

**China Studies Centre**  
悉尼大学中国研究中心  
2018 Year in Review

# WHAT DO WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT CHINA?

Contact us

[sydney.edu.au/china-studies-centre](http://sydney.edu.au/china-studies-centre)  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**



We acknowledge the tradition  
of custodianship and law of the  
Country on which the University of  
Sydney campuses stand. We pay our  
respects to those who have cared  
and continue to care for Country.



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The University's China Studies Centre can look back on its achievements in 2018 with considerable satisfaction. The extraordinary potential of the University to help shape the wider public debate on China and Australian perceptions of China, through the breadth and depth of its China expertise, is very evident in the centre's work.

Its new focus area 'China in the Urban Age' is generating significant internal and external interest, focusing as it does the energies and expertise of a wide range of scholars from different disciplines on some of the big questions of our times. This is exactly what the University hoped for in establishing the centre.

In addition, the centre is continuing its important work of external engagement through seminars, workshops and the hosting of another very successful China Business Forum in partnership with the Business School. Underpinning this important work are the efforts to sustain and enhance the work of our scholars; providing mentoring for colleagues, venues for scholarly and more importantly multidisciplinary interchange and collaboration, nurturing new generations of scholars in the field, seeding new research projects and more. It is critical to nurture the ecology of China scholarship in the University and beyond, to ensure the centre can continue to make an impact.

The China Studies Centre has built a great platform for more to come in 2019. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the whole team and all the scholars associated with the centre, and in particular its director, Professor Luigi Tomba, on their great work over the past 12 months. We look forward to seeing more of the fruits of this vital work in the coming year.

**Professor Stephen Garton**  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost

**China is becoming  
central to the study of  
the world's big challenges  
and their solutions.**

**What do we talk about  
when we talk about China?  
Another year's worth of  
research, public events,  
social engagement and  
community-building at  
the University of Sydney  
suggests that the answer  
to that question is:**

***the world.***

Our work is showing that China is becoming central to the study of the world's big challenges – to those global problems we wish to tackle and the solutions which will make a substantial difference for the quality of our future.

In 2018, we launched a research concentration on China in the Urban Age, searching for the valuable lessons that China is bringing to the big issues discussed globally. It is helping us to build meaningful and unexpected collaborations with all disciplines in the University. It also shows that the work we need to do will involve deeper and closer collaborations with diverse faculties and other multidisciplinary initiatives inside the University, and with selected international partners.

We intend to remain an honest, independent and engaged source of information. We also aspire for our collaborations with and research on China to continue to raise significant global lessons, inspiring and cautionary, and of relevance in and beyond China.

We believe that disciplinary knowledge becomes more relevant once it overcomes the boundaries of its own discipline. The China Studies Centre has been a 'space' for fields to speak to one another and approach problems from a variety of perspectives, facilitating new and fruitful connections between scholars who rarely meet.

At the beginning of 2019, we hosted the first graduate workshop on China in the Urban Age, an international event that we hope will be a model of multidisciplinary collaboration on China between scholars in truly diverse fields.

Our efforts rely on the collaboration of many, and the goodwill of all. We look forward to even more successful endeavours in the Year of the Pig!

**Professor Luigi Tomba**  
Director, China Studies Centre

# Launch of our research theme: China in the Urban Age

The China Studies Centre's inaugural research theme embraces almost every discipline to build a more complex narrative of China's urbanisation and its global relevance, and create a shared research agenda.

Across the sciences, social sciences and humanities, urbanisation is perceived as a goal or a challenge, to achieve a society that is better, more secure, more equal, more efficient, more culturally grounded and altogether more sustainable.

Nowhere in the modern world has the phenomenon of territorial and social transformation been more rapid, comprehensive and all-encompassing than in China. While disciplines tend to advance their own concerns in isolation, there is increasing need for a hub connecting diverse findings, languages and questions.

In 2018, the China Studies Centre launched the research theme 'China in the Urban Age', which we will pursue for the next five years, to recognise the increasing impossibility of approaching urban issues as discreet, separate or solely relevant to China.



## **China in the Urban Age: 2019 graduate workshop**

This inaugural graduate workshop united branches of the sciences, humanities and social sciences with an interest in sustainability, around the theme 'China's Environmental Challenge and Eco-Civilisation: a Multidisciplinary Approach to the Anthropocene'.

The workshop was held at the University of Sydney between 14 and 18 January 2019, in collaboration with the Planetary Health Platform, bringing together a group of international graduate research students and early-career researchers for five days of masterclasses, workshops and discussions led by leading local and international experts.

### **Multidisciplinarity, anyone?**

**Professor Luigi Tomba**

How do we do multidisciplinarity? How do we make the questions that we are asking about China relevant to global discussions on the big questions that face the world?

The inaugural graduate workshop in January 2019 was driven by the increasing need to approach those questions. We decided that a fertile ground for this initial discussion was the advocacy by the Chinese government, since 2007, of an 'Ecological Civilisation' that informs the policies of the government, its strategies and decisions, as well as aiming to shape the behaviour of its citizens.

Our workshop attracted to Sydney a group of 30 young scholars selected from a pool of more than 400 international applicants who research China, share an interest in and passion for sustainability, and come from almost every discipline of the sciences, social sciences and humanities. This cohort attended lectures from a group of diverse local and international scholars, and for a week participated in a series of heated discussion fora on what each form of knowledge has to contribute, emphasising the need for practical solutions while maintaining an eye on the need for ethical and moral considerations.



Working multidisciplinarily firstly means finding the right language to communicate between and across disciplines. We are not only talking about a new vocabulary that challenges the established meanings of existing categories. Sometimes what is needed is an entirely new form of communication.

Many important questions were raised and discussed in the workshop:

- What aesthetics might we need in the Anthropocene?
- What is the role of data and information in this new and challenging era, and who should own it?
- In an age in which we are under an existential threat, as scholars, do we have the duty to become activists as well?
- What should be the role of local and indigenous knowledge, and how should it be situated?
- Is the solution suggested for China and the world too Anthropocentric, considering the word ‘civilisation’ suggests that humans are going to remain both the problem and the solution?

Besides this attention to the pressing questions, we also came to recognise that multidisciplinarity requires space – the kind of space in which one is able to safely, confidently discuss their ideas with people they normally don’t meet in the corridor, such as the earth system scientist and the anthropologist; the economist and the artist.

We did not want the structure of the discussion to replicate the barriers of academic disciplines, by organising papers and discussion around each of our own specific, narrow research endeavours. We therefore organised forum panels around a set of big (global) questions and asked participants to briefly engage with them from the experience of their own research practices.

The panels included topics such as the ethical and material implications of the technological futures (real and imagined) that are emerging in China and elsewhere; the potential for a multi-species approach to the world; reconsidering justice in the city; issues of resilience and lifestyle changes. A significant topic running through many of these discussions was how to treat seriously the role of indigenous knowledge, when and how it is relevant, and how much its effectiveness relates to the cultural environment in which it was created.

The response to this experimental format was generous and enthusiastic – we went from presentations on the social consequences of pollution to an archaeologist working on the history of grain domestication in China and what it means for current climate change adaptation.

Other speakers and subjects included:

- the anthropologist working on Tibetan pastoralists to probe the intersections of indigenous and scientific knowledge
- the political scientist working on urbanisation and land prices





- the economist working quantitatively on the evaluation of environmental impact on life expectancy
- the artist working with weeds to explore who belongs in the city
- the global health professional addressing the immense health challenges facing China and the world
- the earth system scientist concerned with the underestimation of actual urbanisation
- the cultural studies scholar working on the environmental implications of burial practices amid growing cities
- the anthropologist working on the competition between trees and humans in the recent cycle of Chinese urbanisation
- the historian of Chinese energy.

We were impressed by how everyone made an effort to minimise disciplinary jargon in their presentations and clearly address the reasons why their research is important.

Increasingly, the new generation of scholars of China is advancing its concerns about global issues and realises this is the only context in which a fruitful discussion can happen. This cohort is already abandoning the idea (that my generation grew up with) that a China scholar is tasked with explaining the unique complications of China to the world, deciphering what remains illegible to others.

Increasingly, a deep knowledge of the local is accompanied by an equal awareness of the global debates, and many are abandoning the understanding of China as a fundamentally ‘different’ place. What is learned in those fields confirms the importance of local knowledge but is compared and discussed as a contribution to debates – on sustainability, climate, urban futures – that are happening all around the world.

The full program of the inaugural ‘Graduate workshop on China in the urban age’ is available on the China Studies Centre website:

– [sydney.edu.au/china-studies/urban-age-workshop](http://sydney.edu.au/china-studies/urban-age-workshop)

**Professor Luigi Tomba is Director of the China Studies Centre at the University of Sydney.**

# Global Health Challenges and Chinese Eco-civilisation

Dr Selina Lo

“We have lived our lives by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. We have been wrong. We must change our lives so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption, that what is good for the world will be good for us.”

Wendell Berry, *The Long-Legged House*

Global health is the area of study, research and practice that places a priority on achieving equity in health for all people worldwide. In the last decades, while substantial gains have been made in the reduction of child mortality and the spreading of infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases have risen – linked to changing lifestyles and urbanisation.

Cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases and cancer are on the rise in China, echoing global trends. Smoking among women and men has increased. Childhood obesity and mental health burden are also rising – both with complex aetiology that necessitates a whole-of-society response to address the social, political and commercial determinants front on.

