

Call for Participation

POST-MALIGN

Life / Technology / Capital

A Thinking Together Workshop with:

Michael Fakhri / Fleur Johns / Sundhya Pahuja

8–9 October 2026

Balam Balam Place, Brunswick, Melbourne

*(including the 2026 International and Comparative Law Cluster (ICLC) Annual Lecture
at La Trobe University City Campus)*

Expressions of Interest – Deadline 11 September

Expressions of interest are invited from **academics, early career researchers, HDR candidates and practitioners** from across Australia whose work engages with international law, socio-legal studies, political economy, environmental law and humanities, science and technology studies, legal geography, critical theory, and related fields.

The workshop is intentionally interdisciplinary. We hope to bring together participants from different intellectual traditions who share an interest in understanding the contemporary global conjuncture and the futures it is producing. We particularly welcome expressions of interest from researchers at all career stages.

To express your interest, please submit:

- a **short biography** (up to 150 words);
- a **brief outline of your research** (up to 150 words); and
- an indication of **which of the three roundtable conversations** you would most like to directly contribute to with some initial reflections.

Participation is open to all, although places will be limited (approximately 20 participants) in order to preserve the workshop's discussion-based format.

Expressions of Interest close: Friday, 11 September 2026. Send your expression of interest to L.Eslava@latrobe.edu.au. Successful participants will be notified shortly afterwards and will receive the three shared readings—one selected by each of the workshop convenors—in advance.

Workshop Concept

We are living through a period of profound global transformation. The normalisation of mass atrocity, accelerating climate breakdown, renewed militarism, expanding corporate power, rapid developments in artificial intelligence, and deepening economic inequality suggest not simply a crisis of the liberal international order, but the emergence of new configurations of life, technology and capital that are reshaping the conditions of politics, law and collective existence.

Over the past three decades, critical international legal scholarship has exposed the exclusions, hierarchies and violences that have long structured liberal internationalism. Yet the present conjuncture poses a somewhat different challenge. Contemporary transformations in artificial intelligence, planetary ecology, financial capitalism, geopolitical rivalry, infrastructures of extraction, and techniques of governance are generating configurations of power that cannot simply be understood as the continuation of older forms. If the twentieth century was organised around particular relations between life, technology and capital, what configurations are now emerging? What concepts are required to understand them? And what forms of critique and political imagination remain possible?

POST-MALIGN is conceived as a space for collective thinking rather than the presentation of completed research. Bringing together scholars working across international law, political economy, science and technology studies, socio-legal scholarship, environmental humanities and critical theory, the workshop asks how contemporary transformations in life, technology and capital are reshaping the world, and how we might develop new vocabularies adequate to this historical moment.

To help guide these conversations, the workshop will feature three of the leading contemporary thinkers in international law – [Professor Michael Fakhri](#) (University of Oregon), [Professor Fleur Johns](#) (University of Sydney) and [Professor Sundhya Pahuja](#) (University of Melbourne) – whose scholarship has profoundly shaped contemporary debates on the politics of life and survival, technology and global governance, and empire, capitalism and international legal thought. Rather than delivering conventional keynote papers, our invited guests will each curate an extended roundtable conversation around one of these interconnected themes, beginning from a short reading of their choosing that will be circulated to participants in advance. These readings are intended not as definitive statements, but as shared points of departure for collective reflection and discussion.

POST-MALIGN is organised around three analytical lenses through which to understand the contemporary reorganisation of the world: life, technology, and capital. Together, these conversations explore how these intertwined dimensions are reshaping the conditions of collective existence, while opening space to imagine alternative horizons and support the struggles already contesting these transformations.

As part of the workshop, participants will also attend the **2026 International and Comparative Law Cluster Annual Lecture**, delivered by **Professor Michael Fakhri**, at La Trobe University's City Campus.

Why Balam Balam Place?

This workshop is intentionally being held at **Balam Balam Place**, a remarkable civic and creative precinct in Brunswick. Named *Balam Balam* ("White Butterfly") by Wurundjeri Elders, the precinct was conceived as a place where community, creativity and public life come together. Home to artists, community organisations, First Nations initiatives, galleries and public services, it offers an environment where intellectual, cultural and civic life intersect.

Designed through close collaboration between Kennedy Nolan, Wurundjeri Elders, local organisations and community members, Balam Balam Place embodies a commitment to creating spaces that give back to community, care for Country, foster collaboration and encourage collective forms of public life. Rather than privileging institutional enclosure, the precinct has been imagined as an open, flexible and welcoming place for dialogue, creativity and encounter.

