jobs, and corresponding shifts in work culture and priorities have also emerged. A [study done by the International Labour Organisation \(ILO\)](#) reported that youths between 18 and 24 years of age felt that their career prospects were bleak, with 40 per cent stating that they felt uncertain about their future. Such concerns are further exacerbated by a rising cost of living amid inflation and the GST hike. In light of such developments, what are the alternative career and life goals being pursued? What are the obstacles that they may face, and what are the things that may aid them in these paths? What does success look like in those paths? How can society

better equip youths to make informed choices? Do youths from all backgrounds and demographic groups believe they have an equal chance in achieving the success they want? What are the cultures and norms that youths want in their future workplace? What might be the impact of these changing values and priorities amongst youths on the future of our society?

FORMAT

YSC 2022 is a two-day event, with the first day being fully online, and the second day being fully in-person for a more immersive session. For the online day, all participants will have the opportunity to participate in discussions with invited speakers for all thematic sessions. To encourage self-directed networking, the online component of the YSC 2022 is separated by one day from the physical component. Participants will be provided some prompts for reflections and team collaborations, and they will be invited to present their findings and thoughts during the physical component.

On the physical day, participants will also have the opportunity to share proposed ideas and action plans with our Guests of Honour, Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, and Senior Minister of State, Janil Puthucheary, through a lightning session. The participants will be able to hear their responses to their proposals. The conference will end with a dialogue session with our distinguish guests.

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PROGRAMME

MONDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2022

Conference Day 1 Online via Zoom

9.15 am – 10.00 am

Opening Remarks and Ice Breakers

Dr Mike Hou
Associate Director, Social Lab
Institute of Policy Studies

10.00 am – 11.30 am

Thematic Session 1:

Diversity, Inclusivity and Well-Being

Taking care of one another, taking care of our communities

IPS Facilitator

Dr Mathew Mathews
Head, Social Lab &
Principal Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

Domain Leader

Associate Professor Swapna Verma
Chairman, Medical Board &
Programme Director, Community Health
Assessment Team
Institute of Mental Health

Speakers

Ms Carissa Cheow
Co-Founder
Students for a Safer NUS
National University of Singapore

Mr Simon Leow
Co-Founder
Happiness Initiative

1.00 pm – 2.30 pm

Thematic Session 2:
Social Media and the Online Space
Surviving and thriving in the digital world

IPS Facilitator

Dr Carol Soon
Senior Research Fellow &
Head, Society and Culture Department
Institute of Policy Studies

Domain Leader

Dr Natalie Pang
Senior Lecturer & Deputy Head
Department of Communications and New Media
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
National University of Singapore

Speakers

Ms Clara Koh
Head
Public Policy, Singapore & ASEAN
Meta

Mr Teo Kai Xiang
Co-Founder
Singapore Internet Watch

3.00 pm – 4.30 pm

Thematic Session 3:
Climate Change and Sustainability
Facing our changing environment head-on

IPS Facilitator

Dr Woo Jun Jie
Senior Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

Domain Leader

Dr Adrian Loo
Group Director, Wildlife Management Division &
Senior Director, Community Projects
National Parks Board

Speakers

Mr Bjorn Low
Executive Director & Co-Founder
Edible Garden City

Ms Carmen Low
Co-Founder
Afterglow Concepts Private Limited
and
Getai Group

8.00 pm – 9.30 pm

**Thematic Session 4:
Life Priorities and Values**
(Re)defining “success”

IPS Facilitator

Mr Shamil Zainuddin
Research Associate
Institute of Policy Studies

Speakers

Mr Darren Tan
Director
Invictus Law Corporation

Mr Shane Pereira
Research Associate, Social Lab
Institute of Policy Studies

Ms Lim Si Hui
Group Sponsorships
Glyph

Mr Thomas Lim
Associate Artistic Director
Youth & Education
Wild Rice Ltd

9.30 pm

End

WEDNESDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2022

**Conference Day 2
Banquet Suite (Level 10)
M Hotel Singapore**

9.15 am – 9.40 am

Registration
(Light refreshments will be served)

9.40 am – 10.00 am

Admin Brief

10.00 am – 12.15 pm

Team Discussions

12.15 pm – 1.30 pm

Lunch

1.30 pm – 2.15 pm

Exhibition & Exchange

2.15 pm – 2.45 pm

Tea Break

2.45 pm – 4.00 pm

Lightning Session

4.00 pm – 5.15 pm

Dialogue Session

Mr Lawrence Wong
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance

Dr Janil Puthucheary
Senior Minister of State
Ministry of Communications and Information and
Ministry of Health

