

5th Conference on Asian Studies
(zweijährliche Tagung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Asienkunde)
9–11 September 2025, Bonn, Germany

**Abstracts of
Panel Discussions, Poetry
Reading, Workshops, Panels
and Presentations**

More conference details under:
www.asienkonferenz2025.uni-bonn.de

Conference venue:
Regina-Pacis-Weg 3
53113 Bonn
Registration room: Senatssaal (1st floor)

In cooperation with the
German Association for Asian Studies (DGA)

DGA
DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR ASIENKUNDE E.V.
GERMAN ASSOCIATION FOR ASIAN STUDIES

UNIVERSITÄT **BONN** **IOA**
RHEINISCHE FRIEDRICH-WILHELMS- UNIVERSITÄT BONN
INSTITUT FÜR ORIENT- UND ASIEN- WISSENSCHAFTEN

Panel discussion 1:

Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 18:00–19:30 (Hörsaal I)

Asienforschung neu denken?

Potenziale, Herausforderungen und Zukunftsperspektiven

Discussants:

Gisela Burckhardt (FEMNET e.V.)

Stephan Conermann (Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Bonn)

Debarati Guha (Director „Programs for Asia“, Deutsche Welle, Bonn)

Imke Neiteler (Industrie- und Handelskammer Düsseldorf)

Nora Warmer (Doctoral student of South Asian Studies, University of Bonn)

Moderation:

Rodion Ebbighausen (Deutsche Welle, Bonn)

Das steigende politische Gewicht asiatischer Länder auf der internationalen Bühne, die demografischen Entwicklungen sowie der wirtschaftliche und technologische Fortschritt lassen keine Zweifel daran, dass das asiatische Jahrhundert vor der Tür steht. Auch junge Menschen begeistern sich mehr denn je für K-Pop, Manga und andere popkulturelle Phänomene Asiens. Die Asienforschung bietet nicht nur Regionalexpertise und Sprachkenntnisse, sondern bereichert die Forschungslandschaft auch durch eine Vielzahl von neuen konzeptionellen und methodischen Beiträgen im Bereich der kritischen Wissensproduktion, des Verstehens der Vielfalt menschlicher Denk- und Handlungsweisen, der Analyse von komplexen globalen Zusammenhängen sowie der kollaborativen Forschung und der postkolonialen Auseinandersetzung in der Zusammenarbeit mit Partner:innen aus der Region. Zahlreiche Forschungsprojekte, unter anderem der kürzlich verlängerte Cluster of Excellence am Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies an der Universität Bonn, zeugen von Leistungsstärke und Innovation in der Regionalforschung. Dennoch sinken die Studierendenzahlen in den Asienwissenschaften. Obwohl alle vom asiatischen Jahrhundert sprechen, nehmen die Studierendenzahlen und längerfristig auch die Asien-Expertise in Deutschland ab. Begleitet wird dieser Trend von teils massiven Kürzungen und Streichungen in den universitätsverankerten Asienwissenschaften. Wie ist dieses wissenschaftspolitische Dilemma zu interpretieren? Wie kann die Asienforschung, eventuell durch neue Formen des Wissenschaftstransfers, gestärkt werden? Wie kann ein Studium der Asienwissenschaften für junge Menschen attraktiver werden?

Auf dem Podium diskutieren Vertreter:innen aus Entwicklungspolitik, Medien, Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft, wie die Asienforschung in Deutschland zukunftsfähig gestaltet werden kann.

Panel discussion 2:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 18:00–19:30 (Hörsaal I)

Academic Freedom and its Implementation in Germany and Asia

Discussants:

Conrad Schetter (BICC Bonn)

Andrea Fleschenberg (Humboldt University of Berlin)

Richard Takhun (University of Bonn)

Moderation:

Claudia Derichs (Humboldt University of Berlin)

The year 2024 was designated to the theme of “academic freedom” in Germany. A huge number of academic institutions, organizations, foundations, think tanks and the like devoted events and debates to this topic. Questions that were raised touched upon the commitment to academic freedom, on developments that—de facto or potentially—endanger this commitment, and the limitations of actually implementing it. Critical perspectives related to empirical findings that reveal the difficulties of this implementation with regard to the diversity of scholars working in Germany, many of whom hail from Asian countries. A roundtable at the DGA conference in Rostock already addressed the challenges that several of these scholars have to face, and that render the notion of “freedom” a bit doubtful. The panel proposed for the DGA conference in Bonn is meant to follow up on the previous one and asks: What are the take aways from the “academic freedom year” for our work with and work on Asia? What are the lessons learned and who has learned from whom—or who can and should learn from whom? How do restrictions of free research affect our work as Asia scholars?

Since the attacks of Hamas on Israeli civilians on 7 October 2024 in the German public discourse the fine line between a pro-Palestine-partisanship and “being antisemitic” became politicised. Examples are the attempts of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research to interfere into academic freedom in spring 2024, or the recent resolution against antisemitism by the German Bundestag. The latter disclosed that an applicable definition of antisemitism is still missing. This is why the accusation of antisemitism becomes an ill-defined entry point for interfering into academic freedom and freedom of speech. In addition, the question arises to what extent universities should offer arenas for political contestations and what are the limits of the expression of political opinions? This contribution aims to ask if—from the perspective of Asian academia—this debate is rather seen as a specific German one, or as an overall structural change of academic freedom.

Roundtable

Thursday, 11 September 2025, 11:00–12:30 (Hörsaal IV)

Talking Regions and Relations: Dialogues on Palestine/Israel with/in Asia

Discussants:

Claudia Derichs (Humboldt University of Berlin)

Timo Duile (University of Bonn)

Max Kramer (Ludwig Maximilian University Munich)

Miriam Lücking (Ludwig Maximilian University Munich)

Stephan Milich (University of Cologne)

Moderation:

Christoph Antweiler (University of Bonn)

The war in Gaza and the preceding Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023 have been discussed in different contexts in Europe and Asia. The situation in the Middle East is accompanied by strong emotional reactions across the globe. While the discussions in Europe—and especially Germany—often stress the 7th October attack as the main cause of the current war and emphasize the Holocaust and antisemitism as reasons for Israel’s right to exist and legitimizing Israel’s warfare in the Middle East as self-defense, many debates in Asian countries rely on a different historical perspective and perceive of the conflict as an issue of settler colonialism. The suffering of victims of the war evokes solidarity and compassion, particularly in post-colonial societies of the region. The contrasting comprehensions of the conflict in Asia and Europe are often portrayed as mutually exclusive; legacies such as the Holocaust in Germany, for instance, are positioned against the experience of apartheid, which informed South Africa’s interference at the United Nations. Does this seemingly oppositional stance affect scholars’ cooperation and collaboration across regions? How can dialogue be facilitated and by whom? What are the merits for Asia scholars in Germany in gaining access to local sources of information in societies across the region? In our roundtable discussion, we investigate the (im)possibilities of dialogue with and in different Asian societies, and the ways the current geopolitical affairs are conceptualized. We ask how scholars in Germany and in Asia can facilitate controversial but fruitful debates, what they can learn from each other, and how mutual exchange helps in shaping our perspectives.

Poetry Reading

Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 16:00–17:30 (Festsaal)

Dichterlesung (Indonesisch/Deutsch)

des indonesischen Schriftstellers Agus R. Sarjono

Moderation:

Berthold Damshäuser

Agus R. Sarjono, geboren 1962, zählt zu den bedeutendsten zeitgenössischen indonesischen Schriftstellern. Als Lyriker, Dramatiker, Essayist und Herausgeber der Literaturzeitschriften *Jurnal Sajak* und *Jurnal Kritik* prägt er maßgeblich die kulturelle Szene seines Landes. Gemeinsam mit dem Bonner Malaiologen Berthold Damshäuser hat er im Rahmen der in Indonesien erscheinenden Reihe *Seri Puisi Jerman* (deutschsprachige Lyrik in indonesischer Übersetzung) unter anderem Gedichte von Goethe, Rilke, Brecht, Hesse und Nietzsche ins Indonesische übertragen. Er ist regelmäßiger Gast internationaler Literaturfestivals, seine Werke wurden in zahlreiche Sprachen übersetzt, darunter Deutsch, Englisch, Französisch, Niederländisch, Finnisch, Portugiesisch, Serbisch, Kur-

disch, Arabisch, Chinesisch, Koreanisch, Vietnamesisch und Thailändisch. Neben nationalen Auszeichnungen erhielt er 2013 den *Sunthorn Phu Award* (Thailand) für sein Lebenswerk. Agus R. Sarjono war mehrfach als Gastautor und Gastwissenschaftler an internationalen Institutionen tätig, darunter am IIAS Leiden University (2001), an der Universität Bonn (2012), im Heinrich-Böll-Haus (2002–2003), in der Art & Culture Community, Finnland (2006) sowie im Künstlerhaus Schloss Wiepersdorf, Brandenburg (2014). In Deutschland erschienen zwei Gedichtbände Sarjonos in deutscher Übersetzung: 2002 bei edition galrev *Frische Knochen aus Banyuwangi* und 2015 bei Regionspectra *Gestatten, mein Name ist Trübsinn*.

