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# Building a community of Chinese knowledge

2017 Year in review

The University of Sydney

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2017 Year in review

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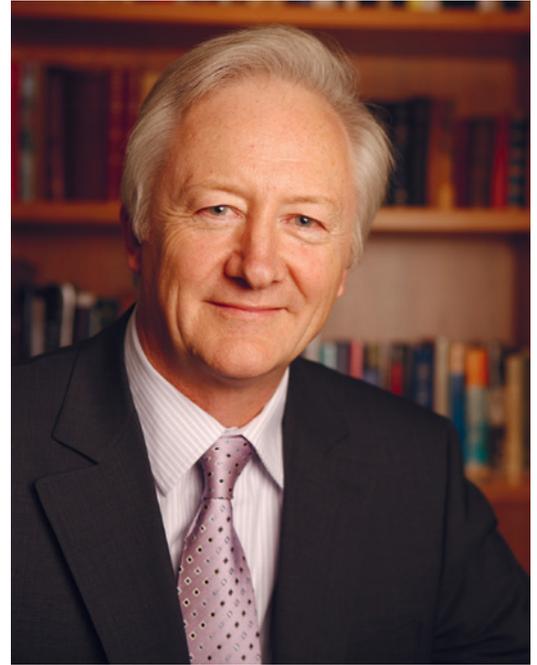
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## Provost's message

It is a pleasure to read of the wonderful work of our China Studies Centre in this 2017 yearbook. A yearbook, of course, is the fruit of wonderful staff and students and, equally important, a history of our serious engagement with China.



The University of Sydney's engagement with East Asia goes back a long way, from the first Oriental Studies program in Australia, established in 1918, through to one of the largest and most significant China studies groupings in the world, outside of China.

We have had academics and Australian students working in China for many years, as early as the 1950s and 1960s. After the Cultural Revolution, the University welcomed nine distinguished Chinese academics who worked with scholars here at the University, all of whom went back to make an important contribution to research and teaching in China. This is a legacy of which we are justly proud. And our contemporary China Studies Centre, with about 250 members and affiliates, is a remarkable expression of the University's continuing engagement with China.

The centre offers a unique perspective on China in the international context. Where many such centres in Australia focus on China-Australian relations, foreign policy and diplomacy, our researchers reach further, focusing more on understanding China itself.

Many of our programs and scholars tie the study of the country's long history, language, culture and politics with multidisciplinary research into resolving the global challenges of our age, such as urbanisation, economic development, regionalism, health and the environment.

The centre is distinguished by its practical and connected focus on understanding how the key issues contemporary China faces fit within a larger global framework of challenges, while digging deep into the opportunities to understand the lessons that may emerge from the experiences in that country. This is a rich field of endeavour that is inspiring many of our scholars and students, and their work will inform current and future generations.

The China Studies Centre is the University of Sydney's strategic hub to connect local and disciplinary knowledge and help devise University-wide research strategies to best deal with the increasing importance of China in many of the things we do. As this annual report demonstrates, our scholars and students are working on many fronts on genuinely exciting and important initiatives that will make a difference for China, Australia and the wider world.

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

## Director's message

China looms large, and 2017 only confirmed what we already knew: how important an understanding of a complex China is to our research, work and everyday lives.



Welcome

It is easy and uncontroversial to say that China is crucial to our economic future, that it occupies a larger and larger space in our everyday lives, that it forces us to reconsider the many ways in which we have thought of our own position in the world.

What is more relevant to our work at one of Australia's premier universities, is that China has also become crucial to the study of the world's big challenges, to those global problems that we wish to tackle. Finding solutions will make a substantial difference to the quality of our future.

The China Studies Centre's main goal is therefore to contribute to the study of global issues in China. Not only because moving, feeding, housing and keeping people healthy are bigger problems in that country than almost anywhere else, but because the knowledge that is generated by attempts to solve those problems offers vital lessons relevant far beyond China.

We believe the solutions will be the result of different gazes, and that specialist, disciplinary knowledge becomes more relevant once it overcomes its own boundaries. The China Studies Centre is willing to provide the 'interpretation' that is at times necessary for disciplines to speak to one another and to approach problems from a variety of perspectives, to facilitate new and fruitful connections.

In 2017, we only scratched the surface of what we can do, and the following pages provide an overview of what has been going on, the breadth of this university's expertise and the engagement we wish to achieve with the arts, humanities, social sciences and sciences.

From 2018 we will devote more resources to building a collective home of China knowledge, and to rallying our community towards common research goals, so as to create that basic networked knowledge that is at the beginning of many great ideas. We will continue to do this with the help of our internal and external stakeholders – the people who support our research and advise us on how to keep our work relevant into the future.

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

# 45 years on: the ties that bind Australia and China

In October 2017, the China Studies Centre marked 45 years since Australia and the People's Republic of China established formal diplomatic relations with a one-day symposium, at which historian Dr Kate Bagnall delivered the keynote address.

To celebrate this milestone, the Australian Government published a collection of stories, called *45 Years, 45 Stories* ([www.45stories.com](http://www.45stories.com)), that aims to highlight the community and cultural links between the two nations.

Marking this anniversary by highlighting people-to-people ties is a shift for Australia. On previous anniversaries Australian politicians and diplomats have focused almost exclusively on the economic relationship between the two countries, citing impressive trade and investment figures, tourism dollars and the growing number of Chinese students at Australian universities.

Sometimes they have given a small nod to the considerable number of Australians with Chinese heritage, or to the contribution of prominent Chinese Australians to fields such as medicine and the arts. But, overall, individual and personal connections between Australia and China have received little recognition.

The stories featured in *45 Years, 45 Stories* are contemporary portraits, yet they gesture to the significance of personal ties in the longer history of Australia–China relations. The first known Chinese settler in the fledgling British colony of New South Wales was carpenter-turned-publican John Shying, who arrived in Sydney in 1818. He owned land and property, held a publican's licence, married and became a father. Shying made a life for himself and his descendants in NSW, but he also maintained his Chinese connections, returning to Canton for five years in the early 1830s.

