NUS National University of Singapore | EW Barker Centre for Law & Business
Faculty of Law

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR LECTURE

CODED POWER: HOW TO END DIGITAL DESPOTISM AND RECLAIM CONTROL OVER OUR DATA

THURSDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2026 || 5.00PM TO 6.15PM || ~~YALE-NUS HALL, NUS LAW~~
WEE CHONG JIN MOOT COURT, NUS LAW



PROFESSOR KATHARINA PISTOR
EDWIN B. PARKER PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE LAW
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

ABOUT

"Coded power" is the power over the formal means by which societies organize themselves. It can take the form of law (law is code) or digital code (code is law). Coded power is employed to advance the interests of the coders, not (necessarily) others who depend on the code. Legally coded power dates back centuries, if not millennia. Digital coded power is of more recent vintage; its source is the control over data that is produced as people go about their lives, especially on the internet. Its full impact on societies and the well-being of their members is only now becoming more apparent. Despite all the potential to do good by connecting people from far flung places, digitally coded power has helped fragment societies, pitch people against one another, and erode social cohesion. Digital despotism is not inevitable; it all depends on how we use the powers of the digital code. The road from digital serfdom runs through participatory or joint data governance, not individual rights, including privacy. This lecture offers examples for how data co-creators can pool data and create governance structures in legal and digital codes to control access and use as they wish and in this way turn data despots into their clients.

PROGRAMME

4.30PM	Registration
5.00PM	Lecture by Prof. Katharina Pistor
6.00PM	Q&A session moderated by Prof. Ernest Lim
6.15PM	Dinner Reception

REGISTRATION

Register at nus.edu/4hT4qqs
or scan the QR code

Closing Date: 1 Nov 2026
Contact: ewbclb@nus.edu.sg

SILE Accredited CPD Activity

Public CPD Points: 1
Area: Data Protection & Privacy
Training Level: Foundation

Participants who wish to obtain CPD Points are reminded that they must comply strictly with the Attendance Policy set out in the CPD Guidelines. For this activity, this includes signing in on arrival and signing out at the conclusion of the activity in the manner required by the organiser, and not being absent from the entire activity for more than 15 minutes. Participants who do not comply with the Attendance Policy will not be able to obtain CPD Points for attending the activity. Please refer to http://www.sileCPDcentre.sg for more information.

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SPEAKER



PROFESSOR KATHARINA PISTOR
EDWIN B. PARKER PROFESSOR OF COMPARATIVE LAW
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Katharina Pistor is a leading scholar of corporate governance, finance, property rights, comparative law, and legal institutions. She is a Professor at Columbia Law School and Director of its Center on Global Legal Transformation, where she examines how law shapes global economic and political relations.

She is the author or co-author of nine books, including the acclaimed *The Code of Capital: How the Law Creates Wealth and Inequality*, which explores how legal mechanisms such as property, contract, collateral, corporate, trust, and bankruptcy law create and protect capital. Her forthcoming book, *The Law of Capitalism and How to Transform It*, examines the legal foundations of capitalism and possible paths for transforming the system.

Pistor has published extensively in leading legal and social science journals and is also a prominent commentator on global finance, monetary sovereignty, and cryptocurrency, including testimony before the U.S. Congress on cryptocurrency regulation.

Before joining Columbia in 2001, she held positions at Harvard Law School, the Harvard Kennedy School, and the Max Planck Institute. She has also been a visiting professor at institutions including Oxford, London School of Economics, NYU, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Her academic contributions have received significant international recognition, including the 2012 Max Planck Research Award and election to the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the European Academy of Sciences.

MODERATOR



PROFESSOR ERNEST LIM
CHAN SEK KEONG PROFESSOR OF PRIVATE LAW
NUS LAW

Ernest Lim is the Chan Sek Keong Professor of Private Law at NUS Faculty of Law. He also serves as Vice Dean (Faculty Development) and Co-Director of the Centre for Technology, Robotics, AI & the Law. He is a Faculty Associate at Harvard University's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society and a Research Member of the European Corporate Governance Institute. He has provided expert witness evidence to the High Court of Justice in London.

His work in comparative corporate law and governance, as well as private law, addresses global challenges including artificial intelligence and sustainability, with a focus on advancing social and ecological justice.

An award-winning researcher, his publications include *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Private Law* (2026), *The Cambridge Handbook of Private Law and Artificial Intelligence* (2024), *Social Enterprises in Asia: A New Legal Form* (CUP 2023), *Sustainability and Corporate Mechanisms in Asia* (CUP 2020), and *A Case for Shareholders' Fiduciary Duties in Common Law Asia* (CUP 2019).

Prior to joining academia, he was a capital markets lawyer at Davis Polk & Wardwell in New York and Hong Kong. He obtained his D.Phil. from Oxford, LL.M. from Harvard, and LL.B. from NUS.