As new evidence emerges in the field of planetary health, it is clear that many challenges yet to be addressed can benefit

if the right strategies and attitude are applied to partnerships and organisation of systems. Among them are the following examples:

- Transition to clean energy (not coal-based) reduces carbon emissions and air pollution with all its inherent risks to health.
- Mental health and cardiovascular and chronic disease burden are all affected by the environment and the communities and cities in which they occur. Closer, accessible, and socially supported communities and active transport systems which include access to affordable public transport and walking/cycling routes have co-benefits for mental and physical health.
- Access to green space has been shown to have global benefits for all ages and communities but particularly for children and the retired.

The recent global platforms of the Sustainable Development Goals and Universal Health Coverage offer opportunities for improving health equity and partnering to achieve targets within health and in the environment. These are global commitments with expectations of national application.

One of the opportunities but also obstructive challenges is engagement with the business and commercial sectors. On one hand, the commercial sector can offer new health products. On the other hand, it can continue to burden health outcomes, either by failing to offer equitable access to products (as in the case of overpriced medicines), or by harming the planet and global health with other products (such as coal, tobacco and sugary drinks).

Worldwide, no countries are exempt from the dilemma of corporate vested interests versus public health goals. China is no exception, as the recent investigations into the obesity epidemic and corporate hijacking of some science platforms attests.

While the public health community has a mantra of not repeating mistakes, in the case of unchecked corporate activity there are repeated conflicts between public health and vested interests in profit.

Yet efforts should remain steely if not positive in this era of Sustainable Development Goals. These offer an opportunity to organise ourselves in a different way for the advancement of public and planetary health.

This can only be credible with the full leadership and engagement of the public health community. The way in which we organise ourselves matters. How we humanise the theme, define accountability and communicate research methods and results is also crucial. Non-health scholars and other sectors can be involved in these areas, cooperating to scale up interventions and disseminate research findings to a wider audience, for greater societal impact.

As China defines its role and aspiration towards eco-civilisation, there is much to learn about a new definition of prosperity (beyond growth), the planetary dream, and public health lessons globally and in China, that can either be scaled up, or learned, so as not to be repeated again.

**Dr Selina Lo was a keynote speaker for the 2019 Graduate Workshop. She has a medical and legal background and is currently Consulting Editor for *The Lancet* medical journal and the United Nations.**

# Infrastructuring China's Green Urban Future

Dr Pow Choon-Piew

Drawing on fieldwork conducted in the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-city (SSTEC), this seminar examined how urban infrastructure projects have been used to frame and 'fix' environmental problems in urban China.



My research focuses on China's 'environmental turn' and the ambitious state-driven 'Ecological Civilisation' mission to build a new 'Beautiful China Dream'. I am particularly interested in how green reforms in China have shifted the Chinese urban growth trajectory from one emphasising mass urbanisation to 'high quality growth' which focuses on the (ecological) quality of the urban environment and built form. A key cornerstone of the Chinese ecological civilisation mission lies in the construction of ecologically advanced and modern cities. Under the central government's 12th Five-year Plan, master-planned eco-industrial zones and eco-cities were declared as the prevailing urban model that will purportedly construct an ecologically harmonious and civilised society.

It is in this context that fledgling eco-cities such as the SSTEC was conceived as a prestigious urban flagship project that would purportedly transplant Singapore's urban and environmental expertise into China. To ensure the project's financial stability,

a 50-50 joint venture company was formed between the Singapore consortium and the Chinese Tianjin TEDA Investment Holding Co., with the SSTEC Investment and Development Co. Ltd. taking the lead as the master developer.

In barely 10 years, what was once considered a barren and polluted wasteland was transformed into a 'model city' of reportedly 80,000 residents living in a peaceful environment with abundant green spaces and powered by renewable energy.

The SSTEC goes beyond adopting supposedly 'best practices' from Singapore. It is bound up in the Chinese government's aim to produce new kinds of governable green urban spaces and ecological subjects, not just in Tianjin but practically anywhere in China.

But like all social experiments, infrastructural projects such as the SSTEC do not take place in a social vacuum and are inherently prone to social risk and instability. Far from being stable physical objects, infrastructures can be 'lively', 'unruly and prone to 'failure''. In particular, my research draws

attention to how the aesthetic ecological promise of the SSTEC often runs counter to the lived reality on the ground when infrastructures break down or encounter 'uncivilised publics' and 'antisocial' behaviours that threaten to derail the ecological promise of the city.

To the extent that the ecological dream of the SSTEC remains a work in progress, it has also opened up debates on the promise and pitfalls of infrastructuring China's green cities. Ultimately, eco-cities such as SSTEC remain especially appealing for policy makers as they serve as bounded experimental sites where complex global and national environmental problems can be scaled down and 'fixed' in space through infrastructuring practices.

**Dr Pow Choon-Piew** is Associate Professor in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore. He was the key speaker at the Infrastructuring China's Green Urban Future seminar held on 2 July 2019 as part of our series on China and the Urban Age.

# China's healthy cities: opportunities and challenges for Australian business

Susan Saretzki

China's urban population accounts for almost 60% of the country's total and is expected to increase by 300-700 million by 2050. This is both a challenge and opportunity for Australia and the world. What do we need to know to prepare?

This question was at the heart of the 2018 Sydney China Business Forum, organised by the China Studies Centre in collaboration with the University of Sydney Business School and the Charles Perkins Centre.

The forum was held in Sydney on Monday 22 October 2018. It showcased the University's expertise in urbanisation, planetary health, nutrition, soil rehabilitation and innovation, and provided a unique opportunity for participants from China and Australia to discuss issues at the heart of China's urbanisation.

The forum was supported by the City of Sydney, China Construction Bank and Reginsun Group as well as Australian and Chinese government agencies.

One key event was a panel discussion on unhealthy urban ways: food, diet and lifestyle; and cities as sites of innovation, smart technologies and future scenarios. In addition, 17 speakers from corporate, government and academic sectors in Australia and China discussed:

- the impact of urbanisation on China's capacity to feed a population that will need to rely on more efficient agriculture
- changes in food consumption demanded by a growing middle class with changing tastes and a more obvious attention to food safety
- environmental challenges faced by rapidly growing cities, including pollution and contamination in water systems and soil
- consequences of new urban lifestyles, transport patterns and nutrition transitions
- ideas and solutions already underway for creating healthy cities
- how technology and modern practices may be improving sustainability in cities
- sustainable urban plans in both China and Australia, and the mutual lessons they offer
- how urbanisation is accelerating demographic trends and transforming consumption patterns, and what this means for access to health services.

With the urbanisation rate in China predicted to reach 71% by 2030, urban health challenges continue to emerge and expand. Professor Duo Li, Chief Professor of Nutrition, Qingdao University, was invited to speak on the management of diabetes – a particular threat to population health in China.

Also visiting from China specifically for this event were Steven Bai, CEO of Sencity, who spoke on the design of sustainable city landscape, and Xuxiu Li, First Vice President of Deheng Law Firm, who discussed the changes of laws in the course of China's urbanisation.

**Susan Saretzki liaises with business and government in Australia and China to raise the profile of the China Studies Centre and the University of Sydney.**



# Collecting Books May Attract Friends

## 藏書可以邀友

Dr Olivier Krischer

One of the centre's new initiatives in 2018 was the launch of our new community library, which has swiftly grown from members' donations.

In our new office space, the library will be a place to spend quiet time working in the inspiring proximity of China-related research materials.

In China, by the late Qing period, the scholar library was an essential part of cultured life. For many educated elites, it was here that their education would begin. A single rare book could be traded for a country estate, while emperors notoriously 'borrowed' valuable items for compilation, indefinitely.

In our society, libraries also have an important social, civic role. In a recent *New York Times* article, 'To Restore Civil Society, Start with the Library' (8 September 2018), Eric Klinenberg notes that the challenge for libraries isn't irrelevance; rather it is their continued popularity amid ever-diminishing resources. As the title above also suggests – libraries as spaces shared and constituted by their members are what Klinenberg calls 'social infrastructure'.

To learn more about the history of the University's Chinese materials (now largely in the Fisher East Asian collection), I spoke with China Studies Centre member Dr Lily Lee, one of the first to donate a book to our new community library: a copy of her *Biographical dictionary of Chinese women: Antiquity through Sui 1600 B.C.E.-618 C.E.* (co-edited with fellow Chinese studies scholar A. Syrokomla-Stefanowska, 2007).

Dr Lee was trained in Singapore, worked in the United States and Hong Kong, and joined the University of Sydney in 1973. When she arrived, most Asian materials weren't catalogued. Since the collection included Chinese and Japanese works,

she learned to transliterate Japanese names. The 'Oriental Library' at this time was on Level 1 of today's Fisher Library.

She later went part time to pursue her PhD with AR Davis, professor of Chinese and a well-known scholar of Tao Yuanming and Du Fu. In the 1950s, Davis was able to purchase books from China, and with his knowledge the University remains rich in traditional string-bound volumes, now considered rare books.

In 1988, with the Bicentennial, Dr Lee – who was now teaching at Sydney – initiated fundraising from the Chinese-Australian community to buy books for the library. Since then, there have been gifts of books from China, Japan and Korea. After the National Library and the Australian National University, the University of Sydney has the third most significant collection of Asian materials in Australia, attracting scholars from around Sydney and interstate.