Moderator

Dr Teo Kay Key
Research Fellow, Social Lab
Institute of Policy Studies

5.15 pm

End

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES



Carissa CHEOW is a community organiser by circumstantial necessity, a multidisciplinary writer, an aspiring political theorist and participatory futurist, and a qualitative research practitioner. A recent graduate from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, she previously served as co-founding Co-President of Students for a Safer NUS, Singapore's first and only fully-student-led community organisation strengthening their collective capacities to respond to and eradicate sexual violence on campus; and as Executive Director of QueerNUS, a prototype of what could eventually become the University's LGBTQ+ Resource Centre. She was also elected Vice-President of the Graduate Students' Society representing the University's over 12,000 postgraduate students. Since graduating, Carissa has been working on a forthcoming initiative to address far-right extremism in Singaporean's contexts, and is looking forward to launch a nationwide coalition across all institutes of higher learning, known as Students for Safer Campuses, modelled after Students for a Safer NUS.



Mike HOU is Associate Director (Strategic Planning) at IPS Social Lab.

Prior to joining Social Lab, Mike was pursuing his PhD in Social Psychology at the National University of Singapore where he conducted research on motivation and decision-making. He is also interested in social and political psychology, specifically in the domains of intergroup relations, immigration, and national identity. He was awarded the President's Graduate Fellowship during his PhD candidature. He also holds a BA (Highest Honors) from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Prior to that, Mike was a Naval Combat Officer in the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) for more than 10 years, where he was deployed both for frontline operations as well as operational policy planning at HQ RSN.



Clara KOH is Head of Public Policy for Singapore and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at Meta (formerly Facebook) where she leads engagement with government, academic and civil society stakeholders around policy and programmes relating to technology, the economy and society. She is a member of the Media Literacy Council. Prior to this, Clara was at Brunswick Group, a strategic advisory firm specialising in business-critical communications, and the Country Director of Singapore at Vriens & Partners, a Southeast Asia-focused political risk and government relations advisory firm. Clara began her career with the Singapore Foreign Service, where she spent over six years helping to manage Singapore's relations with Indonesia, Thailand and the United States. In that time, Clara served as First Secretary at Singapore's embassy in Washington, DC.



Simon LEOW is the co-founder of Happiness Initiative. It is a social enterprise dedicated to promoting happiness and well-being in Singapore and the region. Simon is fascinated with the science of well-being. He believes that well-being skills can be made accessible to everyone. Simon oversees the research and development department at Happiness Initiative. He loves to take a data-driven approach to building a culture of well-being in organisations and communities. His strengths include creativity, love for learning, and kindness. His purpose is to build a community that promotes the practice of well-being so that individuals, organisations and communities can thrive.

Simon holds a Master in Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. A fun fact about him is that he loves to live off grid in a tiny house. He loves nature, camping, vanlife and outdoor cooking.



LIM Si Hui works at Glyph, a social enterprise championing quality education for kids and youths. Her journey started as an intern at Glyph, which led to her taking a break from university to pursue her passion in the social space.



Thomas LIM writes and directs plays for the theatre. He made his professional debut as a playwright and director with *Grandmother Tongue* at the Singapore Theatre Festival in 2016, which was performed in Teochew, English and Mandarin. Since then, he has written plays that were performed in multiple languages, such as *Supervision*, *Straight Acting* and *Peter Pan in Serangoon Gardens*.

Thomas is also passionate about sharing the experience of theatre with young people. He does so in his capacity as Associate Artistic Director for Youth & Education at Wild Rice. He currently runs the Singapore Youth Theatre programme, where he shares the craft of theatre making with youths aged 13 to 17 in the course of a year and encourages them to write and perform in their own plays.



Adrian LOO is Group Director, Wildlife Management and Senior Director, Community Projects, at the National Parks Board (NParks) in Singapore. He graduated with a PhD from the National University of Singapore (NUS) studying palms in the montane forests of Peninsular Malaysia and was a post-doctoral fellow in Kew Gardens and then the NUS, researching population genetics and biodiversity. He chairs the Otter Working Group in Singapore, and co-chairs the Long-Tailed Macaque Working Group. He carries out forest restoration, species recovery, animal rescue and rehabilitation work in the nature reserves.

Adrian is also part of a team in NParks that facilitates the One Million Tree movement in Singapore. Through stakeholder involvement, he hopes that he can plant more trees to restore habitats, fight climate change through carbon sequestration, and utilise trees as Nature-based Solutions for coastal protection and species conservation.