Like most of the Chinese to arrive over the next century and a half, Shying was from Guangdong province. These Cantonese migrants came from a dozen or so counties in the Pearl River Delta. The other notable point of departure for Australia was

Amoy (Xiamen) in Fujian, from where about 3500 indentured labourers left for the Australian colonies in the late 1840s and early 1850s.

Until the late 20th century, Australia's 'Chinese' communities were primarily Cantonese communities, where 'Lingnan' (southeast Chinese) culture, food and languages were dominant. Beyond the personal ties that have linked Australia and China there are still physical manifestations of historical ties. Examples include the heritage-listed Sze Yup Kwan Ti Temple in Glebe, Sydney, built at the turn of the twentieth century, and the Lai Wor Primary School, in Waisha, Zhuhai, built in the late 1920s by Chinese–Australian merchants Choy Hing and Choy Chong.

The 45th anniversary in December 2017 came at a time of increasing tension in the relationship between Australia and China. It followed a one-day symposium on 24 October organised by the China Studies Centre and Sydney Ideas, titled 'Looking back, moving forward: symposium on the future of Australia–China relations'.

As we move towards the 50th anniversary in 2022, we should remember more of the complexities of our shared history and the diversity of Chinese–Australian identities today. While more than 5 percent of Australians identify as ethnically Chinese, less than half speak Mandarin and even fewer were born in China.

Australia's recognition of the People's Republic of China in 1972 was a meaningful moment in the history of our two nations, but it is just one defining point in the history and future of Australia–China relations.

**Dr Kate Bagnall**  
ARC DECRA Research Fellow  
School of Humanities and Social Inquiry  
University of Wollongong



Above: Chinese picnic in Albion bus - Emmaville, NSW, 1908.  
Image: State Library of New South Wales [FL1708557].



Left: The Chinese procession. The Dragon turning the corner of Spring and Bourke Streets. Photograph by Robert S. Brian, 1840-1906.  
Image: Picture collections, State Library of Victoria.



Chinese banquet, 58 Dixon Street, Sydney, 1945.  
Image: State Library of New South Wales [FL1264705].

# Asian art takes centre stage



Image: Woodblock print of courtesans by Kitao Shigemasa and Katsukawa Shunshō, from the album *The Mirror of Yoshiwara Beauties, Compared*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

In 2017 we launched a new three-year initiative, the Sydney Asian Art Series, presented through a partnership between the China Studies Centre, the University of Sydney's Power Institute for Art and Visual Culture, and VisAsia, with support from the Art Gallery of NSW and Sydney Ideas.

The project seeks to expand the centre's support of programming across the disciplines, including in the arts and humanities. Each year, four leading scholars, curators or artists whose work focuses on or connects to Asia are invited to Sydney for two events, including a public lecture and a second smaller program oriented towards students, VisAsia members, and supporters.

In its first year, the Sydney Asian Art Series explored the theme, 'Beyond the studio: contexts of Asian art'. Looking outside conventional tropes of the genius of the individual masters, this year's speakers considered a range of social, political, intellectual, and material concerns that shaped the production and reception of Asian art, from Japan to Persia.

Here are some of the highlights from 2017.

- Professor Julia Nelson Davis (University of Pennsylvania) discussed the overlapping markets for illustrated books and beautiful women in late Edo Japan.
- Professor Joan Kee (University of Michigan) focused on connections between intellectual property law and contemporary art making in China.
- Professor Saloni Mathur (UCLA) shared her research on the intellectual currents that underpinned the formation of a modern art discourse in 20th century India.
- Professor David Roxburgh (Harvard) looked at the ways in which artists in 19th century Iran responded to European photographs and prints, incorporating them into their painting and material practices.

For its second year, the series will turn its attention to the movement of art, artists, and ideas across cultures. We will expand art historical inquiry beyond its well-established boundaries and borders. In 2018, speakers will address a range of subjects within this theme, including:

- painting for export in 19th century Canton
- photography and international celebrity between India and New York
- politics and disingenuity in an artist's practice
- the circulation of objects through the early modern Indian Ocean world.

**Dr Stephen H Whiteman**

Convener, Sydney Asian Art Series  
Senior Lecturer, Department of Art History



Image: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar signed by Mubarak Mirza, b Mahmud, Iran, mid 19th century, private collection



Joan Kee, Associate Professor of the History of Art, University of Michigan. Associate Professor Kee was a speaker for the Sydney Asian Art Series in 2017 on the topic of 'Land Lords: Art, Property and Law in Post-Nineties China'.

# A report card on digital health

The China Studies Centre's Health and Wellbeing cluster had an eventful year in 2017. We have grown to 49 academic members from nearly every school across the University, with nine new members joining the cluster in 2017.

During the summer of 2017 we conducted a review of digital health and wellbeing in China. The review revealed that, with increased integration of health information technologies and data sharing, the advancement of digital health has provided favourable conditions for improving healthcare services in China.

Digital health has the potential to expand access to care and improve the efficiency of healthcare professionals. The findings were shared with the cluster via a half-day research workshop in February 2017 with about 30 participants.

In the workshop, we discussed several barriers, including:

- the lack of a policy framework and nationally adopted standards
- the scarcity of evidence about digital health readiness and cost-effectiveness
- health inequity between rural and urban regions
- insufficient organisational support.

Based on our findings, the participants engaged in a brainstorming discussion to address digital issues ahead for China, and four themes emerged: technology; applications; knowledge and skill development; and regulation.

We encourage collaborative research in the cluster, and called for expressions of interest in new research concepts in April/May 2017. Two very different proposals were selected and funded with \$2500 for further development. The first project is led by Dr Non Arkaraprasertkul, an anthropologist with the University of Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning.