At present the China Studies Centre community library is still in the process of being catalogued by the able doctoral students Samantha Xu and Xiaoliang Zhao. It has already benefited from the generous donations of books and journals from a number of China Studies Centre members and friends. Thank you: Minglu Chen, Bonnie McDougall, Lily Xiaohong Lee, Linda Jaiven, Frederick Teiwes, John Clark, Angie Dallie, Andres Rodriguez and Andrew Sharp.

This title above is a phrase attributed to Cao Rong 曹溶 (1613-85), as an interlinear commentary in Zhang Chao's 張潮 (b. 1649) *Youmengying* 《幽夢影》[Quiet Dream Shadows]. It speaks to the aspirations of our new library.

**Dr Olivier Krischer is deputy director of the China Studies Centre and an art historian of China and Japan.**



# Sydney China Visitors program

Launched in 2018, this program invites respected Chinese studies researchers to share their expertise in Sydney through two fellowships.

**The Sydney China Distinguished Fellowship**, hosted by the Department of Chinese Studies, was established through the generous support of Hong Kong-based alumni Mr James Lee. It recognises senior scholars specialising in modern and contemporary Chinese literature, culture or translation studies.

**The Sydney China Fellowship**, hosted by the China Studies Centre, invites early and mid-career scholars specialising in any field, historical or contemporary, related broadly to China or the Chinese world.

In 2018, we reviewed more than 80 applications, from which we invited 10 exceptional scholars to join us during the 2018–2019 academic years.

Visiting fellow	Duration
<b>Sydney China Distinguished Fellows</b>	
<b>Professor Yueguo Gu</b> is professor and head of the Corpus Linguistics Department, and director of the Corpus and Computational Linguistics Research Centre at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing.	30 July – 25 August 2018
<b>Professor Heike Holbig</b> is a professor of political science with a focus on China and East Asia at Goethe University Frankfurt, and a senior research fellow at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg.	10 October – 7 November 2018
<b>Professor Timothy Cheek</b> is professor and Louis Cha Chair in Chinese Research at the Institute of Asian Research and Department of History at the University of British Columbia, and director of the UBC Institute of Asian Research.	
<b>Professor Wendy Larson</b> is professor emerita of East Asian languages and literature at the University of Oregon.	22 April – 18 May 2019
<b>Sydney China Fellows</b>	
<b>Dr Jinghong Zhang</b> is an associate professor of anthropology at the Centre for Social Sciences, Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, and a filmmaker whose research looks at the consumption of tea and wine in China, and the cultural interaction between China, East Asia and Australia through these commodities.	19 July – 30 August 2018
<b>Dr Dan Chen</b> is an assistant professor of political science and Asian studies at Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania. Her research concerns media politics and public opinion in China.	30 July – 10 September 2018
<b>Dr Ying Qian</b> is an assistant professor in Chinese cinema and media studies at Columbia University.	15 August – 10 October 2018
<b>Dr David G Atwill</b> is associate professor of history at Pennsylvania State University, where he teaches courses on China, Tibet and world history.	18 February – 15 March 2019
<b>Dr Corey Byrnes</b> is an assistant professor of Chinese culture at Northwestern University, where he teaches courses in Chinese literature, visual culture, and the environmental humanities.	1 May – 12 June 2019
<b>Dr Hao Chen</b> is assistant professor in the Department of History at Renmin University, Beijing. His research and teaching has focused on the medical and cultural history of China.	24 June – 21 July 2019

# Media supervision and local governance improvement in urban China

Dr Dan Chen

Recent world politics has shed new light on the intimate connections between the media and our political life. In China, the state media have branched into a more versatile role, inserting themselves into the local governance process.

In conducting research for my book *Convenient Criticism: Local Media and Governance in Urban China*, I found that the state media advance authoritarian rule not just at a general level but through yielding concrete outcomes of governance improvement for specific local leaders.

To achieve this, the state media at local levels have been performing a supervisory role with limited autonomy to discipline misbehaving local officials and redress citizen grievances. In doing so, local state media have evolved into an effective tool that not only targets the general public by manipulating their political views, but also monitors the governing elites by publicising and correcting their misconduct.

In autocracies, criticism is typically perceived as inconvenient and therefore censored by political rulers. However, while political control can suppress critical reporting, it can also encourage media criticism when perceived as convenient. Local leaders in China, especially those savvy about the media, have learned to use controlled critical reporting as a powerful tool to increase bureaucratic control and improve governance.

Since the late 1990s, local television news programs in China have developed and sustained

a popular model of livelihood news (民生新闻) that attends to inept policy implementation and inadequate public service provision at the local level. This model of news production has been sustainable due to its adroitly constructed narrative and real, positive change. The scope of its critical reporting is limited, not least in the commonly understood way of limiting what can and cannot be criticised, but most characteristically in its narrative that frames citizen grievances and governance problems as solely the faults of street-level bureaucrats.

Despite shunning serious investigation into consequential issues, these news programs assign blame to specific individuals at the lower bureaucratic levels, thereby satisfying aggrieved citizens' need for recognition of and retribution for their endurance of injustice. Furthermore, these critical reports, through public humiliation of misbehaving street-level bureaucrats, often result in swift correction of misconduct and redress of grievances.

As a result, the news cycle that starts with a report critical of local officials ends with a positive outcome highlighting government responsiveness. The iteration of this cycle reinforces the hegemony of the regime. The government is seen as willing and able to make positive

changes that continually satisfy citizen interests and demands, which are inevitably defined by the manipulative narrative that blames local officials.

Media criticism, in this light, is convenient to local leaders because it strengthens their governance records by heeding citizen feedback and disciplining their subordinates. Data collected from ethnographic observation, interviews, and content analysis show that local leaders are strategic at empowering journalists, encouraging critical reporting only when it advances their career prospects. Local leaders' remarkable way of harnessing media power constitutes an understudied mechanism of authoritarian rule.

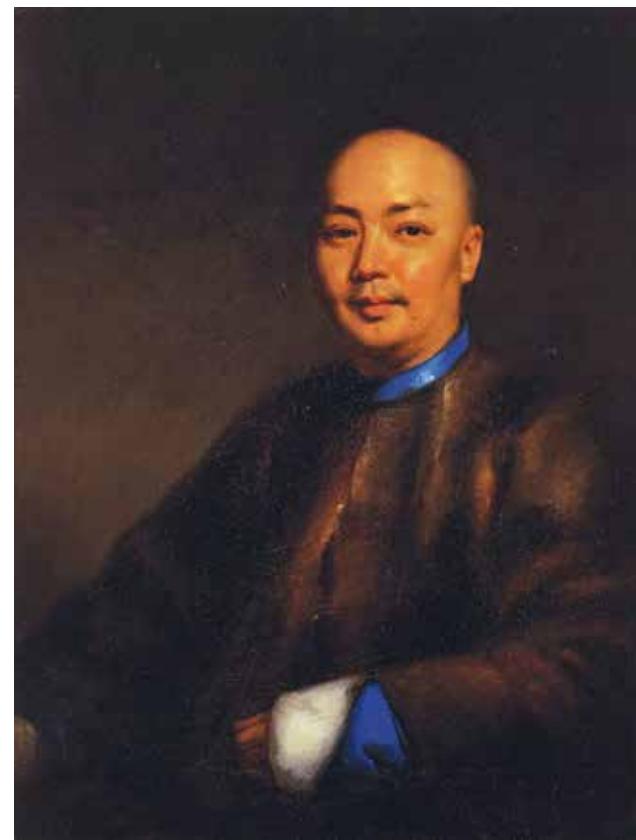
Local television journalists, meanwhile, have developed advocacy-oriented journalism that takes pride in helping ordinary citizens redress grievances. Despite political constraints, this unique form of journalism has morphed into a key player in local governance, especially when it is aligned with the career interests of local leaders.

Offering a fresh perspective on media politics at the local level, my upcoming book will reveal the versatile role of the state media that disciplines local state agents to achieve governing agendas.

**Dr Dan Chen was a Sydney China Fellow. She is an assistant professor of political science and Asian studies at Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania, and is currently completing a book on media politics and public opinion in China.**

# Uncertain Objects: Trajectories of Asian Art

Dr Stephen Whiteman



Lam Qua (1801–1860), *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1840s. Collection of the Peabody-Essex Museum. Image in the public domain.

2018 marked the second year of the Sydney Asian Art Series, an ambitious initiative supported by the China Studies Centre, Power Institute Foundation for Art and Visual Culture, and VisAsia, in partnership with the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Sydney Ideas.

In 2018, the series took up the theme of *Uncertain Objects: Trajectories of Asian Art*. Art history has traditionally been organised around national or clearly defined civilisational lines. Yet as the global turn has come to our field, alongside new ways of thinking about artistic production, reception, and the ‘social lives’ of objects, our eyes are being opened to the connectedness of the premodern and modern world across national lines, and the transnational construction and expression of culture. Four speakers explored these concerns this year, including:

- **Winnie Wong** (UC Berkeley) on 18th-century Canton painting and the circulation of images between China and Europe
- **Ajay Sinha** (Mt Holyoke College) on the photographic encounter between the Indian dancer Ram Gopal and photographer Carl van Vechten in 1930s New York
- **Timon Screech** (SOAS, University of London) on the English East India Company in Japan
- **Nancy Um** (Binghamton University) on the commissioning of Japanese porcelain as diplomatic gifts across the early modern Indian Ocean world.