Workshop 1:

Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 14:00–15:30 (Festsaal)

Sprachvermittlung in den Regionalwissenschaften: Status Quo und Zukunftsperspektiven

Workshop-Leiterinnen:

Andriani Nangoy (University of Bonn)

Xuan Hang Nguyen (University of Bonn)

Die Vermittlung von Sprachen ist ein Kern der Regionalwissenschaften. Die sichere Beherrschung einer Sprache ist zentrale Voraussetzung, um eine Region und ihre gesellschaftlichen, kulturellen und politischen Verhältnisse zu verstehen und zu erforschen. In den letzten Jahren hat sich die Sprachvermittlung – wie im Grunde genommen alle Bereiche der universitären Lehre und Forschung – jedoch stark verändert. Sinkende Studierendenzahlen und kleinere Sprachkurse erfordern Flexibilität. Für anwendungsbezogenen Sprachunterricht müssen oftmals neue didaktische Konzepte und Materialien erarbeitet werden. Durch die Digitalisierung hat sich der Methodenkasten im Sprachunterricht erheblich erweitert, etwa durch ein großes Angebot an Video- und Audioelementen, durch interaktive Übungen und Vokabeltrainer. Auch können trotz räumlicher Trennung und über Zeitzonen hinweg Sprach-Tandems gebildet werden und Inhalte in einer fremden Sprache und Kultur sind oft nur einen Klick weit entfernt. In dem Workshop wollen wir uns über aktuelle Situationen des Sprachunterrichts in den Regionalwissenschaften austauschen, Schwierigkeiten diskutieren und Lösungsmöglichkeiten vorstellen. Bei Interesse können die Lektorinnen Andriani Nangoy und Xuan Hang Nguyen die Möglichkeiten und Schwierigkeiten des digitalen Spracherwerbs am Beispiel des Vietnamesischen und Indonesischen vorstellen. Darüber hinaus dient der Workshop auch zur zukünftigen Vernetzung.

Workshop 2:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 11:00–12:30 (Festsaal)

Creating Perspectives: Exchange and Networking for Asia Researchers

Workshop facilitators:

Alessandro Gullo (University of Bonn)

Yasmin Koppen (University of Leipzig)

What is it about?

This open workshop invites early-career as well as experienced researchers in Asian studies to come together, share experiences and connect with others. The aim is a simple one: to create a welcoming space where challenges can be discussed openly, knowledge exchanged freely, and new perspectives developed—across institutions, disciplines, and regions.

Why it matters: Early-career researchers in Asian studies are currently navigating different challenges, including:

- Limited access to sources and field sites due to geopolitical tensions
- Growing bureaucratic and administrative barriers
- Shifting academic landscapes in Asian and regional studies
- Power imbalances and structural inequalities, particularly in collaborations between European and Asian institutions

These issues are particularly pressing for those still finding their footing—whether in the early stages of their academic careers or in the middle of a PhD project. This workshop creates a space to reflect on a selection of these realities, exchange practical advice and support one another in navigating the field. It also contributes to strengthening the **DGA Young Scholars Network on Asian Studies** by encouraging the formation of peer groups and long-term academic connections.

What to expect: The workshop will take the form of a **World Café**: an open and informal format designed to encourage lively, meaningful discussions. Two themed tables will be available:

- **Administrative Obstacles and Processes** (e.g., visa issues, institutional hurdles)
- **Access to the Field and Organizing Fieldwork** (e.g., permits, logistics and safety)

Participants can move freely between tables, ask questions, exchange strategies, and discover others who may be facing similar challenges. Whether you're looking for quick advice or hoping to connect with peers working in the same region, this is your space to learn, contribute and grow.

Open to all – no registration required:

This is an **open workshop and not a typical panel**: no application, no registration. Feel free to join the conversation, and to contribute—whether by asking questions, sharing experiences, or simply listening in. Everyone is welcome, and every voice matters. Let's create perspectives—together!

Panel 1: Unfortunately, this panel has been cancelled.

Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 14:00–15:30 (Hörsaal II)

~~(Im)printing the Nation: Print as Global Process and its Movements in Asia from Late 18th to Early 20th Century~~

Panel 2:

Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 16:00–17:30 (Hörsaal II)

The Adoption and Dynamics of AI in Asia

Panel organisers:

Wolfram Schaffar (University of Passau)

Min Htin Kaw Lat (University of Passau)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has played an important role in public discourse worldwide for several years now. AI is perceived as a key technology that is expected to profoundly change and revolutionize not only the economy but also society. In many regions of Asia, the adaptation of AI is characterized by several dynamics: On the one hand, the decisive steps in the research and development of AI are being taken by the two leading industrialized nations—the USA and China. Most other countries in Asia (as well as Europe) are only contributors to larger development projects, as suppliers of data and as markets. On the other hand, many Asian regions play a very important role in this peripheral position: South and Southeast Asia, for example, are leading the world in terms of social and economic penetration with digital technologies and social media. This makes them a very lucrative market and an interesting laboratory for various AI applications. Against the backdrop of increasing US-Chinese competition, different regions in Asia are becoming the arena of geostrategic rivalry between the two technology superpowers, where the integration of countries into one sphere or the other has far-reaching consequences.

Apart from the often utopian future scenarios, researchers have pointed out that AI also bears traits of an extractivist industry due to its resource-intensive and labour-intensive foundations. In addition to the raw materials required for the technical devices and infrastructure, and in addition to the enormous energy consumption of the servers, many applications such as image recognition or large language models depend on massive input of human labour (e.g. tagging images and entering data), which is increasingly being outsourced to low-wage countries or performed via platformized work. In these areas, global inequality is reproduced and reinforced.

The panel will provide a forum to discuss the dynamics of adaptation and the role of AI in Asia at different levels, which include but are not limited to questions such as:

- What economic dynamics can be observed?
- What geostrategic developments are associated with the adaptation of AI in the different Asian regions?
- Which players can be identified—investment funds, companies, users?
- What regulatory initiatives are being undertaken by governments?

Presentations:

AI as Extractive Industry – Transformations in Southeast Asia against the Backdrop of a Multiple Crisis and Shifting Global World Order

Wolfram Schaffar (University of Passau)

AI is being hailed as a disruptive new technology with the potential to spark a new industrial revolution. However, the adoption and spread of this technology—much like in previous industrial revolutions—is occurring within a context shaped by global power relations and existing inequalities. Notably, AI displays characteristics of an extractive industry (Crawford, 2021), where advanced technologies intersect with processes akin to primitive accumulation.

In Southeast Asia, the adoption of AI is unfolding within a framework of uneven and dependent development (Carroll et al., 2020), set against the backdrop of multiple global crises, the rise of authoritarian regimes, and shifts in the global order. This presentation explores these structural conditions for AI adoption, using the transformation occurring in the Thailand–Myanmar border region as a case study.

Digital Content Production in Myanmar

Min Htin Kyaw Lat (University of Passau)

The research project investigates the digital content economy in Myanmar, focusing on the networks of low-quality content production operating on digital platforms, commonly referred to as clickbait farms or spam networks. Set against a backdrop of weak regulation and platform-driven profit motives these enterprises deploy novel technologies such as AI-powered translation services in unique ways to produce a wide range of content from celebrity gossip to politically charged misinformation. Taking production as the point of focus, a mixed method approach is used including in-person interviews with content creators, digital ethnography of Facebook groups, and digital methods to track changes in content strategies historically. Guided by theories such as digital labor studies (Gray & Suri, 2019) and disinformation production (Grohmann & Ong, 2024), the study aims to critically examine how digital workers navigate platform policies, monetization rules, and political changes within the broader structure of digital content political economy.

Panel 3:

Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 14:00–15:30 (Hörsaal III)

Learning Empire?

Exploring Chinese International Practices within a Changing Global Order

Panel organiser:

Tobias ten Brink (Constructor University)

China's transformation from a poor, peripheral country to a major global power has been unprecedented in its scale and speed. Like other major powers before it, China's ascent has placed it at the center of global economic, social and political processes. Trying to understand the implications of China's rise, this panel explores whether China is emerging as an empire and whether it adapts amidst a global order that is increasingly informed by geopolitics. While empire-building in the Chinese case appears to be predominantly economic in nature, rather than through military coercion and conquest, this panel examines two sets of processes that we argue are central to the emergence of a novel form of empire: (a) multiple forms of autonomy building to minimize dependencies from incumbent powers or external critical infrastructure and knowledge; and (b) processes that intentionally or unintentionally increase dependence of others, thereby creating conditions for the establishment of exercising authority abroad. Moreover, by examining preference formation and policy learning under authoritarianism, the papers in this panel aim to identify the domestic mechanisms through which Chinese international practices are adapted and how these shape empire building and processes of peripheralization. In short, this panel investigates whether and how China is learning to become an empire under the conditions of a global order in transition.

Presentations:

Learning Empire: Conceptualizing China's Emerging International Practices

Tobias ten Brink (Presenting author, Constructor University)

Anna Ahlers, Daniel Fuchs, Nadine Godehardt, Maximilian Mayer, Johannes Petry, Wiebke Rabe, Gunter Schubert & Matthew D. Stephen

This paper theorizes how Chinese actors have recently adapted their international practices. We conceptualize China as a learning empire that is striving for greater *autonomy* vis-à-vis incumbent powers or external critical infrastructure and knowledge, thereby facilitating, in turn, *dependence* of other states, businesses and actors on its economy, especially in Asia and parts of the so-called Global South. Furthermore, we propose a *typology of imperial practices* that is more generally useful for understanding great power behaviour in the contemporary era: (1) Establishing control over economic structures, i.e., control over, or centrality within, infrastructure and value chains. (2) Intermediary creation, i.e., close alignment with local collaborators who support the imperial core. (3) Divide-and-rule, i.e., the segmentation of a variety of peripheries. (4) Ideational binding, i.e., efforts to become a center of knowledge production; and (5) Securing imperial claims, i.e. by advancing defense policies and securitizing infrastructure projects abroad.

