

Chinese global engagements abroad: changing social, economic, political configurations

An international conference for PhD candidates and post-doctoral students, 5-6 July 2019
The School of Humanities and Social Sciences, HKUST

Organizers: French Centre for Research on Contemporary China (CEFC) and
the School of Humanities and Social Sciences
(Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

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Argument:

There has been a continuous expansion and globalization of Chinese capital, people, and ideas since the early 2000s, from the Chinese government-initiated “going out” (*zou chuqu*) policy to the more recent Belt and Road Initiative. In a domestic context of over-accumulation of capital, and in an attempt at securitizing its raw material and energy supplies, as well as fostering the global competitiveness of its enterprises, China’s foreign direct investment (FDI) has increased globally, particularly in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe. This has resulted in China becoming the most important source of FDI in the world with 158.29 billion US\$ annually in 2017. Flows of capital, people, and ideas from China have not only increased, but have also greatly diversified over the last two decades to reach fields as diverse as energy, trade, transport, media, education, finance, etc. If China’s global imprint has been most prominent in the economic or geo-economic fields, the country’s increasing presence also has important social, cultural and political aspects. The focus of the conference will be put predominantly on the social perspectives of these global engagements.

This conference aims not only at shedding light on the transformations of the Chinese state’s expansion and globalization strategy, but also more importantly to study how Chinese entrepreneurs, engineers, journalists, diplomats, NGOs delegates, etc. interact with local society, with business and political elites.

Moving beyond the assessment of the possible benefits and harms of the increasingly global reach of Chinese capital and aiming at avoiding the too often homogenized and ethnicized depiction of Chinese presence abroad (Nyiri 2012; Tan and Grillot 2016; Lee 2017), we envision this conference as gathering contributions which will engage empirically and theoretically with the complexities of the entanglements between an increasingly diverse Chinese presence (from petty entrepreneurs, state corporations managers, engineers, NGOs practitioners to unskilled laborers) and local actors in an increasingly large number of countries around the world, asking how such engagements help in shaping new political, economic, and social configurations. In this sense, the conference also seeks to expand our understanding of the evolving features of global capitalism in its quest for and production of

“new frontiers” and ask in which respect they produce new assemblages of sovereignty, governmentality, and political economies (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013).

The main purpose of the 4th edition of this Conference is to provide a forum for PhD and postdoctoral researchers to engage with each other’s work and foster a better understanding of economic and socio-political processes at work in contemporary China as well as at an international level as China is becoming an increasingly important global actor.

The Conference will be an occasion to facilitate exchanges on common research subjects, compare perspectives and methodologies, and promote interdisciplinary dialogue. By providing a space for debate and reflection, the Conference intends to contribute to the emergence of more diverse theoretical approaches of global China and contemporary capitalism, both in their domestic and international dimensions.

The participants will present their research in thematic panels. Each speaker will deliver a paper in English, followed by a discussion with an invited discussant.

The best contributors will be invited to submit their papers for a special issue of a peer-reviewed academic journal, as well as shorter versions of their articles aimed at a general audience for a special issue of the *Made in China Journal* to be published in 2020.

Contributions may focus on, but are not limited to, the following questions and topics:

- The connection between the transformations of domestic economic development strategies and accumulation regimes on the one hand, and the expansion and globalization of China’s reach; what are the economic and political goals of the expansion of Chinese capital beyond “accumulation for accumulation’s sake” (Lee 2017: 7);
- How China’s increasingly global reach and the expansion of Chinese capital has been received and represented at the levels of political and business elites, as well as ordinary citizens;
- How various flows and networks of migrants articulate with and rework the local political economies and the relationship between formal and informal labor and migration regimes and how this can be related to networks of accumulation;
- The changing politics and industry of migration: roles of brokers, migration infrastructures, trade unions, etc.;
- How these flows alter the relationship between different generations of (im)migrants, the politics of ethnicity and identity, and the relationship with the Chinese state; what role do the various Chinese associations and networks play in these economic, political, and cultural processes?
- the transformation of the Chinese state’s representation of international Chinese migrants and how this resonates with changing economic development paradigms and strategies in foreign policy.

Quoted references:

Lee Ching Kwan (2017). *The Specter of Global China: Politics, Labor, and Foreign Investment in Africa*. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.

Mezzadra, Sandro and Brett Neilson (2013). *Border as Method, or the Multiplication of Labor*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.

Nyiri, Pal (2012). « Enclaves of improvement: Sovereignty and developmentalism in the special zones of the China-Lao borderlands ». *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 54(3), 533-562. DOI: 10.1017/S0010417512000229

Tan, Danielle et Caroline Grillot (2014). *L'Asie du Sud-Est dans le « siècle chinois » : Cambodge, Laos et Viêt Nam*. Nouvelle édition [en ligne]. Bangkok : Institut de recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est contemporaine, 2014 <http://books.openedition.org/irasec/1169>>. ISBN : 9782355960260. DOI : 10.4000/books.irasec.1169.

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Agenda (tentative)

Deadline for 500-600 words abstracts: 15th March

Contributors informed of selection process: 15th April

Deadline for full paper submissions (8,000 words): 1st June