Each speaker presented on a second occasion, ranging from participation in the Art Gallery of New South Wales’ public film series *Sinha*, to seminars for University of Art History undergraduates, master’s students and the interested public.

For 2019, the Sydney Asian Art Series will turn to architecture, urban environments, and the spatial dimensions of art history, a reflection of a shared interest in these questions. Scheduled speakers include Sussan Babaie (Courtauld Institute of Art), a specialist in the early modern Islamic world; Yasufumi Nakamori (Tate Modern), whose research in photography and new media focuses particularly on Japanese cities; Malini Guha (Carleton University), who works on spatiality and cinema and is currently researching the history of location shooting in the city of Kolkata; and Cole Roskam (University of Hong Kong), who will be presenting new work on architecture and urbanism in 1970–80s China.

We thank all our supporters, institutional and individual, for another wonderful year and look forward to presenting another engaging series in 2019.

**Dr Stephen Whiteman was a lecturer in Chinese art at the University of Sydney and Deputy Director of the Power Institute. From January 2019, he has been a senior lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.**

# Peace on the Peninsula? The origins and implications of North Korea's diplomatic offensive

Dr Justin Hastings

At this lively Sydney Ideas panel in June 2018, experts explored the origins and implications of Kim Jong-un's recent diplomatic activism.

The year 2018 saw potentially dramatic changes in North Korea's relationship with the United States, China and South Korea. Kim Jong-un's New Year's Day speech stated his willingness to talk, and his summit with South Korea's Moon Jae-in was followed by the unprecedented summit with President Donald Trump in Singapore in June. Less noticed, but just as unprecedented, were Kim Jong-un's multiple meetings with China's president Xi Jinping, after years of frosty China-North Korea relations.

Why did North Korea make a move for better relations in 2018, after years of provocative behaviour and angry rhetoric? There were likely push and pull factors. First, while the 'maximum pressure' strategy of the Trump administration likely did not have a strong direct impact on North Korea, China playing ball with the United States due to China's increasing annoyance at North Korea over its weapons tests culminated in a particularly strong sanctions enforcement regime for most of 2017. This caused genuine economic problems for North Korea: cross-border smuggling networks were disrupted, Chinese traders left the market, North Korean businesses were temporarily kicked out of China, and the black markets along the border struggled to stock goods.

The sting was especially strongly felt because North Korea's economy has developed into one where all levels of society have become entrepreneurial, and gone into business as a means of survival. The elites who support Kim Jong-un and benefit from trade opportunities were likely harmed by China's crackdown, resulting in a new politically-driven urgency for relief from the sanctions, and a need for Kim Jong-un to focus on the economy, which he duly did in April. In response to North Korea's overtures, China substantially relaxed enforcement of sanctions, giving Kim Jong-un breathing room for the economy.

At the same time, Kim Jong-un likely felt that now was the best time to come to the negotiating table: weapons tests in 2017 had theoretically culminated in the capability to deliver a small warhead against the United States mainland. Regardless of the reliability of its weapons, this meant North Korea had something substantial to negotiate with. It was able to maintain a nuclear capability while destroying weapons facilities as confidence-building measures, and without conducting further provocative tests.

There was an element of realpolitik to these moves. As a small country

surrounded by larger, potentially hostile powers, one of North Korea's primary goals is to prevent excessive dependence on any one country, but after years of United Nations sanctions, the country has come to depend on China for more than 90 percent of its trade. North Korea's overtures to South Korea and the United States can be seen as an attempt to move away from dependence on China and the pressure China can bring to bear, as demonstrated by the 2017 crackdown.

The year ended with the United States frustrated at the pace of negotiations with North Korea; South Korea anxious for a relaxation of sanctions so it can move forward with projects to improve intra-Korean relations; the United States and South Korea resuming limited military exercises; and the United States slapping new sanctions on North Korea, which were strenuously protested against, but not followed by any concrete provocative actions.

Long-time watchers of the Korean peninsula would be foolish to expect something truly new out of North Korea but for now there is a sliver of hope.

**Dr Justin Hastings is Associate Professor in International Relations and Comparative Politics in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney.**



# Exploring the National Library: a researcher's perspective

Dr Alexandra Grey

In 2018, the National Library of Australia Research Grant was launched with the Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, to allow China Studies Centre members to work in the country's richest Asian materials collection.

I received funding to spend a week at the National Library of Australia in Canberra in November 2018. The purpose was to revisit some rare sources that I had used in my dissertation – as I am turning the dissertation into a book – and to plan the book itself.

The book will be entitled *Language Rights in a Changing China* and is about China's language policies in relation to the Zhuang minority language. Some of the sources I needed at the National Library included rare maps of China. I was keen to look back over at D'Anville's 18th century maps of the Province de Quang-si (Province of Guangxi), now known as Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region.

I set out to carefully check for references in these maps to the Zhuang and other minority peoples. I'm glad I did, as I had previously overlooked the words "Tchoang-kolao" amid the many cursive placenames and mountains and rivers. This term, D'Anville writes in French, is the name of a "peuple sauvage" (wild people). As I read the map aloud (but quietly, as I was in the Special Collections Reading Room), I realised *Tchoang* was another spelling of *Zhuang*. I cheered ... silently, in a library-appropriate way! The relationship of that *Tchoang* group to the officially-recognised *Zhuangzu* minority today is not a question that maps can answer, but it will be dealt with in the book.

Other useful maps held by the National Library include recent language atlas maps, of which I made very high-quality scans. I hope that sharing these through my book (with the authors' permission) will be valuable to many other scholars, as these maps are hard to access despite being 21st century publications. Having access to the 'behind the scenes' equipment for digitising these sources was a great boon.

In addition to its maps, the National Library has an excellent Asian studies collection, and the specialist librarians were helpful in assisting me to find materials. The day I arrived, Bing, Xiaoli and Ping informed me that they had increased their collection of a Zhuang magazine, *Sam Nyied Sam*, because I had referred to

it in a presentation at a China Studies Association of Australia conference. What considerate preparation by the library team!

I poured over edition after edition of the magazine, comparing them to the bilingual Mandarin-Zhuang copies I had collected during my 2014 fieldwork in Guangxi. Through this library visit, I was able to find out that the magazine was barely about Zhuang culture or in Zhuang language during the 1980s and 1990s, and that it has been re-launched again this year without Zhuang language content.

The National Library is a wonderful place for reflection and planning – writing a book needs both! The scholarly silence of the Asian Studies Reading Room and the convivial buzz of the Bookplate cafe terrace spurred me along. I'm very grateful to have been funded for the week-long retreat!

**Dr Alexandra Grey (pictured)** is a postdoctoral researcher with expertise in law and linguistics, at the University of Sydney's Law School.



# Why one should not ‘friend’ their employer on WeChat

Dr Mimi Zou

In the People’s Republic of China, the popularity of social media among its 731 million internet users continues to grow. This creates both opportunities and risks in the employment space.



Social media has ushered in an age of unprecedented information sharing in the workplace. In 2017, more than 83% of WeChat users were reportedly using the app for work-related purposes.

Social media has become a valuable resource for employers to screen job applicants, monitor employee performance and investigate wrongdoings. Employers, both in China and elsewhere, often justify such actions by citing business concerns about reputational risks, leakage of intellectual property and trade secrets, and other legal liabilities that could arise from employees’ social media activities.

Employees’ privacy interests are clearly at stake. To date, Chinese privacy and personal data protection laws have been relatively weak. A patchwork of rules and principles in this domain has developed in a piecemeal and fragmented manner.

Recent legislative developments such as the *General Provisions of Civil Law 2017* may give employees recourse to civil damages if the employer has unlawfully collected and disclosed their personal information on social media. The *Cybersecurity Law* also imposes various obligations on ‘network operators’ in respect of data collection, storage, and transfer. The *Personal Information Security Specification* issued in late 2017 contains a set of recommended principles and standards on the protection of personal information, although there are no penalties imposed for a breach of such standards.

At the same time, a growing number of cases have been brought before Chinese courts involving employer access to, and use of, employee social media content and communications, most commonly in employee dismissal cases. Under the *Labour Contract Law* (art. 39), the employee’s misconduct must be serious for the employer to justify the dismissal without paying compensation. The cases show that employees’ social media postings, including statements expressed by employees on social media out of dissatisfaction with their employment or employer (or manager or co-worker), must constitute serious misconduct or wrongdoing.

These cases highlight the power asymmetries in the employment relationship. Cases where employees are using social media to organise collective industrial action have been held by local courts as serious misconduct by individual employees ('leaders' of such action). Furthermore, employers can use defamation laws against employees for reputational damage from the latter's social media activities, which can result in the chilling of various forms of employee speech.

While new regulatory developments offer the potential to strengthen employee privacy protection, it remains to be seen if they will be implemented in practice, especially in cases brought before the courts. Courts are likely to grapple with difficult questions on how the new privacy and personal information protection laws apply, and how conflicting interests arising from the use of social media technologies in the workplace ought to be balanced.

**Dr Mimi Zou holds the first post in Chinese Law at the University of Oxford. In July 2018, the China Studies Centre supported her lecture visit to Sydney with an Incoming Visitor Grant.**



Professor Anne Cheng

# Conversations with Professor Anne Cheng

Dr Sean Moores

In August–September 2018, Professor Anne Cheng, Chair of Chinese Intellectual History at the Collège de France, Paris, visited the University of Sydney on a China Studies Centre Distinguished Visitors Grant.