Infrastructure Empire:

China's Global Infrastructural Push between Western Autonomy and Southern Dependency

Johannes Petry (University of Frankfurt)

Maximilian Mayer (University of Bonn)

Drawing on IR and IPE theorising, our framework for contemporary empires posits transnational hierarchical constellations characterised by technologically mediated core-periphery relations. Rather than territorial expansion, infrastructural statecraft facilitates connectivity between different entities and locations, enabling certain socio-economic transactions while constraining others. As a result, infrastructures help to consolidate power, constraining actors in different spatial and functional ways as they create asymmetrical relationships between China and other states or firms. On the one hand, infrastructures reinforce core-periphery dependencies. On the other hand, infrastructure construction promotes China's autonomy and reduces its vulnerability. Empirically, we examine the emergence of a China-centric and multi-layered ecosystem of financial infrastructures, including payment systems, digital currencies, SWIFT alternatives, and e-commerce platforms. We also explore whether alternative financial infrastructures can potentially shield China and its international practices from the influence of US power.

Learning and Local Intermediaries: Explaining the Successes of China's Global Solar Industry

Wiebke Rabe (University of Bremen)

China is emerging as a global leader in renewable energy, with the solar industry exemplifying its success. Despite backlash related to Western anti-dumping and anti-subsidy measures against Chinese photovoltaic cells or countries with Chinese solar PV investments, China has achieved global centrality in all stages of solar PV production. Drawing on interview material, company statements, public media reports, and statistics, this paper traces the evolution of Chinese political elites' learning and Chinese solar enterprises' adaptation strategies in keeping and expanding their international market. This paper also highlights the role of host country intermediaries (e.g. local mayors, host country legislation) that have significantly facilitated Chinese global solar investment projects. By illustrating how China has achieved significant autonomy in the solar industry while fostering global dependence on it, this paper contributes to the emerging debate on China's transformation into a new empire and the unexpected successes of latecomer investors.

Building Empire through Narratives:

China's Belt and Road Initiative and the Quest for Global Discourse Power

Carsten Schäfer (University of Cologne)

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is not merely an infrastructure project but a strategic effort to shape global narratives and assert its international discourse power. This presentation examines how China uses the BRI to promote specific narratives about its rise as a global power and about an emerging alternative world order. By exploring these narratives and the channels through which they are disseminated, such as state media and cultural diplomacy, the paper delves into the political goals behind these new storytelling efforts. Narratives, as a

form of political power, allow China to influence perceptions, legitimize its actions internationally, and build alliances. The analysis demonstrates that China's pursuit of discourse power and its efforts to 'tell China stories well' are integral to its broader geopolitical ambitions, aiming to redefine its identity on the global stage, challenge the Western-dominated order, and gain support for its political agenda. Ultimately, this paper highlights how China strategically builds discourse power to secure its position in the shifting global order.

Panel 4:

Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 16:00–17:30 (Hörsaal III)

Urban Infrastructural Expansion in East and Southeast Asia: Actors, Access, and the Unseen

Panel organiser:

Friederike Trotier (University of Passau)

For decades, cities in East and Southeast Asia have been undergoing rapid urbanization boosted by the process of infrastructure expansion. Such a process includes not only physical networks of transport, housing, and digital connectivity but also entangled networks of actors, knowledge (know-how), and governing practices. Looking at different kinds of infrastructure in the urban landscape sheds light on their crucial role in shaping economic developments, mobility, and how people live and work. Moreover, access to infrastructures in urban cities is not always universal. Studies have shown that different social groups and communities are hindered from having full access to certain infrastructures due to factors such as locations, financial disadvantages, political influences, gender, race and ethnicity, etc. As a result, infrastructural development and access have far-reaching impacts on social inequality and stability.

This panel examines such an uneven landscape of urban infrastructure in cities across East and Southeast Asia. Integrating perspectives from urban studies, sociology, social anthropology, political geography, and area studies, the panel aims to explore the emergence and development of different infrastructures as part of the process of urban expansion through different case studies including digital infrastructure for works and services, urban heritage, migration and arrival infrastructure, etc. Such a focus on urban infrastructures sheds light on: (1) what infrastructure developments tell us about the shaping of inclusion and exclusion in urban spaces in regions where urban expansion has been happening at a rapid speed, (2) the contrary between heavily-concentrate/prioritized and overlooked spaces and communities, (3) how different actors and communities navigate the shifting urban landscapes and the process of infrastructural expansion, and (4) the broader and multifaceted political and public discourses and political economies surrounding infrastructural expansion in the cities.

By bridging discussions on infrastructure, labor, digitalization, and urban knowledge production, this panel highlights the uneven geographies of urban transformation in East and Southeast Asia and aims to potentially develop a collaborative publication project. We invite contributions to this panel that explore the following aspects:

- The emergence and development of new and unconventional infrastructures as a result of the expansion and development of cities and urban spaces
- Unseen and overlooked aspects of urban growth and infrastructure development (including but not limited to marginalized spaces, communities, and social groups)
- Which sites/ spaces are revitalized or turned into heritage while others remain neglected?
- The intersection of urban infrastructural expansion (e.g. housing, transportation, digital networks) with labor, labor conditions, cultural and community networks

Presentations:

Looking beyond Spectacular Infrastructures: Overlooked, Unseen and Unspectacular Spaces in Southeast Asia

Friederike Trotier (University of Passau)

Sites of spectacular urbanism receive political, popular and scholarly attention. It is, however, far more difficult to gain understanding of the overlooked, unseen and unspectacular urban spaces and infrastructures in the shadow of spectacular or dominating sites. This paper aims to make sense of the overlooked spaces in Southeast Asia that are connected to spectacular infrastructure and to discuss the non-fixed relationship between the spectacular and unspectacular in their social, political and geographical contexts. Key questions are: Which kind of

unspectacular infrastructure does the spectacular site need to maintain its status? What is the role of temporalities of urban infrastructure? How do non-tangible aspects and symbolism affect the relationship between spectacular and unspectacular infrastructures? What are specific cases in Southeast Asia that help us to understand overlooked, unseen and unspectacular spaces?

How to Urbanise a Chinese New Village in Kuala Lumpur?

An Analysis of Infrastructure Discourses in Sin Chew Daily in the 1990s and Early 2000s

Ryanne Flock (University of Würzburg)

Most studies on Chinese New Villages focus on their early years (the 1950s to 1970s) and let us understand construction, socio-economic characteristics of the inhabitants, cultural customs and the political context of the past. However, we lack research on more current developments as New Villages are spatially integrated into Malaysia's extending urbanisation. In the 1990s, Kuala Lumpur City Hall and the Malaysian Federal Government began conceptualising the capital as a global city, thereby consolidating Malaysia's international standing. This paper focuses on Jinjang during this crucial period, i.e., the largest New Village near the Kuala Lumpur metropolitan region facing urbanisation challenges fueled by globalisation aspirations and interethnic tensions. I analyse the discourses on infrastructure building and land conflicts in the Sin Chew Daily, a prominent voice within the Malaysian Chinese community, in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Bridging Aspirations:

Urban Transformation and Adaptation in Thu Duc City's Residential Landscape

Franziska S. Nicolaisen (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg)

This research examines the broader transformations of urban space in Vietnam, focusing on the case of Thanh My Loi Ward in Thu Duc City. Once a remote agricultural area, Thanh My Loi has experienced rapid development in recent years, partly due to the construction of a new bridge linking it to the urban highway system of Ho Chi Minh City. The ongoing construction of high-rise apartment buildings and luxury villas in a range of architectural styles highlights a blend of global aspirations and personal expression, reflecting the diverse aesthetic preferences of Vietnam's urban elite. However, early residents struggle to keep up with shifting building regulations and the ongoing loss of agricultural land, prompting innovative adaptation strategies. Thanh My Loi serves as a microcosm of broader urbanization trends in Vietnam, where the global ambitions of municipal authorities and urban elites often clash with the everyday realities and practices of local residents.

Uneven Terrain: Navigating Low-end Digitalization of the Logistic Industry in Vietnam

Jessica Steinman (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Over the past decade, global logistics infrastructure has embraced automation and digital systems to enhance efficiency and circulation. Yet, in much of the Global South, due to financial and digital infrastructure constraints, logistics companies and ports have adopted what I call "low-end digitalization"—incremental, localized technological adaptations driven by affordability and necessity. This presentation, grounded in ethnographic research from Ho Chi Minh City, focuses on how low-end digitalization affects logistics labor as workers stitch together different programs and spend more time completing their jobs. This presentation shows that low-end digitalization creates an uneven terrain for urban logistics—where actors must navigate the gaps and inefficiencies of fragmented infrastructure. By focusing on the experiences of logistics workers in such environments, this presentation offers a critical perspective on digital inclusion and exclusion in Asia by focusing on the intersections of urban expansion, technological access, and labor inequality.

Panel 5:

Tuesday, 9 September, 14:00–17:30 (Hörsaal IV) & Wednesday, 10 September, 9:00–10:30 (Hörsaal IV)

Open Panel

Slot 1: Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 14:00–15:30 (Hörsaal IV)

Moderator:

Richard Takhun (University of Bonn)

Presentations:

How Equitable and Inclusive?

