

Plasmatic Perspectives: Heritage, Memory, and Tourism



In April 2025, the series featured Prof. Chin-Ee Ong from the Macao University of Tourism. In his talk, “Illuminating Collective Memories, Heritage and Tourism: A Plasmatic Perspective”, Prof. Ong offered a theoretical framework that moved beyond treating heritage as either static structures or fluid networks.

Prof. Ong proposed “plasmatic thinking”, a theory that conceptualised the world as being composed of plasmas — charged sociomaterial clusterings of objects, humans, and the processes between them. These plasmas are fragile and impermanent, disintegrating once they are discharged. Drawing on cases from Indonesia, Singapore, and the Netherlands, he examined three dimensions: luminosity, or how collective memories and amnesia shaped the production and consumption of specific sites; power relations, interrogating the forces behind remembering and forgetting in locations ranging from cultural parks to refugee camps; and contingency, highlighting the forces that sustained the interplay between social interactions and material contexts.