In the context of international exchanges organised by the China Studies Centre and the Asian Studies Program, we had the pleasure of welcoming Professor Anne Cheng, Chair of Chinese Intellectual History at the Collège de France in Paris, to join us during August and September 2018.

Professor Cheng's visit was the occasion for a series of talks and meetings which inspired many discussions and interactions with staff and students.

In a round table held on 30 August with colleagues from the China Studies Centre, the Asian Studies Program, the Department of Chinese Studies and the Department of Japanese Studies, a very inspiring conversation was had on the theme 'From China as the world to China in the world'. Drawing on the specialties of the various participants, the round table offered the opportunity for a joint reflection on the implications for neighbouring countries of China's self-depiction as the 'centre', from the pre-modern era to the present day.

This subject was further developed by Professor Cheng in a public talk on 5 September in which she reflected on the contrasts and challenges represented by the transition from China's self-representation as

'a sort of civilisation-world' in the pre-modern era, to visions of 'Chinese universality' and its position and role in the modern world.

On 3 September, Professor Cheng gave a seminar with the title 'Does Zhongguo 中國 mean the Middle Kingdom?' In this talk, she highlighted how in certain early Chinese Buddhist sources, the term *zhongguo* is rather ambiguous, since it is impossible to be certain whether the authors were using it to refer to China or northern India. Such an ambiguity was of course an invitation for academic debate, and this was heartily developed by all of the colleagues and students present.

The visit was an excellent opportunity for Professor Cheng to meet academics and students in Australia, and to see at first hand the work and research on China currently being developed at the University of Sydney.

**Dr Sean Moores is Lecturer in Chinese and East Asian Thought in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Sydney.**



## **International Symposium on Chinese Language and Discourse (ISCLD)**

**Associate Professor Linda Tsung**

The ISCLD is a biennial symposium that advances the exchange of scholarship and emphasises an empirical orientation in functional discourse studies of the Chinese language.

The fifth ISCLD, co-chaired by Associate Professor Linda Tsung and Dr Wei Wang, was hosted by the Department of Chinese Studies and co-sponsored by the China Studies Centre and the School of Languages and Cultures. It took place from 18–20 June 2018, welcoming more than 80 researchers from 13 countries and regions. The theme of this year's symposium was 'Chinese Language in Action: Discourse, Literature, Culture and Education'.

The symposium featured keynote speeches by experts in Chinese linguistics and discourse studies from top universities around the world, including:

- Professor KK Luke from Nanyang Technological University, who explained how conversation analysis (CA) has been applied to the study of Chinese discourse.
- Dr Boping Yuan from Cambridge University, who presented first-hand evidence arguing for the directionality and complexity of L1 transfer in L2 acquisition.
- Professor Hongyin Tao from UCLA, who spoke on the pragmaticisation process of *haiyou* in Mandarin conversation with clear lexical-grammatical, conversational, prosodic and gestural evidence.

A wonderful feature of the proceedings was the pre-conference workshops. In the workshop on CA, Professor Luke engaged participants in animated discussions about a data extract of speakers telling stories, demonstrating how the CA method can be applied to the study of naturally occurring data.

Professor Hongyin Tao and Associate Professor Zhuo Jing-Schmidt from the University of Oregon delivered a workshop on scholarship publication and shared many valuable tips and skills.

During the two-day symposium, researchers in the field of Chinese language and discourse presented their projects in 20 parallel sessions on a wide range of themes, including discourse analysis, conversation analysis, Chinese grammar, Chinese education and pedagogy, Chinese culture, and new developments in Chinese language and discourse in the digital era.

The achievements of this symposium will be embodied in three proposed publications, including two special issues for the international journal *Chinese Language and Discourse*, on conversation analysis and Chinese discourse and Chinese language education; and a new volume on Chinese language and discourse.

**Associate Professor Linda Tsung is Chair of Department in the School of Languages and Cultures and co-chair of the China Studies Centre's Language, Literature, Culture and Education research cluster.**

# Probing the Belt and Road Initiative

Professor Hans Hendrischke

One of the projects supported by China Studies Centre cluster funding is a university-wide and international research cooperation on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), organised by the Business and Economics research cluster.

From a business and economic perspective, the BRI is China's response to global shifts in manufacturing, trade and investment which are changing global value chains. China's original aims for the BRI were threefold: first, to build infrastructure links across the Eurasian continent; second, to promote economic development in neighbouring countries similar to what the Marshall Plan set out to do for post-war Europe; and third, to create alternative markets for Chinese technologies, goods and services and reduce China's dependence on Western markets.

During the last two years, the BRI has changed its original scope to include the Western Pacific and developing countries in Africa and Latin America. In the process, the initiative has become politicised by China celebrating every Memorandum of Understanding with new members as diplomatic victories, and increasing concerns in the West that BRI is driven by China's geostrategic interests.

Australia, while not a formal

member, occupies a crucial strategic position in the BRI as a supplier of mineral and agricultural resources, and a service provider with crucial institutional capabilities and traditional links to the Western Pacific nations. Australia has deep regional links and established green credentials through its engineering and consultancy firms and its English-language based education system. At a corporate level, this makes Australia an important strategic partner for China and other countries involved in the BRI.

China, with its traditional preference for informal and transaction-based governance, is reliant on international collaboration and coordination in developing and implementing social and environmental governance structures. International coordination can help minimise negative ecological impacts brought by the development and avoid the traditional development pathway of 'polluting first and cleaning up later'.

Under the China Studies Centre, the BRI cluster project brings

together researchers from the Business School, the Law School, and the schools of Social and Political Sciences, and Economics in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The project is open to members from all faculties.

In addition, we collaborate with many Chinese and other overseas partner universities. Among the participants of the three workshops we organised and attended in 2018 were researchers from Tsinghua University, Renmin University, and the University of International Business and Economics – all based in Beijing – and the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Following our initial workshop in March 2018 with participants from the University of Sydney, we held an international workshop in conjunction with the 22nd Biennial Asian Studies Association of Australia conference in July 2018. Two of our members presented papers on private environmental governance at a workshop with Renmin University (Beijing) and Columbia University (New York) in November 2018.

In line with our business and economic focus, our project involves research on regional economic interaction, trade and investment between China and neighbouring regions, governance issues such as policy coordination and institution building for ecological and social inclusion, incentivisation of corporate partners, and the configuration of value chains and economic regions.

The project is designed for an initial period of two years. The first workshop in 2019 will be co-sponsored by the University of International Business and Economics and is planned to take place in March/April in Beijing. For our publication planning, we are focusing on four areas:

1. Regional economic interaction under the BRI framework, that is, how transport, energy, communication and finance infrastructure facilitate the emergence of regional value chains and trade and investment flows across China's border regions into BRI economies (case countries/regions)
2. Governance issues facing BRI, including policy coordination and institution-building for social inclusion, private forms of governance
3. How Chinese state-owned and private enterprises are incentivised to participate in the BRI cross-border engagement in cooperation with overseas firms
4. Configuration and regional market design based on the interaction of physical infrastructure, economic development and corporate governance in the BRI context.

We welcome researchers from all disciplines to join our team.

**Hans Hendrischke is Professor of Chinese Business and Management at the University of Sydney Business School, and co-chair of the China Studies Centre's Business and Economics research cluster.**



# Changing times for families with children with disabilities in China

Professor Gwynnyth Llewellyn and Dr Hui Su

In 2018, the China Studies Centre, through its seed funding grant, supported research into approaches for care options of children with disabilities in China.

In China today, families are responsible for the lion's share of caring for their child with a disability. Chinese parents are expected to raise their child at home, providing care, education and development on a 24-hour daily cycle.

In a society where most parents are engaged in daily work outside home, caring for the child with disability often falls to grandparents. Up to now, China's disability policy and services have focused attention on the child – not the family – with the provision of paediatric rehabilitation and special schooling.

As more children with disability enter these services, and parents talk to rehabilitation therapists and teachers about trying to manage at home, it is increasingly clear that families also need support. They may find it difficult to get help to care for their child through the (long) working day, to manage the extra costs associated with raising a child with disability, and to cope with the stresses and strains that caring can place on parental and family relationships.

The limited number of family and disability studies in China tend to focus on parenting stress. This, along with the focus on the child, perpetuates the view that families raising a child with disability are predestined to struggle, and struggle unsupported, with their 'burden of care'.

New models of thinking have overturned the notion of disability as a burden and introduced new concepts such as family empowerment, shared support, and the critical impact of social and cultural contexts on family functioning.

In our collaboration between the University of Sydney and Central China Normal University (CCNU), we are addressing the 'mismatch' between current practices which serve only the child with disability and do not recognise family needs, so that children with disability and their families can thrive.

We are bringing our expertise in ecological theories of family functioning to this task. These theories consider the family as a microcosm within the broader set of social and cultural contexts and relationships. The child with disability is seen as an integral part of the web of relationships rather than the sole focus of attention. Optimal family functioning occurs when families develop meaningful, sustainable daily routines that fit with all family member needs.

Why does optimal family functioning matter? Because of the strong evidence that optimal family functioning supports children with disability reaching their full potential as socially and economically participating adults in society, a priority goal of China's social welfare policy.