Southeast Asia and the Geoeconomics of Competitive High-Speed Railway Projects

Jürgen Rüland (Presenting author, University of Freiburg)

Lunting Wu (Zeppelin University, Friedrichshafen)

Southeast Asia has become a focal point for global infrastructure competition, particularly in the high-speed railway (HSR) sector, where China and Japan vie for influence. This article analyses the geopolitical and socio-economic implications of competitive infrastructure financing by comparing HSR projects in Indonesia and Thailand. We argue that recipient states can leverage geo-economic competition to secure more favorable, that is, inclusive and equitable, terms, contingent upon their domestic political structures, developmental ideologies, and negotiation strategies. Examining the Jakarta–Bandung HSR and the Bangkok–Nong Khai HSR, we find that Indonesia, benefiting from intense Sino–Japanese competition and domestic institutional constraints on executive power, negotiated better financing conditions. In contrast, Thailand’s military-led government faced limited competition and accepted less favorable terms, assuming greater financial risk with minimal concessions from China. Beyond financial considerations, the study highlights how infrastructure deals shape and are shaped by political agency, societal inclusion, and environmental safeguards.

Resilience and Resistance: Examining the Exclusion of Sea-Oriented Indigenous Community in Disaster Recovery Management

Gretchen Gonzaga (University of Bonn)

Extreme weather events are becoming more destructive and unpredictable. Their impacts affect different groups of people due to existing discrimination and inequalities. In this presentation, I adopt a decolonial intersectional approach to examine the exclusion of the Sama Badjao, a sea-oriented Indigenous community in insular Southeast Asia, focusing on their post-disaster experiences after Super Typhoon Rai in 2021 in the Philippines. These experiences are framed within a historical context of exclusion and increasing inequality shaped by gender, ethnicity, and religion. Drawing on data from my ten-month fieldwork (2021–2022) in the coastal area of Bato, Leyte, Central Philippines, I illustrate how exclusion manifests during and after the typhoon amidst resource scarcity. The findings address the pervasive othering of the Sama Badjao through stigmas and stereotypes, highlighting their resistance to dominant public narratives, their efforts to counter imposed identities and the representation of ‘Badjao’ on the periphery.

Slot 2: Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 16:00–17:30 (Hörsaal IV)

Moderation:

Alessandro Gullo (University of Bonn)

Presentations:

Contemplation in Action: The Power Dynamics Inherent within Perceptual Identification and Embodied Negotiation of Sacred Sites in Kathmandu and Lumbini, Nepal

Lewis Doney (University of Bonn)

Tibetan Buddhist literature encourages contemplation and pilgrimage to sacred sites associated with holy beings. Lewis Doney’s presentation applies second-generation, “embodied” cognitive science accounts to two Nepalese sites: Boudhanath Stupa and Lumbini. Embodied contemplation takes place in these spaces through physical negotiation, barriers and “in-between” zones in a mindful state. The presentation will address the differences between the more perceptual identification of a site as “sacred” and the often “less-than-sacred” acts performed there as part of people’s visits; nonetheless leading to affordances for embodied contemplation as the geography

of holy places is negotiated in real time. This presentation thus also contextualizes these sites within the textual creation and reading of space, and narratives concerning sacred sites that also create powerful sensorimotor effects on readers. It thereby uncovers the lived ecology of sacred sites, either as contemplated from afar in embodied ways, or as physically experienced by Tibetan Buddhists in Nepal.

Intercultural Exchange between Japan and Germany: Toshio Hosokawa and the Role of Japanese Musicians at the Darmstadt Summer Courses for New Music

Joevan de Mattos Caitano

This paper explores the intercultural dialogue between Japan and Germany through the participation of Japanese composers and performers at the Darmstadt Summer Courses, focusing in particular on Toshio Hosokawa (b. 1955). His artistic development reflects a synthesis of Japanese aesthetics and European avant-garde practices. After studying with Isang Yun, Klaus Huber, and Brian Ferneyhough, and engaging with figures such as Helmut Lachenmann and Gérard Grisey, Hosokawa became an influential presence in Darmstadt from the 1990s onward. His compositions and lectures reflect a deep engagement with transcultural ideas. The paper also considers contributions by other Japanese musicians such as Mayako Kubo, Ichiro Nodaira, and Misato Mochizuki, who significantly shaped the internationalization of the Courses. Drawing on archival materials from the IMD and scholarly sources, this presentation highlights how Japanese artists have played a vital role in expanding the global discourse on contemporary music in Darmstadt.

ASEAN – A Central Actor in Global Services Trade?

Daniel Köllner (Ruhr University Bochum)

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) aspires the realisation of the ASEAN Centrality, characterised by a central role in Indo-Pacific Trade. Meanwhile developments in trade in goods are examined frequently, highlighting the competition between the emerging People's Republic of China and the global power United States of America, international exchange in services is comparatively seldom illuminated. This contribution examines ASEAN's roles in international services trade. The substantial volume of exported services underscores the significance of ASEAN in global services trade. Here, the impact of Southeast Asian exchanges on global exchanges in services will be elaborated based on a quantitative led role theoretical approach, focussing on standard setting and considering free trade agreements. Is ASEAN enacting a central role in global services trade?

Slot 3: Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 9:00–10:30 (Hörsaal IV)

Moderation:

Rakhmat Hidayat (State University of Jakarta & University of Bonn)

Presentations:

The Essay Poetry Generation:

The Birth of a Literary Movement in Modern Indonesian Literature

Agus R. Sarjono (Indonesian Arts and Culture Institute in Bandung)

This paper examines the emergence and establishment of the "Essay Poetry Generation" as a significant literary force in Indonesian literature following the "Generation of 2000." It analyzes the historical context of literary generation declarations in Indonesia, highlighting the varying degrees of success and acceptance of past movements. The essay argues that the Essay Poetry Generation, initiated around 2012 with Denny JA's groundbreaking "essay poetry," has solidified its position through a unique combination of factors. These include the development of a distinct genre with specific formal (narrative structure, footnotes) and thematic characteristics (addressing marginalized voices, historical consciousness), the proactive and organized nature of its formation, and the substantial body of work produced across four comprehensive anthologies (2012-2024). Furthermore, the movement's expansion into neighboring countries, particularly Malaysia, and the accompanying critical discourse from prominent literary figures and academics both within Indonesia and internationally, underscore its impact and legitimacy as a new literary generation. This study posits that the Essay Poetry Generation represents not only a novel literary form but also a conscious effort to preserve memory, challenge dominant narratives, and democratize literary participation in Indonesia and beyond.

Discovery is Followed by Conquest:

Sven Hedin and the “Blank Spots” in German Youth Literature before 1945

Bernhard Hertlein (Bielefeld University)

Perhaps it is a privilege of young people that they can dream to discover unknown regions. Today, for such an adventure, they would have to fly to Mars. A hundred years ago, however, there were – allegedly – “blank spots” still on earth, especially in Asia. An area was described as “blank” (in German: *weiß*) if it was allegedly uninhabited or at least untouched by civilization. In practice, discovery was often followed by colonial conquest of the areas – prepared, accompanied, and supported by writers such as the Swedish geographer and author of youth books, Sven Hedin (1865–1952). Hedin thus stands in a long tradition, which, however, was not unbroken even during his lifetime. But as his books were sold in large numbers, the images which Hedin created on Mongolia, China, India and Tibet had a lasting impact. This presentation will reflect on the German translations of Hedin and its lasting impact on German youth before 1945.

Gendered Urban Speech: A Study of the Bambaiyā-speaking Woman

Hridaya Ajgaonkar (University of Bonn)

As a localised urban speech, in addition to its actual usage, Bambaiyā is heavily mediated by its cinematic representation. However, the cinematic, and consequently largely caricatural re-production of Bambaiyā is closely compartmentalised along the norms of gender and sexuality. Like several forms of non-standard and covert prestige speech, it is associated with the performance of street masculinity. Bambaiyā speech on a female tongue is rare but not absent. In this paper, I aim to factor in rarer cinematic representations of the Bambaiyā-speaking female alongside observations from the pilot phase of my fieldwork, including interviews with Bambaiyā-speaking women and men from Mumbai. Through its sociolinguistic-cinematic analysis, thus, this paper explores the gendered political interactions of the urban street.

Panel 6:

Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 14:00–15:30 (Hörsaal V)

Crossing Borders: Asian Nurses in the German Health Care System

Panel organisers:

Alexander Loch (HVF Ludwigsburg)

Retno Widayastuti (HVF Ludwigsburg)

The migration of professional health workers, particularly nurses and caregivers, is a critical global issue as healthcare systems struggle to meet rising demands. There are 29 million nurses globally. Yet, the World Health Organization (WHO) projects a shortage of 4.8 million nurses and midwives by 2030, with the most severe gaps in developing countries, where health systems are already under-resourced and overburdened (WHO 2024). Asia, especially the Philippines, India, Vietnam, and Indonesia, have become prominent suppliers of nurses and caregivers to countries facing healthcare workforce shortages due to demographic change—including Japan, Germany, and the United States (De Lorenzo 2024, Bludau 2024). For example, the Philippines provided approximately 240,000 nurses to OECD countries, with an annual outflow of 15,000–20,000 nurses (Buchand & Catton 2020), while India and Indonesia are rapidly emerging as key partners in bilateral agreements to address labor shortages.