Bjorn LOW is a practising urban farmer and a social changemaker. He is an Ashoka fellow, a young leader of the World Cities Summit and the co-founder of Edible Garden City, an urban farming social enterprise. Bjorn's practice and research focuses on identifying the value that urban agriculture brings to the communities of highly-dense and food import-dependent cities such as Singapore. He has a keen interest in how shifts in social ecology, demographic changes as well as the rapidly ageing population present a new opportunity for urban care farms to play a bigger role in the rejuvenation of cities.



Carmen LOW believes in taking the road less travelled and having the courage to pursue an alternative career path. She spent the first six years of her working life in Singapore, Australia and China and worked her way up the corporate ladder in various cultures and MNCs. Her corporate adventures set a foundation for a journey in entrepreneurship when she returned to Singapore.

With a penchant for adventure, she co-founded a series of companies focusing on food, lifestyle and culture. Carmen co-founded Lepark and Getai Group, which turned an abandoned old car park into one of the most popular lifestyle spots that provided a platform for young budding artists and creatives between 2015 and 2018.

Carmen is currently focusing on growing Afterglow, a plant-based food company that she started right after she returned from overseas eight years ago with the aim of providing clean, plant-based whole food solutions in Asia. Afterglow has been rated one of the top local plant-based brands and eateries and is looking to push the boundaries of a plant-based lifestyle through wholesome offerings and a made in Singapore brand.

In building businesses and serving her generation, Carmen realises that entrepreneurship is not an end goal, but a lifelong journey with milestones that will look radically different from one's peers.



MATHEW Mathews is a Principal Research Fellow and the Head of the Social Lab at the Institute of Policy Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. He has been involved in over 50 research projects examining social policy issues including race, religion, immigrant relations, family and poverty. Together with his colleagues, he recently released a report on the second wave of the CNA-IPS survey on race relations. He also led the IPS-OnePeople.sg Indicators of Racial and Religious Harmony study and other studies examining inclusion issues. He is on the boards of OnePeople.sg, the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre, and Families for Life Council.



Natalie PANG is Senior Lecturer and Deputy Head at the Communications and New Media Department (CNM), as well as Principal Investigator at the Centre for Trusted Internet and Community, both at the National University of Singapore (NUS). Her research and teaching focuses on digital citizenship, digital well-being and digital humanities.

She has published extensively on social media, digital citizenry and digital inclusion, authoring and co-authored over 40 journal articles and over 50 conference papers, book chapters, commentaries and encyclopaedia entries.

She has worked on translation research in the form of policy papers and service with government and intergovernmental agencies, tech companies and organisations such as the International Fact Checking Network (IFCN). Other than her teaching and research work, she is also faculty advisor to student groups such as the NUS Political Association and the CNM Society, where she mentors members on various initiatives including community and social change projects.



Shane PEREIRA is a Research Associate at Social Lab, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). He specialises in applied ethnography and social research methods, and holds qualifications in sociology and social research methods, which he taught for the last 11 years in both the National University of Singapore and King's College London. He also taught cognitive processes and problem-solving in Republic Polytechnic.

His research focus centres on issues of ethnographic methodology, religious and ethnic diversity, multiculturalism, and the management of new religious movements in Singapore. His current research work at IPS includes an ethnography of low-wage young Singaporean workers, in-work poverty and precarious work in the gig economy, intergenerational poverty.

He also has a keen interest in the social construction of cults, sects, and other minority religions. His last foray in this regard was a multi-sited, six-year ethnographic study of the Sathya Sai Baba Movement.



Janil PUTHUCHEARY was elected Member of Parliament in 2011. He is currently Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Communications and Information, and Ministry of Health. He is also the Chairman of OnePeople.sg (which works to promote racial harmony in Singapore), Chair of Young PAP (the youth wing of the People's Action Party), and Whip.



SHAMIL Zainuddin is Research Associate in the Society and Culture Department at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). He specialises in applied ethnography and holds qualifications in sociology, which he has taught as a Teaching Assistant while completing his Masters in the National University of Singapore.

Prior to joining IPS in 2018, he was a Senior Design Ethnographer at NCR Corporation, a global enterprise technology company. There, he spent five years using qualitative methods researching human experiences to inform R&D, innovation and marketing.

He has received awards for applied ethnographic work and is the recipient of the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Day Award in 2005. He is also an active volunteer with Beyond Social Services and strongly encourages everyone to volunteer their time with them as well. Above all, he is most interested in carrying out the work to make the everyday easier for especially disadvantaged communities.