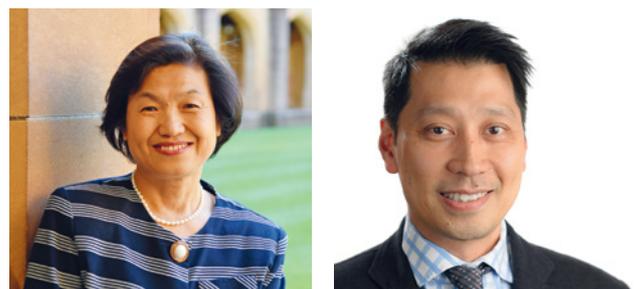
Dr Arkaraprasertkul and his collaborators proposed to look at the quality of life in China's megacities and the unintended consequences brought about by rapid urbanisation. The second project is co-led by Dr Olaf Werder and Dr Janet Xue, and proposes to compare the patterns of end users' information sharing between Australia and China in rural areas. They are particularly interested in the structure of networked individual patient information sharing through mobile apps.

In early 2018 we are preparing another research workshop with two main objectives: the first is for the two project leaders to share their ideas and preliminary findings. Our hope is to foster more cross-collaboration among our members in the cluster.

The second objective, even more important for the multidisciplinary goals of the centre, is to invite emerging research experts from China to share their work with our cluster members. We also wish to identify new research areas and establish new research links with China.

**Professor Mu Li**  
Sydney School of Public Health

**Associate Professor Simon K Poon**  
School of Information Technologies



Mu Li and Simon Poon

# How has Hong Kong evolved after the handover?

The impact of Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty in July 1997 – 20 years on – was explored in a packed panel discussion on 22 August.

This event was organised by the China Studies Centre, Sydney Ideas and the Centre for Asian and Pacific Law in the University of Sydney Law School. It was entitled 'Hong Kong 20 years after the handover: developments since 1997 and prospects for the future'.

Amid concerns about China's pressure on the news media in Hong Kong, Dr Joyce Nip, Senior Lecturer in Chinese Media Studies at the University, focused her talk on dissenting media in the territory. Dissenting media can include rebellious mainstream media, alternative media, and online independent media.

Major political events have encouraged their development which, in turn, has helped organisers to intervene in political events and participate in political life. In-Media Hong Kong, for example, called for action in 2006 to protect the Star Ferry Pier – as part of Hong Kong's cultural heritage – from its planned demolition. Eddie Chu, one of its editors who occupied the pier during the fight, was later elected to the legislature.

Is mounting pressure to maintain stability paying off in Hong Kong? Dr Kevin Carrico, Lecturer in Chinese Studies at Macquarie University, analysed politics in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region with the benefit of experiences from other autonomous regions in China. He observed that Beijing's policy toward Hong Kong, particularly in political and cultural matters, has become increasingly hardline.

This corresponds with the incorporation by Beijing of the ideologically loaded concept of 'stability' – central to post-Tiananmen governance by the People's Republic of China – in its rule over Hong Kong. Beijing's emphasis upon sameness has produced a growing sense of difference in the Hong Kong-PRC relationship. The result of top-down stability measures is radicalising bottom-up responses in Hong Kong.



iStock/danielvlfung

Have the legal concessions to autonomy made in 1997 contributed to maintaining Hong Kong's autonomy? Professor Bing Ling, Professor of Chinese Law at Sydney Law School, spoke of about 20 years of Beijing's interpretation of the Basic Law, the mini-constitution that provides for the implementation of Beijing's policy of 'One country, two systems' in Hong Kong.

Professor Ling showed how the five interpretations made by Beijing have impacted on governance and undermined the rule of law in the territory. He suggested that Beijing's exercise of the power of interpretation needs to be reformed and re-institutionalised, and how it will go a long way in shaping Hong Kong's autonomy.

Listen to the podcast of this event on SoundCloud: Hong Kong Twenty Years after the Handover: developments since 1997 and prospects for the future. (Search for 'Sydney Ideas Hong Kong handover')

– [soundcloud.com/sydney-ideas](https://soundcloud.com/sydney-ideas)

**Dr Joyce Nip**  
Senior Lecturer,  
Department of Media and Communications

# Capitalising on China's digital revolution

## 2017 Sydney China Business Forum

How can we lay the foundations for a successful launch into China's digital market? Why is digitisation so ubiquitous in China?



Are there ethical differences and different privacy concerns between applying robotisation and artificial intelligence to the current production cycle in China and Australia? What are the areas of production in which robots are making a difference? How are drones changing China's agriculture and what is Australia's contribution? What is a smart city and how do these cities contribute to China's urbanisation trend?

These key questions and many more were addressed at the 2017 Sydney China Business Forum on 25 September, themed 'Capitalising on China's digital revolution' with a focus on digitisation, robotics and artificial intelligence.

The China Studies Centre has organised this annual forum for seven years, and it has grown to become a leading engagement activity with business and the policymaking community in both China and Australia.

The forum is an ambitious attempt to bridge worlds (academia and business) and suggests that such interaction is essential to the policymaking community. The digital revolution is forcing everyone in China (from the online consumer to the traveller, the farmer to the beggar) to change the way they conduct their activities. It changes everyday life as much as business practices, and ultimately the relationship between society and the state.

The forum revealed the different and practical ways in which the University of Sydney is already making a difference by providing the research and ethical leadership needed to enter this new age. It provided an opportunity for candid insights on future scenarios,

today much closer to reality than they appeared to be in the past. Participants were treated to opportunities to expand their network and exposed to the insights of academics dedicated to thinking about both the technological consequences of this transformation and its moral and political challenges. They had opportunities to:

- meet high-calibre business representatives from China
- exchange ideas with high-profile entrepreneurs, government representatives and academics
- discuss issues at the heart of China's digital economy
- gain insights into China's digital transformation, the impact of the internet on its productivity and economic growth as well as China's digital future.

The event was presented in collaboration with the University of Sydney Business School and received financial support from the City of Sydney, PwC, China Construction Bank, Reginsun Group and the University's Confucius Institute.