This interdisciplinary panel will examine the Asian nurses’ migration dynamics; areas include the migration drivers, expectation management, healthcare demands, alongside challenges like brain drain and remittances in origin countries, also acculturation, integration, and discrimination issues in destination countries. Case studies from Germany, such as trainee recruitment from Vietnam (2019), placement agreements for nurses from Indonesia (2021), the German-Indian Migration and Mobility Agreement (2024), also prominent examples from Asian countries, such as the Japan Economic Partnership Agreements (JEPA), illustrate the interplay of policies, recruitment practices, and worker experiences. The panel invites comparison and critical reflection of efficiency and cross-cultural compatibilities, e.g. from 2022 to August 2024, 187 Indonesian nurses came to Germany through the Indonesia-Germany Triple Win Program, while, in comparison, 875 Indonesian caregivers and 47 nurses have been placed through the JEPA (BP2MI, 2024).

While destination countries gain skilled workers, origin countries face care gaps that strain fragile health systems. By addressing ethical recruitment, gender dimensions, and (re)integration obstacles of health workers crossing

borders, the panel also will highlight pathways to mitigate global health workforce shortages and ensure sustainable health systems. These discussions align with achieving SDG 3 (good health and well-being) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth). Shared responsibility and ethical policies are critical to mitigating shortages and building resilient healthcare systems globally. The comparative analysis of the experiences of Asian Nurses in the German Health Care System may provide social scientists, migration researchers and decision-makers in the medical sector an evidence-based understanding of potentials and challenges in German-Asian cooperation.

Presentations:

Acculturation Dynamics of Indonesian Nurses in Germany

Alexander Loch (HVF Ludwigsburg)

Retno Widyastuti (HVF Ludwigsburg)

This study examines the migration and acculturation experiences of Indonesian nurses placed in Germany through the Germany–Indonesia Triple Win program. Anchored in the migration–development nexus and informed by the Perawat Survey 2025 data, it investigates recruitment, relocation, acculturation, job satisfaction, personal values, and return aspirations. The research explores three core questions: (1) Expectation Management—how promises and bureaucratic processes shape migrant experiences and who bears the burden of unmet expectations; (2) Acculturation and Integration—how nurses navigate linguistic barriers, professional hierarchies, and cultural dissonances while negotiating belonging; and (3) Impacts and Paradoxes—whether this migration model delivers meaningful development gains or reinforces structural asymmetries. By critically analyzing this case of circular labor mobility, the study contributes to global debates on care chains, fair recruitment, and the limits of state-led migration schemes.

Indian Nurses in the German Healthcare System: Historical Context and Contemporary Perspectives

Tobias Santosh Großmann (Research Centre BAMF)

In the Global North, the recruitment of nursing professionals from the Global South is often seen as a response to the increasing strain on overstretched healthcare systems. In this context the Indian state Kerala has become a central hub for nursing migration. The first part of this presentation, through the lens of historical migration research, explores the origins of Asian women's recruitment into German healthcare professions in the 1960s, focusing on migration flows from Kerala. The second part, based on field research conducted in 2023 and 2025, examines how these historical developments inform current care migration trends from India. It will highlight the differing perspectives of institutional and private actors in India and Germany in shaping migration patterns, while opening the discussion on various research approaches.

The Nurses' Situation in Indonesia and Binawan's Initiatives for Nurse Placement in Germany

Said Saleh Alwaini, MM., MIM (Binawan Group)

Erika Lubis, S.Kp, MN (Binawan University)

In 2023, Indonesia had 696,217 nurses—the largest group among health workers—yet faced persistent challenges in service distribution and quality, especially in remote areas. To address this and improve nursing education to international standards, the Indonesian government, through BP2MI, partnered with Germany to deploy Indonesian nurses abroad under a triple-win program. Binawan plays a key role in this initiative, building on its prior success with an Australia-based program that placed nearly 250 nurses across Australian cities. These initiatives have benefited both the nurses and the destination countries. Currently, Binawan supports the Germany-bound program by providing German language training and job-specific vocational education to enhance both technical and soft skills. This comprehensive approach helps ensure Indonesian nurses are well-prepared to meet the demands of international healthcare systems while contributing to national goals of improving workforce quality and global mobility.

Hiring and Support Structures for Indonesian Healthcare Migrant Workers to Germany and Japan – From Pre-Departure to Post-Arrival

Andi Holik Ramdani (Hashimoto Foundation Societas Institute)

This study compares the hiring and support structures for Indonesian healthcare migrant workers in Germany and Japan, covering the entire migration process from pre-departure training to post-arrival integration. Both

countries face rising demand for eldercare workers and have bilateral agreements with Indonesia, but their migration models differ significantly. Germany's Triple Win Program, a G to G initiative, offers structured career pathways. Japan, however, recruits through multiple schemes, including the G to G Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and the Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) system, each with unique entry requirements and support mechanisms. This study examines institutional frameworks, training programs, recruitment, and integration policies, identifying strengths and challenges in each model. Using interviews, policy documents, and fieldwork, it explores ways to improve ethical recruitment, worker protection, and labor integration, contributing to discussions on sustainable healthcare migration and international workforce cooperation.

Panel 7:

Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 16:00–17:30 (Hörsaal V)

Mehr Perspektiven wagen! Chinabilder in (Bildungs-)Medien

Panel organisers:

Jonas Schmid (University of Heidelberg)

Stefanie Elbern (University of Heidelberg)

Mit dem Aufstieg Chinas zur Weltmacht rückt China zunehmend in den Fokus gesellschaftlicher und politischer Diskurse und medialer Berichterstattung. Dabei werden einer breiten Öffentlichkeit Chinabilder vermittelt, die teils stark von aktuellen Emotionalitäten und Interessenslagen geprägt sind und nicht selten fernab wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisse liegen.

In diesem Panel sollen mediale Chinabilder analysiert werden. Inwiefern haben diese sich in verschiedenen Medien entwickelt? Welche historischen Kontinuitäten und gegenwärtigen Besonderheiten lassen sich beobachten? Inwiefern unterscheiden sich Chinabilder in verschiedenen Medien, etwa in der medialen Berichterstattung herkömmlicher Tageszeitungen, in den sozialen Medien und in Schulbüchern? Welche Unterschiede lassen sich eventuell auch zwischen Chinabildern in unterschiedlichen Ländern und Kontinenten beobachten?

Ausgerichtet wird dieses Panel von Mitarbeiter:innen des BMBF-Projektes „China-Schul-Akademie“: Trotz der gesteigerten medialen Aufmerksamkeit bleibt China zufolge einer Merics-Studie von 2018 „für den Großteil der rund elf Millionen Schüler in Deutschland [...] ein Randthema.“ In ihren Vorträgen stellen die Mitarbeiter:innen der China-Schul-Akademie die Ergebnisse einer systematischen Erhebung und umfassenden quantitativen und qualitativen Analyse von China-Bezügen in den bundesweit aktuell gültigen Lehrplänen der Fächer Geschichte, Geografie/Erdkunde, Sozialkunde und Ethik/Religion vor. Zudem wurde ein repräsentatives Korpus von Schulbüchern der genannten Fächer aus den letzten 10 Jahren (2013–2023) zusammengestellt und die Auswahl von Fallbeispielen, das Quellenangebot und die Bildsprache untersucht. Basierend auf den Ergebnissen der Studie und dem im Projektverlauf gesammelten Erfahrungen werden Empfehlungen für Lehrplankommissionen, Schulbuchredaktionen und -autor:innen, Fachdidaktiker:innen, Lehrer:innen und nicht zuletzt für die Chinawissenschaften formuliert.

Weitere Beiträge zu Chinabildern (nicht nur in deutschsprachigen) Medien sind willkommen und sollen zur breiteren Diskussion der Frage beitragen, inwiefern und wie „mehr Perspektiven“ auf China gewagt und „mehr Perspektiven“ aus China präsentiert werden können.

Presentations:

China im Geschichtsunterricht: Mehr und verschiedene chinesische Stimmen hörbar machen

Jonas Schmid (University of Heidelberg)

Der Beitrag gibt ausgehend von der Lehrplan- und Schulbuchanalyse der China-Schul-Akademie einen Überblick über die Auseinandersetzung mit der chinesischen Geschichte in allen Bundesländern. Anhand einer quantitativen und qualitativen Untersuchung aller zwischen 2013 und 2023 erschienenen deutschen Geschichtsschulbüchern und den darin enthaltenen über 1.000 Schulbuchseiten mit China-Bezug wird gezeigt, wie in der Gesellschaft verbreitete Chinabilder auch in Bildungsmedien für das Fach Geschichte reproduziert werden. Ein Fokus liegt dabei auf Textmaterialien, die im deutschen Geschichtsunterricht traditionell eine wichtige Rolle spielen. Chinesische Stimmen sind dabei unterrepräsentiert, insbesondere was die Deutung und Bewertung von historischen Ereignissen und Entwicklungen angeht. Anhand von Beispielseiten zur neueren chinesischen Geschichte wird gezeigt, wie solche fehlenden chinesischen Perspektiven zu aus fachwissenschaftlicher Sicht problematischen Narrativen und Chinabildern führen.

Religion und Ethik in China im Spiegel von Lehrplan und Schulbuch

Stefanie Elbern (University of Heidelberg)

Intra- und interkulturelle Widersprüche wahrzunehmen und Toleranz gegenüber Ambivalenzen zu fördern ist Bildungsziel auch und gerade im deutschen Religions- und Ethikunterricht sein. Während religiöses Leben in China und dort vorhandene ethische Konzepte theoretisch ein interessanter Unterrichtsgegenstand sein könnten (insbesondere angesichts der Einschränkungen und Umdeutungen, die der politische Rahmen dort vorgibt), findet eine explizite Hinwendung zu China in den Lehrplänen der entsprechenden Fächer nur höchst selten statt. Nichtsdestotrotz ist ein breiter curricularer Spielraum identifizierbar, innerhalb dessen das Themenfeld Religion und Ethik aus/in China zielführend aufgegriffen werden könnte. Schulbücher bieten trotz der theoretisch vorhandenen Anknüpfungspunkte in den Lehrplänen wenig China-bezogene Inhalte, enthalten vereinfachende Stereotypen und Fehlinformationen. Der Vortrag präsentiert diesbezügliche Erkenntnisse aus der Analyse von aktuellen Lehrplänen und Schulbuchinhalten.