Workshop Format

To distinguish the workshop from a conventional conference, participants will not be asked to prepare formal papers.

Instead, each of our invited guests will curate one roundtable by selecting a short theoretical reading that has recently inspired or challenged their thinking. These readings will be circulated to participants in advance and will serve as common points of departure for discussion.

Participants will be invited to prepare a brief intervention (approximately five minutes) responding either to the reading, to the broader theme of the roundtable, or to questions emerging from their own research. The emphasis throughout will be on sustained

conversation, intellectual experimentation and thinking together, rather than the presentation of completed work.

Workshop Programme

Thursday, 8 October 2026

Venue: Balam Balam Place, Brunswick

9.30 – 10.00

Registration and Coffee

10.00 – 10.30

Welcome and Introductions

Opening remarks by the organisers and introductions by participants.

10.30 – 1.00

Roundtable I

Life: Survival and the Conditions of the Future

Conversation curated by Professor Michael Fakhri

Contemporary struggles over food, climate, health, humanitarianism, ecological breakdown and social protection all raise fundamental questions about the conditions under which life is sustained and survival is organised. This roundtable explores the legal, political and economic infrastructures through which contemporary international order governs life, distributes vulnerability and shapes the possibilities of collective futures.

Provocation

How are contemporary forms of global ordering reshaping the conditions of life and survival, and what alternative futures can be imagined and built?

Shared Reading:

Michael Fakhri and Omar Khouri (illus), 'Gaza Fishers'; 'Dignity Despite Suffering'; 'Palestinian People's Food Sovereignty' – Graphic reports accompanying Michael Fakhri, Starvation and the Right to Food, with an Emphasis on the Palestinian People's Food Sovereignty – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food", UN Doc A/79/171 (17 July 2024). Available at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/8hsgw4c3kwtdy37z6gz9w/2024-Palestine-Food-Sov-Comics.pdf?rlkey=ghq4rp97odmxth0v94thgss1n&st=o9jj3cnv&dl=0>

1.00 pm onwards

Lunch

5.30 – 8.00 pm**2026 International and Comparative Law Cluster Annual Lecture****La Trobe University City Campus****Keynote Lecture by Professor Michael Fakhri**

Reception to follow.

Can International Law Be a Life Giving Force?

International law is excellent at cataloguing death and suffering. In fact, jurists continue to expand international law necrophilia by pushing for new terms such as ecocide and domicide, to accompany people's understanding of genocide. Drawing from his recent experience as UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food (2020-2026), Professor Michael Fakhri will explore whether international law can be a force that encourages the creation of life.

Friday, 9 October 2026**Venue:****Balam Balam Place, Brunswick****9.30 – 12.00****Roundtable II****Technology: Algorithmic Power and Knowledge Infrastructures****Conversation curated by Professor Fleur Johns**

Digital infrastructures increasingly shape governance, security, finance, welfare, environmental management and everyday social life. Rather than treating technology as external to law, this conversation examines how algorithmic systems, artificial intelligence and data infrastructures are transforming legal authority, political imagination and the possibilities for democratic accountability.

Provocation*Is law becoming algorithmic, or are algorithms becoming law?***Shared Reading:**

Fleur Johns, 'On Tech Diplomacy and Dilemmas of Human-Nonhuman Interface'
(Forthcoming) *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*.

12.00 – 1.00**Lunch****1.00 – 3.30****Roundtable III****Capital: Empire and the Reorganisation of the Global Order**

Conversation curated by Professor Sundhya Pahuja

The apparent crisis of the liberal international order has not diminished the legal infrastructures through which capitalism, empire and corporate power continue to organise extraction, finance and global inequality. This conversation considers how empire, capital and international law are being reconfigured in the present conjuncture, while asking what conceptual resources critical scholarship needs to understand emerging forms of global ordering and the possibilities for political transformation.

Provocation

What comes after liberal internationalism?

Shared Reading:

Melinda Cooper, 'Patrimonial Capitalism: Agency Theory and the Return of Dynastic Wealth' in Greta Krippner, Sarah Quinn, and Marion Fourcade (eds), *Rebooting Political Economy* (Duke University Press, forthcoming). Available at:
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5103131

3.30 – 4.30

Closing Conversation

Post-Malign: New Vocabularies for a Changing World

The workshop will conclude with a collective reflection on the conversations developed across the two days. Rather than seeking consensus, this final session will consider what analytical vocabularies, research agendas and political commitments may be needed to confront the challenges of the present while sustaining alternative futures.

Organisers

International and Comparative Law Cluster (ICLC)

La Trobe Law School