Children, their teachers and parents at the Wuhan Natural History Museum

An important goal of our research is to adapt our evidence-based family-centred measures to the Chinese cultural context. With the assistance of CCNU Master of Special Education students, we are implementing these measures to build a knowledge base about families of children with disability in China.

Another goal is to bring knowledge translation to paediatric rehabilitation and school staff as we engage in collaborative workshops with families and professionals.

Our final goal is to engage with policy makers, beginning in 2018 with hosting a delegation from the China Disabled Persons' Federation and a reciprocal visit in China. Our aim is to support decision making at the national, provincial and service level as China moves towards implementing evidence-based family-centred practice for families of children with disabilities.

**Professor Gwynnyth Llewellyn from the Faculty of Health Sciences is an occupational therapist and leading international authority on family and disability.**

**Dr Hui Su is a research affiliate of the University's Centre for Disability Research and Policy, from Central China Normal University, Wuhan.**



Singing time at the end of the school day

# The Sunflower and Umbrella movements on Facebook and Twitter

Dr Joyce YM Nip

How have the internet and social media changed the dynamics of social movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan?

The internet has been a useful tool of information and communication of social movement organisations for some time. Now, networked digital media, notably social media and smart phones, are changing the organisation of social movements itself.

On social media, individuals and collectives expressing, sharing and filtering their personal views of the social movement through their social networks marginalises the leadership of social movement organisations in framing the movement. These personal frames underlie the motivation of

individual participation in protest actions, which can be coordinated via social networks with the help of instantaneous communication on smart mobile devices, bypassing social movement organisations. As social media pages of individuals and collectives act as a form of media, the role of traditional news media in framing social movements also changes.

These are some of the issues that drive the collaborative research project 'Online public opinion in Greater China: Similarities, differences, and mutual influences', funded by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation Grant in 2015-17.

Supporters of the Sunflower Movement, 30 March 2014.  
Neon Tommy - Flickr: [1], CC BY-SA 2.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31944676>



Led by me, the project's other investigators are Dr King-wa Fu (University of Hong Kong), Dr Yu-chung Cheng (Hsuan Chuang University), and Dr Pai-Lin Chen and Dr Kung Chen of the National Chengchi University in Taiwan.

The project focuses on the communication on Facebook and Twitter in the Sunflower Movement of Taiwan and the Umbrella Movement of Hong Kong in 2014. Facebook was the most widely used social media in Taiwan and Hong Kong at the time of the movements. Twitter is popularly used as a news media internationally. The similarities and differences between the two Chinese societies provide the backdrop of a comparison.

On Twitter, we collected more than 700,000 tweets about the Sunflower Movement from 155,000 unique users, and more than 1.6 million tweets about the Umbrella Movement published by 268,000 unique users in Cantonese, complicated Chinese, simplified Chinese, English and Japanese.

The tweets were analysed computationally to examine the timing and the language used in tweeting in relation to the development of the movements. Results of the analysis were published in two Chinese-language academic papers: 'Online real-time civic engagement in a networked movement: A case study of Taiwan's 318 movement', and 'Heteroglossia in social media during the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement: Exploring multi-language tweets'.

The data will be further examined to compare the two movements.

For the Facebook study, 2388 messages (1389 from Hong Kong and 999 from Taiwan) were sampled from 10 public pages, comprising pro-movement and neutral/anti-movement comments. Manual content analysis of the messages identifies the frames expressed and how they change as communication flows from post to comments and replies on the Facebook pages.

Results of the Facebook study were presented in two international conferences in 2018: the Chinese Internet Research Conference, held on 22-23 May at Leiden University, the Netherlands; and the Digital Asia: Social Change, Engagement, and Voices – International Communication Association Preconference, held on 24 May in Prague, Czech Republic. Further analysis of the Facebook data is ongoing to examine the role of various media in the two movements.

**Dr Joyce Nip is a senior lecturer in the Department of Media and Communications and the Department of Chinese Studies, both in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.**

Umbrella Movement, Hong Kong, 25 October 2014.  
Citobun [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)]



Umbrella Movement, Hong Kong, 25 October 2014.  
Citobun [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)]



# Rethinking Socialism in China: government accounting reform and the role of ideology

Dr Eagle Zhang

Accounting with ‘Chinese characteristics’? Eagle Zhang’s research, funded by the China Studies Centre, examines recent developments in China’s fiscal management and their broader implications.

Since the establishment of the People’s Republic in 1949, China has only applied a cash-based budgeting system for fiscal management. In 2014, China announced a specific plan to establish an accrual-based accounting system over a seven-year period by 2020. The system will require all levels of government to produce accrual-based accounting information. This will supplement the existing cash-based budgeting to report the value of assets and liabilities owned by governmental bodies, and provide performance information on costing and productivity that is not available under the current budgeting system.

These reforms represent a significant strategic change in China’s public management.

Drawing upon intellectual debates among leading accounting scholars in China from 1997 to 2018, my project explores the major institutional forces that have enabled the reform and the ideological values that shape government financial reporting in China.

Considering the wider social position of accounting in public sector reforms, accrual-based financial reporting has been shown to offer technical capacities that enable neoliberal forms of social governance in Western

societies. China's decision to embrace the same reporting technology has offered the opportunity for this project to revisit the relationship between government accounting reform and the shifting power relations in global processes of neoliberalisation.

The history of China's social politics has resulted in a hybridity between capitalist economic relations and socialist ideologies. This project analyses China's official ideology of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics (SWCC) to illustrate the conflicting political dynamics in contemporary Chinese society. The analysis argues that there is a broad process of adjustment and adaptation that serves to accentuate the political leadership of the Chinese Communist Party underlying the concept of SWCC. The party has managed to guard its political power and this is possible, in part, because of the successful mobilisation of the language of socialism and the forms of policies that ensure both the economic and political capacity of the party.

In this context, accounting technology is highly supported and understood as playing an important role in the ongoing debates concerning public sector reform in China.

As a form of managerial control, the reform of government accounting offers critical technological capacities for the party to control resources more effectively, thereby enriching its political and economic power. The findings suggest that the purposes as well as the other conceptual understandings, such as the reporting entity, of the reform all correspond to the ideological objectives of SWCC.

In helping develop a more robust supervisory capacity, including managing fiscal risks, the technical functions of financial reporting help sustain the public ownership of economic resources and ultimately the authoritarian control of the Chinese Communist Party. In this way, the accounting change is associated with the optimisation of the socialist market economy, which forms an appropriate and desirable part of the process of adaptation and revitalisation that is critical to the lasting political legitimacy of the ruling party.

**Dr Eagle Ying Zhang is a senior lecturer in the Discipline of Accounting at the University of Sydney Business School.**



## 'Made in China' Summer School

By Sirma Altun



Illustration by Marc Verdugo Lopez. Courtesy *Made in China Journal*.

China Studies Centre student member Sirma Altun was given the opportunity to attend the 2018 'Made in China' Summer School in Florence, Italy.

Looking back to the European summer of 2018, I recognise how precious was the week I spent at the summer school. It was organised by the *Made in China* journal under the theme of 'Chinese Labourscapes: Transregional Perspectives on Work and Rights'.

*Made in China* is a quarterly journal on Chinese labour, civil society and rights. It is published in English and is remarkably open access; all issues since 2016 are accessible online for free. Besides the quarterly journal, the team also publishes the *Made in China Yearbook* and organises this summer school.

The Made in China Summer School was held in Florence from 9–13 July 2018. The CISL Study Centre, where the summer school took place, was a venue with great historical importance for the labour movement in Italy, and hence a perfect match for a school themed on labour and workers' rights.

Bringing together academics, PhD students, NGO workers, unionists and government workers from China, Europe, Australia, the United States and Canada, the summer school provided a unique international and multidisciplinary platform where academic knowledge met diverse practical experience.

The diversity of participants notably advanced the array and depth of discussions. The organisers

made remarkable efforts to establish an open and democratic floor for all participants to express their opinions freely and equally.

The five-day long summer school was structured around presentations by leading China specialists including Professor Luigi Tomba on collective rental economies and labour conditions; Professor Ching Kwan Lee on global China and Chinese foreign investments in Africa; Professor Mark Frazier on the politics of citizenship in Shanghai and Mumbai; and Dr Jean-Philippe Beja on civil society in China under Xi Jinping's rule, among others.

In addition to presentations, organisers lined up creative sessions such as pro/contra debate on labour empowerment and precarisation in China between Ching Kwan Lee and Jack Linchuan Qiu. Speakers in roundtables on China's 'influence', on Chinese labour abroad and current challenges for Chinese labour NGOs presented stimulating discussions on different aspects of Chinese labourscapes. As a PhD student, I also benefited from methodology workshops on the challenges of doing fieldwork and on digital methods.

As a student member of China Studies Centre, my participation was sponsored by the centre's Graduate Research Students Support Grant Scheme. I strongly appreciate this support, as without it, I wouldn't be able to participate. I highly recommend that higher degree by research students who are working on China follow the *Made in China* publications and participate in future summer schools.

**Sirma Altun is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Her thesis concerns socio-spatial struggles in Hong Kong and Taipei City.**

## AAS-in-Asia Conference

By Shensi Yi

**China Studies Centre student member Shensi Yi was chosen to present a panel discussion at the 2018 AAS-in-Asia Conference in New Delhi, India.**

The 2018 AAS-in-Asia conference was held by the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) and Ashoka University from 5–8 July. As a regional conference of the AAS, it gives attendees an invaluable opportunity to communicate with scholars, discuss their research in person, and advance their academic path.