The forum reached a media audience of 17 million, an increase of 57 percent on 2016. The China Studies Centre and the Business School are already planning the 2018 edition of the forum, which will be devoted to the implications of rapidly emerging urban lifestyles for food, transport, housing and keeping China's cities healthy.

**Susan Saretzki**  
Director, Business Development & Government Relations,  
China Studies Centre

# The changing face of Chinese investment in Australia

The future is bright for Australia–China investment cooperation, and private companies are increasingly dominating investment in Australia.

In 2012 I joined the ‘Demystifying Chinese Investment in Australia’ project, the China Studies Centre’s first and longest running research project. At the time, a great deal of public attention was focused on Chinese mining investment in Australia but there was no comprehensive data.

There was also an urgent need for research based on factual information about the nature of China’s outbound direct investment and the internationalisation of Chinese companies in Australia.

Combining our work on Chinese domestic entrepreneurship, institutions and networks, my colleague Professor Hans Hendrichske and I formed a research partnership with KPMG to focus on the changing behaviour and strategies of globalising Chinese firms in Australia. We established the first comprehensive dataset of Chinese investments in Australia and over the last six years annual reports debunking the myths surrounding this topic.

The latest research report, also titled ‘Demystifying Chinese Investment in Australia’ (May 2017), was the 12th in the series.

Our research team had an exciting 2017. One of the common considerations was that China’s tightening restrictions on capital outflows would sharply curtail investment into Australia, as happened in the US and Europe, where investment has dropped considerably. Our findings showed that the future is bright for Australia–China investment cooperation as Chinese companies have already begun to reduce investment in restricted areas and increase investment in areas explicitly encouraged by the Chinese Government.

In 2016 Chinese investment in Australia grew steadily, by 11.7 percent. More importantly, unlike growth

in the US and Europe that was primarily driven by commercial real estate, growth in Chinese investment in Australia was driven by infrastructure and services. Chinese investment in Australian commercial real estate dropped substantially between 2014 and 2016, but investment in infrastructure, healthcare and agribusiness increased significantly in 2016.

These changes confirm a deep economic interdependence between Australia and China. China’s transition to a more consumer-oriented society is now creating demand that supports Australia’s reorientation towards agribusiness and services exports by building new supply chains. Cooperation in services ranging from commercial real estate to health and education is expanding and consolidating.

Another common myth is that investment in Australia is driven by Chinese state-owned enterprises. Again, our research finds that Chinese private companies increasingly dominate investment in Australia. In 2016 Chinese private corporate investors accounted for 85 percent of deal volume and nearly half of the total project value.

The number of Australian–Chinese joint ventures is increasing and more and more established Australia-based Chinese companies are conducting repeat investments. Many investment projects are transformative for the Chinese investors as well as their Australian counterparts.

In 2017, I interviewed Chinese companies investing in healthcare services in Australia for our next ‘Chinese investment in Australian healthcare’ report that was launched in February 2018.

**Dr Wei Li**  
Lecturer, University of Sydney  
Business School

# Why a social life is critical for older Chinese migrants

A research project funded by the China Studies Centre will use a translated and culturally adapted questionnaire to gain fresh insights into social relationships among older Chinese migrants in Australia.

Older migrants are frequently excluded from research exercises in Australia. An important part of encouraging more research participation is to have questionnaires and other study materials available in migrants' native languages.

We chose the area of social relationships because older people themselves consider social isolation and loneliness an important priority for research into ageing. Social relationships are important for both physical and mental health. A lack of social relationships and interactions is tied to both reduced quality of life and longevity in older people.

Another important goal of our project is the adaptation of existing measurement scales to better capture some of the changes in social relationships that occur after migrating to a new country. We also wanted to understand the impact of changes in technology on how we communicate with others and maintain relationships over distance.

To this end we have developed a new scale that measures the number of transnational relationships (social relationships with friends and family members in other countries) and how these relationships are maintained across distance.

We have also incorporated questions about English language support provided by family and friends into our social support scale. This is an important area of support for many older migrants but is not included in the majority of social support scales for older people.

In addition, we have added questions about the support that older Chinese migrants provide to their children and grandchildren, to better capture the reciprocal nature of support within families.

In 2018 we are working with two Chinese community groups to test our questionnaire on a small group of older Chinese migrants in Sydney through some qualitative interviews. This approach will help us to make sure that the translation has adequately captured the meaning of the original scales and to determine if any changes are required.

Following these interviews, we will distribute the questionnaire to more than 100 older Chinese people in Sydney.

This larger survey will help us to further test the performance of our questionnaire. We hope to provide valuable information about the social relationships and social support needs of this population.

We aim to use our developed questionnaire and the results of this pilot study to support an Australian Research Council discovery project grant application. It will focus on the social and cultural aspects of ageing in older migrants in Australia.

**Dr Fiona Stanaway**  
Senior Lecturer, Sydney School of Public Health



# When minorities spoke out from the borders

What did minorities on China's borders make of the new world order that emerged after 1945? How did they interpret and voice their opinion on matters of political representation and citizenship that began to circulate in the region within a wider context of decolonisation?

These are some of the key questions that my new research project 'Speaking out from the borders' seeks to answer by examining how relationships of power between border areas and the political centre were redefined in early post-war China. After years of relative autonomy, these regions became part of post-war reconstruction schemes enacted by the state that sought to establish new economic and political ties with communities and resources on its borders.

'Speaking out from the borders' looks in particular at the mechanisms enacted by the Chinese party-state (Guomindang and later the Chinese Communist Party) in its attempts to 'hear' the voices of those inhabiting border areas in China's southwest during this period.

These mechanisms, such as constitutional assemblies and the creation of representative political bodies for non-Han ethnic groups, reflected the ways in which decolonisation reshaped social hierarchies in new nation-states as well. Another vital way communities voiced their demands was through delegations led by non-Han ethnic groups marching to Nanjing to take part in the National Assembly for this period.