Blickt über den Tellerrand! Aber bloß nicht zu weit? Fachübergreifende Ansätze am Beispiel von möglichen Chinabezügen im Deutsch-Unterricht und in fachbergreifenden Kursen

Marjolijn Kaiser (University of Heidelberg)

In den meisten Lehrplänen des Faches Deutsch (gymnasiale Oberstufe) wird, u.a. durch die Förderung von inter- oder transkulturellen Kompetenzen, die Entwicklung eines differenzierteren Weltbildes oder die Thematisierung von Fremdheits- oder Alteritätserfahrungen, der Realität einer globalisierten Welt und den Anforderungen an zukünftige Generationen in dieser Welt - zumindest theoretisch – Rechnung getragen. Fachübergreifende Bildungsziele wie Bildung für Nachhaltige Entwicklung (BNE), Bildung für Toleranz, Akzeptanz und Vielfalt (BTV), oder Kulturelle Bildung bieten darüber hinaus ebenfalls Platz für ein Blick über den Tellerrand. Dieser Beitrag analysiert auf der Grundlage einer Lehrplan- und Schulbuchanalyse, ob und wie eine Auseinandersetzung mit dem Thema China im Fach Deutsch und in (fachübergreifenden) wissenschaftspropädeutisch ausgerichteten Kursen in der Oberstufe bereits stattfindet oder stattfinden kann, um diesen übergeordneten Bildungszielen gerecht zu werden.

Panel 8:

Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 14:00–17:30 (Hörsaal VI)

Youth Movements against Authoritarianism in Asia: Tracing the Transformations

Panel organisers:

Teresa Jopson (Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg)

Anas Ansar (Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg)

The frequency with which the youth have been at the forefront of recent political and social movements across Asia has captured the world's attention. Movements such as the pan-Asian "Milk Tea Alliance", the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, Myanmar's spring revolution against the military dictatorship, and the July 2024 student uprising in Bangladesh signal a new wave of youth activism. These movements are characterized by novel patterns, innovative strategies, solidarity dynamics, and transnational digital networks, revealing a unique transformation in both scale and scope. Youth movements in Asia have a long legacy of challenging authoritarian regimes and pushing for societal change. Alongside resistance, movements like Taiwan's 2014 Sunflower protests and Thailand's Move Forward party (2023) highlight youth-driven efforts to mainstream progressive issues like same-sex marriage and democratic reform. The digital space has reshaped how young generations have used informational, transnational, visual, and emotional tools via social media to create new forms of domestic and cross-border mobilization and collaboration. At the same time, these movements continue to face significant challenges, as they confront deeply rooted political, economic, and social institutions that resist the changes they seek.

Studying youth movements in Asia against authoritarianism is crucial, given the region's unique characteristics: a significant youth population, ethnic and religious diversity, varied regime types, political parties, authoritarian resilience, stagnating democracies, and a political culture that is often intolerant of dissent. Understanding these movements provides valuable insights into youth participation and resistance, particularly in the context of post-colonial nation-building struggles. This panel expects to offer transferable lessons with global implications, highlighting the universal fight for democracy and social justice across the world. This panel aims to explore the new

wave of youth activism against authoritarian regimes in Asia, focusing on the diverse forms of protest and the violent repression these movements face. We ask, *how have recent youth protest cultures evolved in response to political, economic, and social changes in Asia?* The panel brings together scholars, particularly early career researchers from the Global South to critically examine the contexts, demands, strategies, and outcomes of these movements. Drawing on various disciplinary perspectives and case studies, the panel addresses youth and student political movements across South and Southeast Asia. By doing so, we seek to trace the transformation of these movements and develop a nuanced understanding of resistance from below.

Slot 1: Tuesday, 9 September 2025, 14:00–15:30 (Hörsaal VI)

Presentations:

Lying Flat: Redefining Success and Resistance among China's Youth

Sarah Köksal (Ludwig Maximilian University Munich)

Our work critically examines “Tang Ping” (Lying Flat) practices among Chinese youth, an emerging youth movement characterized by minimalism, re-evaluation of traditional success markers, such as property ownership and marriage, and a disengagement from the high-pressure “996” work culture. Tang Ping reflects a growing disillusionment with societal expectations, economic stagnation, and diminishing returns on educational investment. Some scholars have described Tang Ping as a collective reckoning and a form of political resistance. Drawing on semi-structured interviews conducted in Dali, Yunnan, provides an empirical account of how different Tang Ping practices are lived out and conceptualized by Gen Z and Y (post 1990s and post 2000s). The findings reveal a profound questioning of China’s achievement-oriented cultural life script. Research participants described looking for a purposeful, socially connected life as opposed to career- and consumption-oriented urban lifestyles they perceived as superficial and unfulfilling. Shared value orientations were observed such as a prioritization of long-standing relationships over career-related mobility, the search for autonomy and work-life balance, and commitment to self-reflection and deep learning. This study bridges the gap in empirical research on Tang Ping, offering critical insights into the complex interplay between personal agency and structural constraints, youth discontent, and the evolving definitions of success in contemporary China.

Marxism Haunting Marxism:

Tangpingism as the Revival of China's Marxist Resistance Tradition in Digital Space

Cheng Ma (Free University of Berlin)

This paper investigates Tangpingism (“躺平主义,” or “lying flat”), a Chinese youth-led digital resistance movement that rejects societal pressures to overwork, as a contemporary revival of Marxist critique in the digital age. Conceptualised as “Marxism haunting Marxism,” Tangpingism adapts China’s Marxist resistance tradition—particularly the strategy of “扛着红旗反红旗” (holding up the red flag to oppose the red flag)—to navigate state surveillance and censorship. Based on eight months of digital ethnography (2021) across platforms like Baidu Tieba, Weibo, and Douban, alongside engagement with Marxist students drafting the Tangpingist Manifesto, this study examines: 1) the movement’s evolution from online memes to socio-political critique; 2) its innovative use of digital tools, such as coded language and meme culture, to circumvent authoritarian control; and 3) its reimagining of Chinese Marxist resistance traditions within a global framework of digital youth activism, with comparisons to movements like South Korea’s “N-po Generation.” This paper contributes to broader discussions on youth resistance, authoritarian resilience, and the transformative role of digital cultures in Asia.

Scripts of Dissent: Theorizing Study Circles and Intellectual Resistance in Indian Universities

Vidyasagar Sharma (Bielefeld University)

Historically, Indian universities have been at the forefront of resisting the authoritarian structure. Universities and the intellectual class have played a significant role in shaping the discourse of socio-political movements, from colonial to post-colonial regimes. In continuation of this legacy of resistance, contemporary Indian universities are in the process of dissenting against authoritarian regimes, due to the strong control exercised by the right-wing majoritarian government. However, the modalities of resistance have adopted ‘reading’ as a method of resistance within university spaces. By mapping the historical trajectory of intellectual resistance in India, I argue that study circles—particularly those led by left and anti-caste-oriented student groups—are emerging as new sites of resistance. These formations are transforming the traditional nature of protest by embedding dissent within everyday academic and dialogic practices.

Presentations:

Graffiti as the Manifesto for the Future:

(Re)Imagining Bangladesh through Revolutionary Street Art

Anas Ansar (Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg)

Abu Faisal Md Khaled (Ruhr University Bochum)

This paper examines how graffiti in Bangladesh reflects the nation's social and political aspirations, evolving from subtle resistance to a powerful catalyst for change during the July student uprising that toppled the authoritarian regime of Sheikh Hasina, the longest-serving female prime minister in the world, who ruled Bangladesh with an iron fist for over 15 years. Employing an urban ethnography and analysis of street arts and graffiti and their online representation and reinterpretation, this study argues that graffiti narratives reflect the country's desire for freedom of expression and political transformation. Conceptualizing "Graffiti as manifesto for future" unpacks the authoritarian regime's practices while signaling the youth's vision for a democratic Bangladesh. Graffiti is also an ideological landscape, a space of convergence and divergence that serves as a beacon of hope, reimagining the nation through visual rebellion and articulating collective dreams. This transformation provides insights into graffiti's role in shaping public discourse, influencing policy, and guiding Bangladesh's aspirations for a more open, democratic, and prosperous society.

Why Solidarity Fades: The Decline of the Milk Tea Alliance

Tuanont Phattharathanasut (Humboldt University of Berlin)

Social movement scholarship has given considerable attention to the mechanisms and processes that lead to the rise of transnational solidarity, but comparatively less to its decline. This research explores the Milk Tea Alliance (MTA), examining how and why solidarity movements persist in certain contexts while losing significance in others. To understand this dynamic, I adopt a regional perspective, centering the region as the core unit of analysis, and apply the concept of interactive contention, which combines framing, structural opportunities, and resource mobilization. The research finds that transnational solidarity is shaped not only by the framing of shared struggles, but also by domestic political opportunities and pre-existing networks, which play a crucial role in either the withdrawal from or sustained commitment to a campaign. This highlights the interaction between domestic, regional, and international factors that shape the resonance of activism and the challenges of alliance-building in non-democratic societies.