As a student member of the China Studies Centre, I have been conducting historical research on the early Chinese Communist movement. Following recent developments in the field, such as a growing focus on international history, I felt it would be meaningful to gather scholars of communist history on the broader platform of the AAS conference to share ideas and stimulate critical discussion. I therefore contacted several colleagues and leading scholars to create a panel, proposed to the AAS-in-Asia conference.

The panel was titled ‘Networks, Culture, and Localization: Transnational Studies of Communism in China and South East Asia, 1920s–1950s’. Based on multi-archival sources and perspectives of intra-Asian connections, this panel examined several aspects of communist activity in Asia from the 1920s to the 1950s. The papers showed how Asian communists, when they encountered internal rifts and external influences, used their practical resources to scramble for their own revolutionary grandeur, rather than simply passively following Moscow.

A broad transnational perspective was provided by case studies of communist operations in Shanghai, the Chinese communities in Singapore, the transfer of Dalian from Japanese to Soviet occupation, and cultural circles in Indonesia. The panel both evaluated how each communist group survived and developed, and compared their efforts to localise international communism and reach their political objectives.

With generous support from the China Studies Centre, I was able to make it to the conference. Our panel was held on 6 July. I presented my investigation of the dramatic change of leadership in the Chinese Youth League’s early period, and analysed the role

therein of personality, emotion and local autonomy.

The other two panellists presented recent studies. Dr Yi Wang traced how the Chinese Communist Party, together with the Soviet Union, strove to establish a propaganda system in Dalian right after the end of the Second World War to eliminate Japanese influence and outmanoeuvre the Guomindang. Dr Stephen Miller scrutinised the cultural strategy of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) in the early 1950s, investigating how the sometimes vexed (and subsequently controversial) relationship between communism and religion (especially Islam) was navigated in fictional representations in the PKI’s organ, *The People’s Daily*.

Due to a visa issue (a problem for many people attending this conference), Professor Alexander Pantsov, who would have served as the panel chair and discussant, could not make it to New Delhi, and had to give the panellists his constructive comments in text form instead of expressing feedback onsite.

The Q&A process offered a good chance to interact and communicate with audiences from different fields of Asian studies. These forms of feedback and questioning gave us a valuable opportunity to improve and verify our studies.

At this conference, I talked and consulted with PhD candidates from different continents, which broadened my knowledge of the first-rate studies being produced by promising historians. Organising a panel to attend this conference was a significant milestone in my graduate research program.

**Shensi Yi is a PhD candidate in the Department of History. His thesis concerns young revolutionaries in the cosmopolitan city.**



# 16th International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE) biennial conference

By Xiao Ma

China Studies Centre student member Xiao Ma reports on the 16th IASTE conference, held in Coimbra, Portugal. Its theme was 'The Politics of Tradition'.

The conference brought together more than 240 scholars and practitioners from a variety of backgrounds to present papers structured around three broad themes:

- Traditions of Everyday Social Practices and the Shaping of Traditional Built Environments
- Theorising the Political from the Spaces of Traditional Built Environments
- Tradition, Politics, and the Built Environment.



University of Coimbra, Portugal

Hosted by the University of Coimbra from 4–7 October, the 2018 IASTE conference explicitly foregrounded the ways in which traditions in the built environment and the domain of the political are related.

It is useful to address how the built environment has been shaped by state apparatuses or by citizens to advance diverse political positions, often deploying imaginary traditions or purportedly rejecting emerging spatial practices and political subjectivities.

The 2018 IASTE conference offered reflections both on the importance of the concept of tradition for the political question in itself, and on the ways in which variants of governance structures face the question of tradition in the built environment. Participants were encouraged to question the practice of tradition in the production of the systems of politics as a category of tradition, reflecting on how the construction and deconstruction of professional political bodies acts on the built environment.

The University of Coimbra (founded in 1290) is the oldest university in Portugal, and one of the oldest universities in continuous operation in the world. At the conference, I presented my research project about the transnational production of housing in Sydney, namely the practices of Chinese developers. The presentation concentrated on the problem-solving processes through which Chinese developers adapt their practices to a new social, cultural and planning context.

I further explained the conflict and strategies that Chinese developers use in the design, construction and marketing stages through the analysis of two case studies: Greenland Group, Greenland Centre; and Country Garden Group, Ryde Garden.

Finally, I highlighted three characteristics of Chinese developers' practices in Sydney: continuation, regulation and innovation.

During the Q&A session, we discussed Chinese government regulation restricting the purchase of foreign exchange and overseas investment.

Attending the conference was a professionally rewarding experience. In addition to socialising with colleagues from other institutions, and visiting an exotic locale, it was an invaluable opportunity to hear relevant presentations and converse with like-minded researchers. The presentations informed me of what others are doing and inspired research ideas of my own. I am very grateful to the China Studies Centre for funding my research trip.

**Xiao Ma is a PhD candidate in the School of Architecture, Design and Planning. Her thesis concerns Chinese developers in Sydney.**

# 22nd European Association for Chinese Studies (EACS) biennial conference

By Ruttapond Swanpitak



With funding support from the China Studies Centre, student member Ruttapond Swanpitak participated in the EACS conference at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. Its main theme was 'China and the World: The Mapping of Exchange'.

The EACS international conference on Chinese Studies provides a forum for scholars and academics in China-focused fields to gather and exchange knowledge. The 2018 conference, held from 29 August to 1 September, brought together scholars from Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific working in fields from traditional sinology to contemporary China.

As my current research is in the areas of literary, gender and cultural studies, I attended relevant sessions and engaged in research-focused discussions that helped me to develop ideas for my thesis and reassess my interdisciplinary approach.

My thesis aims to offer insights into three writers' works concerning changing portrayals of Chinese women and the development of Chinese feminist writing. Specifically, the project discusses how these writers attempted to subvert and resist entrenched gender discourses within their narratives and through writing strategies, to create new spaces for women which challenge traditional, socialist and capitalist patriarchal cultures as well as state control.

Providing a close textual analysis and literary historical research, their writing presents the multidimensional feature of feminist ideologies that

can be seen as a channel for developing a feminist consciousness and feminism in China.

On 31 August 2018 at the conference, I presented my paper titled 'Womanhood in the Age of Globalization: Feminist Consciousness in Chi Li's Late-1990s Fiction', which investigates Chi Li's treatment of female identity in an urban commercial culture through her novels. After my presentation, I gained invaluable experience, constructive advice and insights from professionals and scholars working on literary and gender studies.

The conference was a crucial step to refine my arguments and make my research have more impact. It was also beneficial to completing my doctoral thesis, including future research and publications.

Attending this major conference was a significant way not only to exchange knowledge and ideas but to build international networks of Chinese studies scholarship around the world.

**Ruttapond Swanpitak is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Her thesis concerns female sexuality and subjectivity in the literary works of Wang Anyi, Tie Ning and Chi Li, published between 1985 and 2000.**

# Suzhou-Shanghai Field School: student perspectives

In 2018, the China Studies Centre led a dozen University of Sydney students to Suzhou, Hangzhou and Shanghai for three weeks. Supported by the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan, our mobility program included Chinese language classes, cultural and business site visits, and a course of diverse lectures credited as an Arts or Asian Studies elective.



**Monica Jones**

Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws  
(Chinese Studies major)

Over the holidays, I was lucky enough to be part of the New Colombo Plan Field School to Suzhou, Hangzhou and Shanghai.

We visited the Alibaba headquarters in Hangzhou and witnessed the development of e-commerce in China, and how it is bringing new opportunities to rural areas which had previously been isolated. We heard presentations from two start-ups based in Naked Hub (Shanghai), a modern co-working space with locations all over China.

The program included lectures and cultural activities such as calligraphy and dumpling making. We also enjoyed a visit to Jinze County, which is a small town outside of Shanghai that is undergoing a process of ecological renewal. On our last day, we heard engaging talks from the Australian Consulate, the NSW Government office in Shanghai and the Austrade Landing Pad program for Australian businesses in China.

**Peter Dougherty**

Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws  
(Government and International Relations major)

During the trip, I gained an appreciation and a (very elementary) understanding of the Chinese language through language classes in Suzhou. We also heard about many of the prominent political issues – from Xi Jinping's role in modern China to China's position in the legal disputes of the South China Sea – from a Chinese perspective. Understanding such perspectives can only help build rapports between our two countries.

Unexpected experiences on the field school were also impactful. Witnessing the revitalisation of traditional Chinese tea culture alongside the emergence of the new 'bubble tea' phenomena helped me consider the diverse intergenerational cultural exchanges occurring in China. Visiting Alibaba and using the WeChat app allowed me to appreciate China's technological advancements compared to the West and their battles against minor inconveniences – such as the wallet!



### **Andrew Cain**

Bachelor of Engineering and Diploma of Language Studies

On the field trip, every day was something new. Suzhou was our first city; it was where we had our Mandarin lessons, cultural inductions and broached topics of China's modern and historical identity. We visited historical sites and companies that were pushing the limits of innovation. We experienced many firsts in Suzhou, and as a group we bonded, going out to KTV, the ancient gardens and familiarising ourselves with the local 'Family Mart' convenience store. Talking to the Uyghur street food vendors outside our apartment complex and walking along Yangcheng Lake remain cherished memories.