Far from being compliant with China's party-state, its leaders made use of a wide array of public spaces to lay out their demands and in so doing presented their own interpretation of representation, equality, and emancipation.

China's political experiment on its borders for this period, however, should not be seen as an isolated account. Similar experiments and consultations were also taking place in border areas in both northeast Burma and northeast India, suggesting a wider trend of 'frontier reconstruction' that transcends the nation-state as our only point of reference.



Image: China 1945, from History of US Marine Corps Operations in World War II, Vol. 5, B.M. Frank and H.I. Saw, US Marine Corps, 1968, p.523

Minorities in these regions also began to articulate new political voices and demanded to have a say in how their interests were to be represented legitimately amid wider debates of political reform and experimentation.

Future archival work in these other regions will hopefully shed light on the ties and experiences that bound together China, India and Burma's borders and its inhabitants during this particular moment in Asia's early post-war period.

**Dr Andres Rodriguez**  
Lecturer, Department of History

# Climate change protection for remote communities

How can remote ethnic minority villages respond to climate change? The centre's research project will fill knowledge gaps and inform policy and practice.



Tusi Manor, Enshi, Hubei Province, China.  
Image: Fxqf, commons.wikimedia.org

The global climate is changing and will continue to change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 5th Assessment Report, it is “virtually certain” we will have more frequent and intensive extreme weather events in most regions of the world. China has already exceeded the US as the biggest polluter in the world. With the largest population and a rapid expansion of its economy and urbanisation, China is facing more extreme weather events due to climate change.

Climate change is a serious threat to human health. Combined with the certainty that climate change and extreme weather events will worsen is the reality that human populations are vulnerable to these changes. The impacts of climate change on health are disproportionately distributed in sub-populations.

Remote, ethnic-minority and Indigenous communities are among the most vulnerable to changes in climate. However, a focus on Indigenous content has been largely overlooked in the IPCC assessments, policy discussions, financing systems, and conceptual research frameworks in responding to climate change.

The project is supported by the China Studies Centre and the Sydney School of Public Health, and is the first such study conducted in China focusing on how remote, ethnic-minority villages can respond to climate change.

It aims to fill knowledge gaps and also inform policies and practices for building community resilience in remote ethnic minority communities. There is an urgent need for such research and we expect this project to have powerful implications and benefits for policy and strategic development.

In the summer of 2017 the research team conducted fieldwork for a survey with more than 1000 participants from 10 mountain villages in Hubei Province, China, to better understand their perceptions of changes in environment and climate. The villages were in southeast Hubei, with most local residents being Indigenous ethnic minorities.

Based on the findings from this initial study, a large cohort will be established to develop further interventions and policies that could reduce the risks and impacts of climate change on the communities.

The research team includes Dr Ying Zhang, Dr Michelle Dickson and Associate Professor Geoff Morgan at Sydney School of Public Health, and Associate Professor Hui Ye at South-Central University for Nationalities, our partners in China. Please contact me if you have any questions about this project.

**Dr Ying Zhang**  
Senior Lecturer, Sydney School of Public Health  
[ying.zhang@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ying.zhang@sydney.edu.au)

The China Studies Centre directly funds top-quality research on China, and facilitates collaborative research relationships both across the University and with institutions worldwide. The centre administers a small research grants scheme that provides \$250,000 each year, in two rounds of funding, to support the research activities of its members. You can apply for conference facilitation, short-term visits (incoming or outgoing), seed funding for research projects, publishing support, graduate research support or to support a conference at the University's Centre in China, Suzhou. If you are interested in applying, please visit our website:

- [sydney.edu.au/china-studies-centre/our-research/research-grants.html](http://sydney.edu.au/china-studies-centre/our-research/research-grants.html)



# Students shine light on contemporary China

The China Studies Centre has vowed to become a 'China home' for the diverse community of students who are exploring important issues related to China. Some of these activities are directly supported by the centre's funding.

We hope this engagement will deepen and generate true communities of knowledge among our students. Some of our students share their fascinating and entirely different experiences and research.

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the bureaucracy, allowing such initiatives to succeed and directly contravene the China of previous generations.

However, contemporary China is characterised by profound contradictions. When I walked the streets, conducted conversations and accessed the emerging rich space between state and society, I glimpsed a nation very much at odds with itself, unsure of its future trajectory, or the goals and values which might define it. People are more prosperous than ever, though inequality is rife.

In one of our lectures we heard the following statistics: 63.2 percent of Chinese people believe elections should be competitive, but 62 percent believe only one party should exist. Similarly, just 38 percent value government rule by the people while 40 percent see government ruling for the people.

If the direction of change is uncertain, its inevitability is nonetheless assured. China will never be stagnant, neat or clearly understood.

**Angus Chapman**  
Bachelor of Political, Economic and Social Sciences  
New Colombo Plan student  
Attendee, 2017 Suzhou-Shanghai field school

China today is more complex and multi-faceted than it has ever been. This realisation only became clear to me once I completed the 2017 Suzhou-Shanghai Field School, administered and supported by the China Studies Centre.

China has opened up and liberalised. Sending a group of Australian undergraduate students to live and study in China for a number of weeks speaks to a genuine spirit of cooperation and freedom that has infiltrated



Dr Minglu Chen (far left) led the Suzhou-Shanghai field school students to visit Rio Tinto (Shanghai) on 17 July 2017. Ludmila Nunell is fifth from the left in the front row.

I was one of the 16 students on the Suzhou-Shanghai Field School trip, led by Dr Minglu Chen. The opportunity to visit Chinese and Australian businesses in Shanghai, as well as a week of lectures at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, gave me a much more nuanced understanding of China's economy.

The lecture that really reshaped my understanding of the role of the state in the national economy was Junhua Zhang's 'Clean vehicles and China's neomercantilist ambition'. I was surprised to learn of the wide range of ambitious policies the government has implemented to encourage not only the production but also the consumption of so-called 'clean vehicles' in China, in an effort to catch up with more advanced countries.