Carol SOON is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) where she leads the Society and Culture Department. Her research interests are in false information, media regulation, digital inclusion, new media and activism, online public opinion sensing and public engagement. She worked with the Ministry of Health in 2017 on Singapore's first Citizens' Jury and is working with various government agencies on engaging citizens in co-creating policy solutions. She is currently leading a study on building digital competencies of own-account workers, funded by SkillsFuture Singapore. She is also Associate

Director of the Temasek Foundation-IPS Asia Journalism Fellowship; and Vice Chair of Singapore's Media Literacy Council and Principal Investigator at the NUS Centre for Trusted Internet and Community. She has taught courses at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and the University Scholars Programme at National University of Singapore (NUS). She was a recipient of the Australian Endeavour Award and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy Research Excellence Award.



SWAPNA Verma completed her residency training in Psychiatry at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, USA and is a board-certified psychiatrist. She started her academic career with the Singapore Early Psychosis Intervention Programme in 2001 and was closely involved in the development and establishment of its clinical, research and training initiatives. Later, as the Chief of Department of Psychosis she led in the development of innovative care models for Schizophrenia and driving research in the field of Psychotic Disorders.

She is the Programme Director of Community Health Assessment Team (CHAT), a national youth mental health initiative funded by Ministry of Health. Since December 2020, she has been appointed as the Chairman Medical Board of Institute of Mental Health (IMH). She is also a National Examiner for the Singapore Board Exams in Psychiatry. She is the recipient of the Duke-NUS Outstanding Educator award in 2009, the NHG Outstanding Leader in Education award in 2012 and the IMH Clinical Mentorship award in 2016.



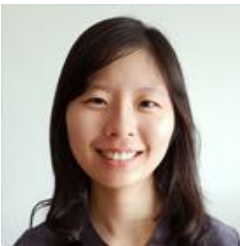
Darren TAN grew up in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Singapore. He became a secret society member when he was 14 years old, which led him to spend the next 16 years being in and out of prisons. In total, he spent almost 11 years of his life behind bars and received a total of 19 strokes of the cane for gang- and drug-related offences.

Darren applied to Faculty of Law at National University of Singapore (NUS) just before his release from his last imprisonment in 2009. He became the first person with such a long string of criminal convictions to be admitted to NUS Law and subsequently to be called to the Singapore Bar as an Advocate and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Singapore in 2014. He is currently a director at Invictus Law Corporation, and heads its Civil Litigation Practice.



TEO Kai Xiang is a storyteller, researcher and journalist focusing on digital rights, digital inclusion and tech policy. Prior to founding the Singapore Internet Watch, he was a Communications Officer at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. He completed his Master of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge as a Chevening and Cambridge Trust Scholar.

His dissertation, on data governance and civic engagement in Singapore, received the inaugural Hart-Marshall Arts and Humanities Prize from Clare Hall. Before this, he studied at Leiden University and Singapore Polytechnic. In his spare time, he produces games and interactive media.



TEO Kay Key is a Research Fellow at Social Lab, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). She has a PhD in Political Science from the National University of Singapore. Her research interests are in political and social attitudes, public opinion, voting behaviour, and Singapore society. She is interested in examining these topics using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. Her current projects examine a myriad of issues in Singapore, including attitudes towards the family, social norms and values, and national identity.

Prior to joining IPS, she worked in the civil service for about three years doing strategic planning, training and policy work. She has a Masters in Political Behaviour from the University of Essex in the United Kingdom and a Bachelors in Social Science from the Singapore Management University.



Lawrence WONG is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance. He is also a Member of Parliament for Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC. He co-chairs the Multi-Ministry Taskforce on COVID-19, and is the Deputy Chairman of the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS). He is also a member of the GIC Board, the Future Economy Council, the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council and the National Research Foundation Board, and co-chairs the Singapore-Shanghai Comprehensive Cooperation Council.

He was elected a Member of Parliament in May 2011 and was re-elected in September 2015 and July 2020. He has held positions in the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Communications and Information, the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, the Ministry of National Development, and the Ministry of Education.

He contributes to the labour movement as Chairman of the Singapore Labour Foundation as well as Advisor to the Union of Power and Gas Employees.

Beginning his career as a civil servant, he had worked previously as Chief Executive of the Energy Market Authority and Principal Private Secretary to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

He was educated at Tanjong Katong Secondary School and Victoria Junior College. He obtained his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He also holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School.



WOO Jun Jie is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies. He has previously held faculty and research positions in Nanyang Technological University, the Education University of Hong Kong and the Harvard Kennedy School. He received his PhD from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. His research interests include urban policy, economic development and financial regulation. He is the author of the recently published book *Building Immunity: Contagion and Crisis in the City State*. His research has also been published in leading SSCI journals.

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