Panel 9:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 9:00–12:30 (Hörsaal II)

Popular Confucianism: Exploring the Confucian Revival in China and Beyond through the Lenses of Social Science

Panel organisers:

Sandra Gilgan (University of Bonn)

WANG Canglong (University of Brighton)

The Confucian revival in China on academic and political levels since the 1980s has received important scholarly attention in Asian and Chinese studies. Yet there is limited awareness of the grassroots developments in popular Confucianism that have grown in the 2000s, especially when explored through evidence-based research and social science approaches. Ordinary people—technicians, employees, workers, or peasants—have transgressed boundaries towards an area that used to be accessible only to the scholar-literati with an official position, such as Confucian temples and education based on the Confucian classics.

The most visible educational initiative is classics-reading education for children in so-called 'study halls' and 'academies'. People aim to cultivate modern 'virtuous persons', hoping that they will change China for the better (Bilioud & Thoraval 2015; Gilgan 2022). Moral education through reading the classics also fuels self-cultivation in the sense of Confucian individuality and citizenship (Wang 2023). 'Confucian entrepreneurs' use educational measures to expose their employees to Confucian classics and ritual, reflecting their contribution to the making of the modern citizen of high moral quality that the state desires, and to the construction of a Chinese capitalist ethic (Lan Jiang Fu 2022). Social science approaches to Confucian studies have already been recognized as one of

the top ten academic highlights of 2023 in China, while this new trend is still gaining momentum in Europe. Therefore, we bring researchers together to critically discuss the variety of popular references to Confucianism—such as education, spirituality, business, and local politics. We welcome contributions from area, heritage, citizenship and religious studies, from anthropology, sociology, and other fields of study that use evidence-based research on popular Confucianism in China and beyond.

In our panel, we will address questions such as:

- What are the roles and functions of ‘revived’ Confucianism? What do people need or use it for?
- Which ideas about ‘tradition’, ‘history’, ‘heritage’ and other ‘pasts’ prevail in the field?
- What tensions can be identified between the past, present and future? Between ideals and reality?
- How do the actors in the field relate to family, society and politics?

Along all cases, we will discuss and reflect on methodological opportunities and challenges:

- What are the (methodological) challenges and opportunities of applying social science approaches to Confucian studies?
- How can interdisciplinary approaches to Confucian studies be achieved by integrating humanities and social sciences?

Slot 1: Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 9:00–10:30 (Hörsaal II)

Presentations:

Confucian Practices:

Towards a Sociological Concept for Understanding the Confucian Revival

WANG Canglong (University of Brighton)

Since the early 21st century, Confucianism has witnessed a wide-reaching revival across diverse domains, including education, religion, politics, and identity, among others. This revival is shaped by both top-down initiatives from elites and bottom-up actions by ordinary actors. In response, Confucian studies have taken an empirical turn, adopting social scientific approaches to analyse Confucianism as a lived social reality. Yet, existing scholarship still lacks adequate conceptual tools. This article introduces the new sociological concept of “Confucian practices” to capture the complexity and multiplicity of this revival. The term refers to practices engaging Confucian ideas, values, or forms across varied settings. It highlights how Confucianism is enacted, reimaged, and made meaningful through everyday interactions. Rather than a fixed tradition, Confucianism is viewed as a fluid and variegated quality. This conceptual lens shifts the analysis from abstract philosophy to social practice, advancing the empirical orientation within contemporary Confucian studies.

Confucian Practice as Societal Utopianism

Sandra Gilgan (University of Bonn)

Characterizing the revival of Confucian education in the early 2000s remains challenging, as empirical research on the topic is still in its early stages. Nonetheless, a growing body of scholarship reveals recurring themes in how individuals imagine the past and the role of tradition in shaping China’s future. At the heart of this phenomenon lies a deeper tension of positioning oneself between past and future and how to navigate the present within this dynamic. This tension reflects the essence of utopian thinking. While political utopianism—particularly in its 20th-century socialist and communist forms—has often been discredited due to historical failures, utopian thinking at the societal level persists. In this context, I argue that the classics-reading (dujing) movement represents a living expression of utopian imagination: a vision for an alternative society in response to a discontented present. From a theoretical standpoint, this movement offers valuable insights for enriching our sociological understanding of utopia in contemporary settings.

Guoxue and the Confucian Revival in China

Philip Scherer (University of Tübingen)

In my research on *Guoxue*, I analyze not only the development and history of *Guoxue*, but also the current situation of *Guoxue* and its popularization since the 1990s. The Confucian Revival and the ‘re-evaluation of *Guoxue*’ went hand in hand in the period after the reform and opening and both revivals are often regarded as a phenomenon that belongs together. ‘Grassroots *Guoxue*’ or ‘popular *Guoxue*’, which usually simply corresponds to China’s

traditional culture, plays an important role in today's *Guoxue* and complements the academic *Guoxue*. The movement of reading classics is closely interwoven with *Guoxue*, and traditional, private academies (*Shuyuan*) are partly supported or academically advised by *Guoxue* actors or their institutions. Although *Guoxue* basically takes the entirety of Chinese scholarship (*Jing-Shi-Zi-Ji*) as its basis and explicitly does not pursue a special position of Confucian classics, many *Guoxue* sites today are mainly characterized by Confucianism. For the panel, I would like to contribute my perspective on the Confucian Revival from my research on *Guoxue* and share my experience in empirical and evidence-based research.

Confucianism at the Nexus of Business Practices, Academic Research, and Political Instrumentalisation in Contemporary China

Matthias Niedenfür (Zeppelin University, Friedrichshafen)

This paper examines the network of Confucian entrepreneurs in China and the Chinese diaspora, drawing on over a decade of empirical research in Case companies and firsthand observations at relevant discussion forums on Confucian entrepreneurship in China and Malaysia. It discusses the revival of Confucian practices that began in the 1990s, leading to the rise of "Confucian entrepreneurship". While business ethics have traditionally been influenced by Confucian values, these practices faced disruption in mainland China but were upheld by diasporic communities. The paper highlights bottom-up movements like the revival of national studies, alongside top-down support from senior party officials and the role of scholars, such as Tu Weiming, in reintroducing classical tradition. The nexus of economic, academic, and political interests brings forth tensions between profit and ethical values, presenting "Weberian-type" dilemmas. Political figures promoting Confucianism as a source of national identity risk co-opting it for nationalist purposes. Certain companies have incorporated Confucian virtue ethics into their corporate culture, blending professional and personal spheres.

Constructing Discursive Assemblages and Infrastructures of Memory (IoMs) in the Actualisation of Hanfu Discourse, Narratives, and Practices

Andrew M Law (Newcastle University)

In recent years, a body of work has emerged on the Hanfu movement in China. While this research has played an important role in understanding the discursive aspects and meanings of the movement – including its own ideologies and ethnocentrism – there has been less research to examine the role of the *actualisation and materialisation* of the narratives of this group. In unpacking the practices of Hanfu enthusiasts, this paper looks at several discourses within the Hanfu movement relating to ethnicity, morality, behaviour, etiquette, nostalgia, gender and Han-ness. Specifically, it is suggested that in the actualisation of these discourses, the Hanfu movement constructs assemblages and infrastructures of memory relating to materialities, embodiment, performativity and affects. In making these arguments, this paper draws upon two empirical studies conducted on the Hanfu movement in the cities of Beijing, Chengdu, Shanghai, Wuhan, and Xi'an.

Slot 2: Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 11:00–12:30 (Hörsaal II)

Presentations:

From Empty Good Words to Situational Wisdom: The Ethnographic Relevance of Confucianism

ZENG Yukun (University of Michigan)

This paper explores a crucial methodological issue that challenges the contemporary revival of Confucianism: Despite the pervasiveness of Confucian discourses and symbols—facilitated by state endorsement and cultural consumerism—to what extent are Confucian slogans merely "empty good words" printed on street banners and propaganda materials? When, how, and for whom does the revived Confucianism matter? To address these questions, this paper engages with methodological debates on ethnographic studies of wisdom and develops a critical ethnographic sensitivity to the situational relevance of moral values in social life. This methodological approach is particularly productive in distinguishing meaningful concerns from rhetorical platitudes. The paper hones this approach by examining the textual and social dynamics of two chapters from the *Analects*: the "empty good words" effect of the first chapter in official and academic discourses, and the situational relevance of the final chapter within the grassroots movement of reading classics.

***Visions of Redemption for Uncertain Times:
Grassroots Neo-traditional Confucian Teaching in China Today***
Gil Hizi (University of Cologne) & SHI Ziyuan (University of Cologne)

This paper treats grassroots “Confucianism” as an affective reaction to anxieties amidst China’s socio-political reconstructions, rather than as a coherent framework for moral development or bottom-up resistance to state-coopted traditionalism. Focusing on an academy for “family education” in Zhejiang, we describe a neo-traditional and neo-conservative enterprise that, in line with transnational trends, addresses citizens’ resilience in a period of hyper-individualism, post-truth, and the so-called crisis of masculinity. The principal educator strategically abstains from classics-reading pedagogies while privileging hybrid spiritual practices, employing Confucianism as a mystified traditionality that could usher civilizational redemption. Temporally, the teaching nostalgically diagnoses a historical rupture between an idealized past, while, spatially, it positions “Chinese wisdom” against “Western modernity/religiosity.” This dual maneuver exposes the growing tensions featuring neo-traditionalist projects—between cosmopolitan spirituality and parochial nationalism and between individuated self-cultivation and statist visions of civilizations clash, all while reproducing citizens’ experiential dialectic of resilient pride and chronic vulnerabilities.