As a market-socialist economy the party state still intervenes and imposes policies that affect the overall direction of the economy. This is particularly observable in Shanghai, where the effort to reduce the city's environmental footprint, and shift from a manufacturing to a global financial centre has led to fast-paced policy implementation and enforcement.

Thanks to the field school, we had the opportunity to gain insights into the way China is constantly experimenting to determine the most effective policies for a strong and advanced economy, which we may never have learnt in a lecture hall.

**Ludmila Nunell**  
 Bachelor of International and Global Studies  
 New Colombo Plan student  
 Attendee, 2017 Suzhou-Shanghai field school  
 Previous student member, China Studies Centre



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My research looks at one of the most intriguing aspects of Mandarin Chinese grammar – the order of words in the sentence. Word order has a crucial role in this language – it compensates for a number of linguistic ‘tools’ it lacks compared to languages such as English.

My thesis looks more closely at this powerful linguistic tool and the functions it displays, including expressing who does what to whom, what is known to the hearer and what is new, what the speaker’s communicative intentions are (the focus of her message), what events occur when and so on.

I explore possible permutations but also restrictions, and word order ‘freezing’ phenomena, which happens when two different word order structures ‘compete’ as both are required to encode different meanings in the same sentence. I do so by adopting a multi-level approach that looks at the syntactic dimension of the language, semantic aspects such as event structure, pragmatic needs of the speaker, and contextual factors.

I am also interested in the cognitive and iconic dimension of Mandarin grammar, and whether and to what extent the order in the sentence corresponds to the order in which speakers conceptualise events.

My work ultimately seeks to bridge the gap between research on Mandarin linguistics and its teaching practice, exploring new modalities to exploit and apply research findings to Chinese pedagogy.

#### **Anna Morbiato**

Cotutelle (double degree) PhD candidate  
Department of Linguistics, The University of Sydney  
Department of East Asian and African Studies,  
University of Venice  
Student member, China Studies Centre



My PhD research focuses on the evolution of information and communication technologies and the development of civil society in China.

More specifically I am interested in analysing how the development of social media may facilitate or impede Chinese people from participating in public affairs, providing an informal but powerful way of scrutinising political and capital power in China.

In June 2017 I presented my paper titled ‘Two decades of research on China’s online public sphere, a historical review’ at the well-regarded 15th Chinese Internet Research Conference in Texas, with funding support from the China Studies Centre.



The China Studies Centre 2017 Suzhou Shanghai Field School students visiting the UNESCO world heritage Humble Administrator's Garden in Suzhou, China. Credit: Field School student Alexander Edge.

I received intriguing and constructive feedback from scholars from a variety of countries and disciplinary backgrounds. The conference was a crucial step to refine my thinking and to establish important connections in the field of Internet studies.

I am now preparing for my final PhD submission. The centre offers financial support for the proofreading of the paper, which is very important help for international students who are not native English speakers.”



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**Xuanzi Xu**

PhD student, Department of Media and Communications, The University of Sydney  
 Student member, China Studies Centre

# Chinese Party congress maps out ambitious reform plans

The Chinese Communist Party's 19th National Congress, held in October 2017, has been the most significant event for Chinese politics in the past five years.

It was a rare opportunity to witness leadership formation and power transition within the one-party system and has conveyed a number of important messages that help us understand the party's capacity to rule. On 18 October 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping delivered a verbal report that kick started the 19th Party Congress. This three-and-a-half-hour report comprehensively covered almost every aspect of the party's work.

Xi's account of China's past aims to explain how history matters for the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) present. This history has left an ambiguous legacy for China. On the one hand, the report solemnly proclaims that "with a history of more than 5000 years, our nation created a splendid civilization". However, "with the Opium War of 1840, China was plunged into the darkness of domestic turmoil and foreign aggression".

Such ambiguity has set the stage for the CCP's rise, when in the early 20th Century "Marxism-Leninism was integrated with the Chinese workers' movement".

Starting as a minor political party, the CCP managed to rapidly broaden its popular support by moving to the countryside, recruiting from the peasantry and developing many of its now famous strategies, such as "using the rural areas to encircle the cities".

The CCP's legitimacy has been often attributed to this historical legacy: not only did it achieve "China's independence, the people's liberation, national reunification, and social stability" in 1949, but also more recently it has positioned itself as the only rightful force to realise "the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation".

While history is seen as the source of the CCP's legitimacy, the report also highlights another important legacy: the close and longstanding relationship between the party and the military.

If, in 1949, the CCP was able to "seize state power with military force", today it is even more convinced of the need to maintain "absolute party leadership over the people's army". Nearly 70 years ago, the political loyalty of the military enabled the communists to defeat an enemy despite its considerable advantage in both troops and technology. Nowadays, a highly politicised and disciplined army is fundamental to realising the party's ambitious target of national rejuvenation, and the party now envisages a military force equipped with world-class weaponry.

China's unparalleled economic performance has certainly been the other major factor used to justify the party's right to rule. Therefore, Xi Jinping, like each of his predecessors since Deng Xiaoping, has attached great importance to the ongoing task of economic reform and opening: "only with reform and opening can we develop China, develop socialism, and develop Marxism."

For a long time, introducing market forces and attracting foreign investment had been the main focuses of China's reform and opening. Nowadays, Xi and his colleagues are reaffirming the state-owned sector as a key component of the socialist market economy and developing a more outward-looking perspective for investment and aid.

When discussing the CCP's future strategies of accelerating economic growth, Xi in his report outlined a much more detailed plan of how to support state-owned enterprises "to become stronger, better and bigger". While the development of private businesses was also seen as necessary, it did not receive equal emphasis. As to further pursuing opening up, the current leadership predicts both a "bringing in" and a "going global" strategy.