We spent most of our time in Shanghai, a Chinese city with the allure of a modern international metropolis. At one of China's top universities, Shanghai Jiaotong, we discussed topics ranging from modern China's economic growth to the recent revival of Confucianism. Our many site visits never got tedious as we delved into big business, start-up culture and investment opportunities, while meeting key policy and decision makers from both sides of the South China Sea.

We also enjoyed wandering through the streets. I will forever have memories of walking along the Bund at night, suiting up in the textile markets and enjoying the beautiful views of the city from rooftop bars.





### Justin Handisurya

Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Government and International Relations major)

If I were to describe my three-week experience on the field school in a single word, it would be *contrasts*.

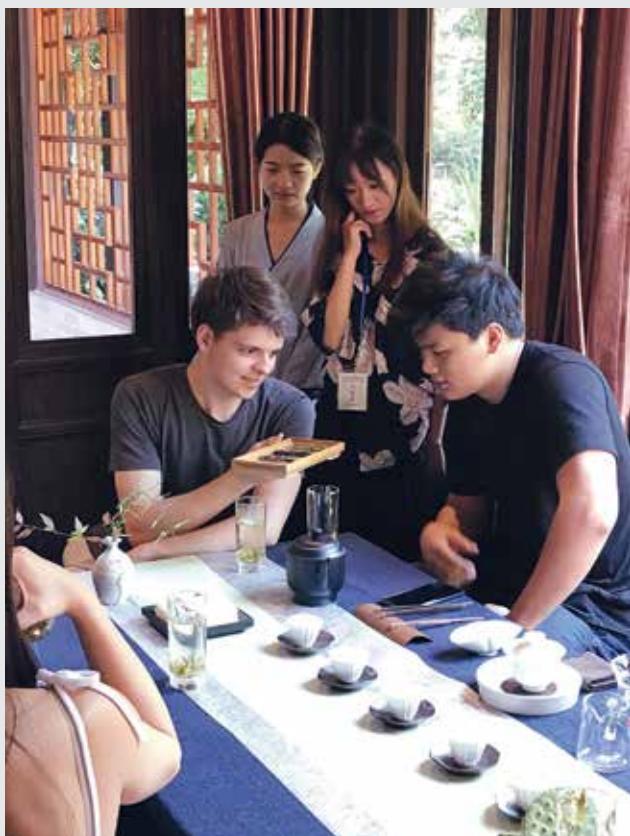
While undertaking language and culture classes in the heart of the Suzhou Industrial Park, we learned about the power and promise of the Sino-Singaporean bilateral partnership. At a local level, we gained insights into the competitiveness of the Chinese education industry as we coached local schoolchildren, and courted history and heritage in the UNESCO-listed Tongli Town.

In leafy Hangzhou, we observed the tension between tradition and modernity. A fascinating lecture on the history and cultivation of Pu'er and other teas amid undulating tea slopes was contrasted with a staggering testament to the transformative power of Chinese e-commerce in a visit to the Alibaba HQ.

More than any other, the Shanghai leg of the trip embodied ‘contrasts’, with much of the intellectual legwork done at Shanghai Jiaotong University. Outside the classroom, we witnessed both ends of the experiential spectrum. At one end stood the commanding heights of Chinese neo-capitalism, accessed through site visits to Rio Tinto and venture capital firms; at the other end, grassroots social enterprises and barely-concealed poverty embodied in Buy42 and Jinze Town.

We often found ourselves playing into the city’s contradictions. Meditations on the future of Chinese communism and wealth inequality were un-ironically followed by a Michelin-starred dining experience on the Bund and forays into the heart of Shanghai’s shopping culture on Nanjing Road. Unsurprisingly, it was the more modest, local samplings which proved superior – I found myself more at home wolfing down freshly-steamed, family-made Baozi (包子) and Yang’s legendary Sheng Jian Bao (生煎包)!

All in all, the field school was an incredibly rich, multifaceted and once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I credit my desire to one day work in China solely to this trip. I cannot recommend it enough!



# 2018 Events calendar

Event type	Event name	Speaker	Co-host
Annual event	2018 Sydney China Business Forum: China's healthy cities: opportunities and challenges for Australian businesses (see page 14)	Multiple	The University of Sydney Business School, Charles Perkins Centre
Chinese New Year event	Public lecture – Rust never sleeps: the impact and control of plant diseases	Professor Robert Park, University of Sydney	City of Sydney
How to ... series	How to expose your work on China to the global media	Multiple	
	How to find China-related resources		
	How to maximise your job opportunities in China-related fields		
	How to write China-related content for the general public		
	How to fund your China-related research		
	How to do fieldwork in China		
	How to get published		
China and the Urban Age series	'China and the Urban Age' theme launch event (see page 6)	Multiple	
	Gentrifying China's Urbanisation: Why Culture and Capital aren't enough	Professor Luigi Tomba, University of Sydney	China Development Society
	Keynote lecture – A Reflexive Regionalist Approach to Practice	Li Xiaodong (architect), Tsinghua University, China	School of Architecture, Design and Planning
	Infrastructuring China's Green Urban Future (see page 12)	Associate Professor Choon-Piew Pow, National University of Singapore	
Monthly seminar	Between Europe and China: business systems along the Belt and Road Initiative	Professor Barbara Krug, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany	The University of Sydney Business School
	The political economy of Han Xinjiang: organised dependency and lucrative chaos	Dr Tom Cliff, Australian National University	
	China and the Global Refugee Crisis: External and Domestic Dynamics	Dr Fengshi Wu, University of Melbourne	
	De/Re-construction of Zhuang Shamanic Songs in Cultural Festivals	Professor Kao Ya-ning, National Chengchi University, Taiwan	Sydney Conservatorium of Music
	Effect of Lactoferrin Fortified Formula Milk for Infants previously Exclusively Breastfed on Iron Metabolism Homeostasis	Dr Ke Chen, Director of the Department of Nutrition, Chengdu Women's and Children's Central Hospital	School of Public Health
	Convenient Criticism: Local Media and Governance in Urbanising China	Assistant Professor Dr Dan Chen, Elizabethtown College, United States	
	Making Films, Making Research: The Use of Documentary Films in Academic Research	Dr Jinghong Zhang, Southern University of Science and Technology, China	
	No production, no consumption confidence? A comparative study of wine-drinking in China and tea-drinking in Australia	Dr Jinghong Zhang, Southern University of Science and Technology, China	
	Rethinking socialism in China: The ideological implication of China's government accounting reform (see page 30)	Dr Eagle Zhang, University of Sydney	
	India and China in the Regional Economic Order	Professor Amita Batra, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India	
	Deconstructing "Rightness" – the Role of yi 義 in the Early Thought of Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927)	Dr Sean Moores, University of Sydney	Oriental Society of Australia

Event type	Event name	Speaker	Co-host
Co-hosted events	Report launch – Demystifying Chinese Investment in Australia Healthcare	Multiple	The University of Sydney Business School
	Masterclass – Media and Communication in China	Multiple	Department of Media and Communications
	The Fifth International Symposium on Chinese Language and Discourse (see page 23)	Multiple	Department of Chinese Studies
	Peace on the Peninsula? The Origins and Implications of North Korea's Diplomatic Offensive (see page 19)	Multiple	Sydney Ideas
	Asian Studies Association of Australia Conference 2018	Multiple	Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, School of Languages and Cultures
	Public lecture – My friends are on WeChat and my boss as well: Social Media and Employee Privacy in the Chinese Workplace (see page 21)	Dr Mimi Zou, University of Oxford	Sydney Law School, Sydney Business School
	China after reform: How a new era is being constituted and what it entails	Professor Heike Holbig, Goethe University Frankfurt/German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg, Germany	Department of Chinese Studies
	Sydney Ideas – Visionary realities: documentary cinema in 20th century China	Dr Ying Qian, Columbia University	Sydney Ideas
	Sounds of Silence in Wang Xiaobo's Work: Exit, Voice or Loyalty?	Professor Heike Holbig, Goethe University Frankfurt/German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg, Germany	
Sydney Asian Art series (see page 18)	Until you see the original again: Lam Qua, Chinese export artist	Associate Professor Winnie Wong, University of California, Berkeley, United States	Power Foundation for Art and Visual Culture, VisAsia Event partners: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney Ideas
	Transcultural Attractions: Photographs of an Indian Dancer	Professor Ajay Sinha, Mount Holyoke College, United States	
	The Shogun's Silver Telescope: Art in the First English Encounters with Japan, 1611-1616	Professor Timon Screech, SOAS University of London	
	Boxes Fit for Kings: Aromatic Gifts around the Late-Seventeenth- and Early-EIGHTEENTH-Century Indian Ocean	Professor Nancy Um, SUNY Binghamton University, United States	
General events	Welcome event for the 2018 Sydney China Visiting Fellows (see page 16)	Multiple	
	China studies reading group	Assistant Professor Dr Dan Chen, Elizabethtown College, United States	
	Chinese tea tasting	Dr Jinghong Zhang, Southern University of Science and Technology, China	
	China Studies Centre Mid-Autumn Festival	Multiple	
	China Studies Centre community library launch (see page 15)	Multiple	
	Sydney Chinese Studies Postgraduate Seminar	Multiple	Department of Chinese Studies
	Student seminar – Views from the Grassroots: Independent Documentary Cinema in Contemporary China	Dr Ying Qian, Columbia University, United States	

**The University of Sydney  
China Studies Centre  
悉尼大学中国研究中心**

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