In the past, China's eastern seaboard has been the main recipient of foreign investment. In the future,



we can expect to see foreign investors encouraged to invest more in inland areas, as the party is looking at “improving the balance in opening different regions and opening the western region wider”. The ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (the infrastructure strategy of bringing countries in the region into the Chinese area of influence) was mentioned five times in Xi’s report as a priority of China’s opening up.

In 1981, the CCP saw “the contradiction between the ever-growing material and cultural needs of the people and the low level of production” as the most significant challenge to Chinese development. More than three decades later, with China having developed into the second largest economy in the world, in the eyes of Xi and his colleagues, the predicament facing the country has evolved into “the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life”.

However vague this might sound, it indicates that the party is clearly aware of the many problems of delayed social reform, including social inequality, regional disparity, the urban and rural divide, and environmental degradation.

In his report, Xi acknowledged that “there are still many areas where we fall short”. The report offered a number of solutions, with the focus on “the most pressing, most immediate issues that concern the people the most”. His plans include improving social provision for “rural and non-working urban residents”, establishing a unified national healthcare system, providing rehabilitation services for people with disabilities, and ensuring fair access for each child to good education.

However, we will need to take these ambitious projects with a measure of caution. The party leadership still sees welfare provision as the “joint efforts of government, society and the market”, and their governance mechanism will remain the same, with “the central government making overall plans, provincial-level governments taking overall responsibility, and city and county governments ensuring implementation”.

This suggests Chinese citizens’ welfare entitlements will still be subject to local governments’ access to resources and individuals’ capacities to provide for themselves.

Xi’s report also paid much attention to environmental protection and promised China’s development will be “characterised by harmonious coexistence between man and nature”. In a 2013 document issued by the State Council, air pollution prevention and control was already regarded as important to the realisation of national rejuvenation.

In a speech delivered in 2017 at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Xi said: “past experience, if not forgotten, is a guide for the future”. While it will take some time to assess how the party manages to achieve all the goals it set for the immediate and distant future, there is a glimmer of hope that it will be able to deliver on some of its environmental promises.

A nationwide campaign to shift from coal to natural gas seems to have had an immediate effect. Only two months after the 19th CCP National Congress, pollution in a number of key Chinese cities seems to have improved, as per the report’s promise to see “our skies made blue again”.

**Dr Minglu Chen**  
Senior Lecturer,  
Department of Government and International Relations

# Centre strategy targets China's urban evolution



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How do we choose a theme for a centre that intends to organise but not direct, to connect but not predefine, the new ideas that can emerge from the interaction of a diverse membership?

A thematic concentration of our resources is a way to suggest problems that need to be addressed and by definition cannot be the object of a single gaze, and to stimulate the search for connections and original ways to raise questions and to answer them.

We have thought of a theme broad enough to touch the research interests of many throughout this wide community of knowledge. We intend not to exclude others' research undertakings that may not fit in this framework, or are specific in nature, but rather to devote extra resources to a series of new activities, without affecting the traditional ways in which the centre funds and supports the activities of our members.

We will focus these extra resources on advancing multidisciplinary collaboration and training in one comprehensive area of research. We have identified 'China and the urban age' as an inaugural theme.

## Defining challenges: the urban container

China is undergoing a comprehensive urban transformation aimed at increasing its economic growth, to modernise its population, production, economy and delivery of welfare. The emergence of cities has been central, across the ages, to:

- the economic and social viability of economic models in the country
- the territorial role of the state
- the emergence of multiple local cultures
- the relationship between markets and areas of agricultural production
- the creation of new classes
- industrialisation
- the concentration of resources
- the delivery and organisation of services
- the unwanted deterioration of the environment and health
- the improvement of the built environment
- the production and consumption of food
- the demographic revolution
- the development of languages and media.

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Three considerations are at the centre of our strategy:

- Almost every aspect that interests the sciences, social sciences and humanities encounters urbanisation as a goal or a challenge – better, more secure, more equal, more efficient, more culturally grounded, altogether more sustainable.
- Nowhere in the modern world has territorial and social transformation been more rapid, comprehensive and all-encompassing than in China.
- While disciplines advance their own concerns often in isolation, there is the need for a hub connecting diverse findings, languages and questions.

Yet the study of cities is often driven by an attention to the disconnections rather than the connections, looking at the material without considering the ethical, the present without considering the past, the values without looking at the material improvements achieved through technology, the biomedical without the environmental. We forget that the people, the buildings, the roads that allow them to move, the history that made the place, and the forms of expression that they create, are all connected.

By launching this theme, which we will pursue for the next five years, we choose a topic that is in a way enveloping every discipline, and calling them to arms to build a complex narrative of China's urbanisation and its historical relevance for a better urban world. We want to claim the increasing impossibility of approaching these urban issues as discreet, separate or solely relevant to China.

Through this theme the Centre's ambition is not to suggest research directions but to offer opportunities for creating fruitful "connections". Intellectually, we



Highlight

are thinking of this theme as a *container* that can expand in different and unexpected directions; and a *converter*, where the final outcome of this intellectual exercise is greater than the sum of its parts.

In concrete terms, we are thinking of using our resources strategically to advance a multidisciplinary urban activity that will characterise the work of the centre while supporting the different disciplines of the University's community.

Adding 200 million urbanites in a decade or building hundreds of new "green cities" constitutes the visible signs of a transformation that needs to be investigated through the understanding of the processes behind it. Once we accept this we inevitably see only one aspect of the process in full, what becomes necessary to our investigation is no single discipline, but rather a series of thematic connections and mutual translations.

The 'Urban Age' is already integral to the University's strategies in areas of collective research. Similarly, multidisciplinary activity defines the University's work and has led to the creation of several important initiatives, from the Charles Perkins Centre, which tackles obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and related conditions, to Sydney Nano, which provides a very broad framework for the field of nanotechnology, as well as the Sydney Environment Institute and the Planetary Health platform.

With this theme, we advocate collaboration not only with all the faculties of this University but also with the multidisciplinary initiatives.

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



# 2017 China Studies Centre events

Event type	Event name	Speaker	Partner
<b>Annual event</b>	Sydney China Business Forum—Capitalising on China’s digital economy	Multiple	University of Sydney Business School
<b>Special event</b>	Looking back, moving forward: Symposium on the future of Australia-China Relations	Multiple	
<b>“How to ... “ series</b>	How to find China-related resources	Multiple	National Library of Australia, University of Sydney Library
	How to maximise your job opportunities in China-related fields	Multiple	
	How to get published	Multiple	Research Portfolio
	How to use and translate Chinese language materials for research and dissemination to the public	Multiple	
	How to do fieldwork in China	Multiple	
	How to fund your research on China	Multiple	
<b>Student events</b>	Research student seminar—Defining Britishness in the Great Depression: Major Louis Cassel and his League for British Whites in 1933 Hong Kong	Multiple	
	Graduate retreat—Building a community of Chinese knowledge: Your PhD thesis on China	Multiple	Sydney Democracy Network
<b>Monthly seminar</b>	从日本看中日关系：一位旅日学者的报告 Chair by A/Prof Jingdong Yuan	Professor Wang Weibing	
	Dr Joseph Needham and his intellectual heritage	Professor Mei Jianjun	Centre for Classical and Near Eastern Studies of Australia
	Demystifying Chinese investment in Australia year 2017 update	Dr Wei Li	University of Sydney Business School
	Chinese Australians in Shanghai: stories from the Kwok family archive	Dr Sophie Loy-Wilson	
	World War II with the flying tigers	Professor Deborah Chung	
	From Kashgar to Cairo: the East Turkistan Republic in the Islamic World	Dr David Brophy	
	The dragon(s) of Sydney	Dr Michael Paton	
	Exporting infrastructure: the origin of the culture of self-sufficiency in Chinese International construction companies	Professor Duanfang Lu	
	China’s foreign policy under Xi Jinping	Professor You Ji	
<b>Co-hosted events</b>	Sydney Ideas: The origins and dynamics of crony capitalism in China	Professor Minxin Pei	Sydney Ideas, Sydney Democracy Network
	Sydney Ideas: Abolish slavery in my smartphone	Professor Jack Linchuan Qiu	Sydney Ideas, Sydney Democracy Network
	Workshop: Mining for history: minerals and metals in the old world	Professor Mei Jianjun	Centre for Classical and Near Eastern Studies of Australia
	Sydney Ideas: Turning urban: strengths and vulnerabilities of China’s collectives in the process of urbanisation	Professor Luigi Tomba	Sydney Ideas

Event type	Event name	Speaker	Partner
	Sydney Ideas: Space, social conflict, and the future of urban society: a comparative view	Professor Michael Herzfeld	Sydney Ideas, Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, Department of Anthropology, and University of School of Architecture, Design and Planning
	Seminar: Beware of Chinese bearing gifts: Why China's direct investment poses political challenges in Europe and the United States	Dr Sophie Menuie, Professor Hans Hendrischke	China Research Group University of Sydney Business School
	Seminar: The mixed progress of corporate governance in China	Professor Guo Li	Centre for Asian and Pacific Law
	Panel discussion: Hong Kong 20 years after the handover	Professor Vivienne Bath, Professor Bing Ling, Dr Joyce Nip, Dr Kevin Carrico	Sydney Ideas, Law School
<b>Co-hosted events (continued)</b>	Seminar: Indonesia's new politics of Chinese foreign labour	Associate Professor Nobuhiro Aizawa	Sydney Southeast Asia Centre, Sydney Asla Pacific Migration Centre
	Seminar: Understanding the Modern Chinese rural society	Professor Chunguang Wang, Dr Jing Wang	China Development Society
	Seminar: Hong Kong: city of protest	Mr Antony Dapiran	Sydney Democracy Network
	Sydney Ideas: An analysis of Western images of China	Professor Colin Mackerras	Sydney Ideas, Department of Chinese Studies
	Sydney Ideas: Australia and China: Before and below the nation	Dr Kate Bagnall	Sydney Ideas
	Sydney Ideas: The 19th Party Congress: What will Xi Jinping use his power for?	Professor Willy Lam	Sydney Ideas
	A conference on exploring sources for the consolidation or deconsolidation of democracy in East Asia	Multiple	Center for East Asia Democratic Studies (NTU), Sydney Democracy Network, and Department of Government and International Relations
		Marketing pleasure for profit: the mirror of Yoshiwara beauties, compared	Professor Julie Nelson Davis
<b>Sydney Asian Art Series</b>	Landlords: art, property and law in post-90s China	Associate Professor Joan Kee	Power Institute, VisAsia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, and Sydney Ideas
	A fragile inheritance: radical stakes in contemporary Indian art	Professor Saloni Mathur	Power Institute, VisAsia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, and Sydney Ideas
	Painting after the mass-produced image: art in 19th century Iran	Professor David J. Roxburgh	Power Institute, VisAsia, Art Gallery of New South Wales, and Sydney Ideas
		Workshop: Digital health and wellbeing in China	Professor Mu Li, Associate Professor Simon Poon
	Lecture: Contemporary art and contemporary art museum, Shanghai and its biennale	Emeritus Professor John Clark	
	Seminar: Mobilisation meets institutionalisation in China's Cadre Management System	Professor Margaret M. Pearson	
<b>General events</b>	Seminar—New research on gender in modern Chinese history and literature	Dr Stephen Whiteman, Professor Antonia Finnane, Professor Anne McLaren, Associate Professor Paola Zamperini	
	Seminar: Assessing Xi's diplomacy	Professor Jianwei Wang	
	Public lecture: Rethinking the relationship of Chinese and Western medicine	Professor Shigehisa Kuriyama	School of History and Philosophy of Science

**The China Studies Centre is the University of Sydney's strategic initiative to stimulate the study of China across the University. Comprising 250 staff members, the centre coordinates the multidisciplinary work on China, conducted across all faculties and schools at the University.**

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