Lineage Power and Confucian Revival in Shenzhen, China
Ling Li (University of Erfurt)

The revival of Confucianism in China extends beyond state ideology into grassroots practices, shaping social relations, economic activities, and local governance. In Shenzhen’s urban villages, lineage groups actively mobilize Confucian values, rituals, and educational initiatives to assert cultural legitimacy and maintain socio-economic influence. Based on ethnographic research, this paper examines how Confucian revival intersects with urbanization, focusing on how lineage organizations use artifacts, rituals, and ancestral narratives to shape moral education, economic strategies, and community identity. It explores how Confucian-infused governance serves both as a state cultural policy instrument and a local power strategy within China’s dual land property regime. By applying theories of governmentality and symbolic power, this study highlights the resilience of Confucianism in shaping governance and social organization. This research aligns with the workshops’s theme by illustrating how Confucian revival functions as a dynamic force in contemporary urbanization and governance.

***Confucianism as a Cultural Subsystem in Today’s China:
Symbols and Action, Imagination and Time***
Sébastien Billioud (University of Paris Cité)

In recent years, the so-called Confucian revival in Chinese society has been increasingly documented by the scholarly community in papers, monographs and dissertations. Based on the wealth of data now available, the aim of this presentation will be to propose a few ideas about how we could try to understand and analyze the Confucian imagination that is now produced in certain circles at the grassroots level. The emphasis will be put both on the ways Confucian symbols mediate certain types of actions and on the new relationships to time generated by the emerging Confucian imagination.

“Shendu 慎獨” and (Re)construction of Chinese Elites: Past and Future
FANG Zhaohui (Tsinghua University)

The spiritual reconstruction of contemporary Chinese people has been a topic widely discussed since the 1980s. Yet, the spiritual world of the ancient Chinese elite was mainly constructed through self-cultivation, among which *shendu* 慎獨 is one of the most important practices (*gongfu*). Could *shendu* still function well today as a way of self-cultivation for spiritual reconstruction of modern Chinese and others (if possible)? Certain important documents unearthed since 1970s, including “Wuxing 五行” chapter in the *Mawangdui Silk Manuscripts*, “Wuxing 五行” chapter in the *Bamboo Slips of the Guodian Tomb of Chu State* and “Zhongni Yue 仲尼曰” chapter in the *Bamboo Slips of the Warring States Period Stored in Anhui University*, indicate in a new way that *shendu* 慎獨 is a specific self-discipline on inner heart-mind. Here, “*shen* 慎” should be interpreted as “*cheng*” (誠 truthfulness) rather than “*jin*” (謹 prudence), and “*du* 獨” should be interpreted as “what others do not know,” which includes both outer and inner aspects. This new interpretation of *shendu* will help us understand the spiritual world of ancient Chinese elite and the way to reconstruct it today.

Panel 10:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 14:00–15:30 (Hörsaal II)

Beyond Chinatown: Chinese (Hi)stories from Europe

Panel organiser:

Helen Hess (University of Zurich)

This panel shall focus on the histories of Chinese/Sinophone (i.e. Chinese-speaking) communities and stories told by Chinese/Sinophone individuals in a selection of European cities. Amsterdam, for instance, is home to an ‘old’ Chinese diasporic community with one of the very earliest China-towns in Europe, and mainly populated by Cantonese speakers from Southern China, but also from Indonesia, as it was a Dutch colony. Prato, on the other hand, with allegedly the highest rate of registered residents of Chinese nationality in Europe, is home to more recent, but very large Chinese/Sinophone communities, mainly from Wenzhou. Paris is home to different Chinese/Sinophone communities, including early migrants from Southern China, refugees from the former French colonies in Southeast Asia, as well as more recent communities, for instance, those from Northeast China. As recent research has shown, there is not one Chinese/Sinophone community in Europe, but many different ones. By focusing on specific cities rather than countries, we apply a sub-national framework, paying tribute to the diverse situations across Chinese/Sinophone communities in Europe. The situation of individuals of Chinese descent living in Europe varies strongly, depending on different factors and conditions that intersect with each other, such as their city of origin and/or of arrival, the time of migration, their class background, their age/generation, their gender, their mother tongue, etc.

Against this background, this panel opts to critically reflect on concepts such as Chinese diaspora, Overseas Chinese, and Sinophony, discussing their respective potentials and limits. Methodologically, we mainly draw from the anthropological concept of storytelling, creating a transdisciplinary dialogue between oral, visual, and text-based analysis. Combining individual stories with discourse and media analysis, we aim to think beyond juxtaposing official history versus individual experiences, trying to find new ways of framing the kaleidoscopic narrative(s) of Chinese/Sinophone individuals and communities in Europe. Such an endeavor is particularly important at a time when political fronts are hardening between global players—with Chinese living abroad being caught in the middle—media reporting is one-dimensional to a large extent, and hostility towards people of Chinese descent is on the rise.

Presentations:

Life Stories of Diasporic Chinese Women in Switzerland: Migration, Professional Trajectories, Networks

Helen Hess (University of Zurich)

This paper explores the life stories of diasporic Chinese women in Switzerland, with a particular focus on those working in the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) sector. Chinese migration to Switzerland is a relatively recent yet growing phenomenon, and TCM has become a significant economic niche for Chinese migrants—primarily as practitioners, but also as interpreters and entrepreneurs. Employing a storytelling methodology, this study foregrounds the micro-histories that emerge from individual experiences, examining how personal narratives—shaped by family ties, social networks, cultural and linguistic practices, and other factors—intersect with broader transnational dynamics. Special attention is paid to the role of gender in shaping these migration experiences. Through in-depth interviews, the study offers insight into the lives of Chinese diasporic women in Switzerland, highlighting their agency in navigating complex socio-cultural, economic, and political landscapes.

‘Chinese Migrants’ Children in Prato: Migrant Children, Double-Migrants, and Their Not-So-Chinese Dream

Giovanni Giamello (University of Aalborg)

In the city of Prato, Italy—where nearly one quarter of its youth as of Chinese origin—traditional labels like “second” or “third generation migrants” obscure the complexity of these adolescents’ disrupted trajectories between Italy and China. These varied paths produce destabilizing present experiences and uncertain futures. Aspirations reflect parental expectations and Prato’s ethnic economy: some embrace familial entrepreneurial dreams and opportunities in the local ethnic economy, while others perceive market saturation and doubt upward mobility. Challenging prevailing theories of transnational youth thriving between “two worlds”, these young people often feel lost between countries and cultures. While China does not represent an option by default, pathways instead

include will or resignation to life in Italy, aspirations for education or work abroad, offering valuable insights into the intersections of identification, education, and aspirations in transnational settings.

Invisibility of Chineseness as a Business Strategy in Korean Chinese Entrepreneurship within Paris's Homestay Industry

Xiaoying Jin (University of Heidelberg)

This study explores how Korean Chinese (Joseonjok/Chaoxianzu) entrepreneurs from Northeast China navigate ethnic identity within Paris's homestay industry. While ethnic resources often support migrant entrepreneurship, this research highlights the ambivalence in how these migrants mobilize their Chinese and Korean identities. Drawing on over two years of ethnographic research—including interviews, participant observation, and focus groups—the study finds that overt expressions of Chinese-ness can impede business success. Instead, many adopt a strategy of making their Chinese identity “invisible” to better align with customer expectations and social integration in Europe. Ethnic networks remain crucial for launching and sustaining businesses, yet cultural identity is approached pragmatically rather than expressively. This research contributes to scholarship on Chinese migration to Europe by documenting the rising role of Korean Chinese entrepreneurs and challenges culturalist assumptions in migrant entrepreneurship studies. It reveals the complex, sometimes counterproductive role of ethnic identity in shaping both business strategies and migrant incorporation.

Panel 11:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 16:00–17:30 (Hörsaal II)

Raum und Ordnung in Transformation

Panel organisers:

Anno Dederichs (Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou)

Ruirui Zhou (University of Hamburg)

In den Sozialwissenschaften leitete die Auflösung der Blockbildung des Kalten Krieges in den 1980er Jahren einen *spatial turn* ein, und die Veräumlichung löste als Methode der Postmoderne den dominanten Fokus auf die Zeitperspektive der Moderne ab. Unter anderem betrachteten postmoderne Ansätze Raum als von Macht und Herrschaft durchzogene soziale Konstrukte. Die Rückbesinnung auf Raum wurde begleitet von der Feststellung von Globalisierung und einer durch Kommunikationstechnologien und Mobilität verursachten Ortlosigkeit.

Spätestens mit dem Beginn der Coronapandemie in 2020 wurde ein Trend neueren Territorialstrebens sichtbar, der mit dem russischen Angriffskrieg auf die Ukraine 2022 noch einmal an Fahrt aufnahm und auch in Deutschland zu einer neuen Geopolitisierung beitrug. Die Wahrnehmung einer darin enthaltenen „Zeitenwende“ selbst weist aber eurozentristische Züge auf – und Staaten des so genannten Globalen Südens stimmen mit dieser Einschätzung nicht immer überein.

Gleichzeitig scheinen sich einigen „Permanenzen des Raumes“ zu bestätigen: Erneute Blockbildung zwischen Ost und West (etwa in dem unter Trump 2017 begonnenen Wirtschaftskrieg zwischen USA und China), Abgrenzung von Nord und Süd (etwa während der Coronapandemie), aufkommender Nationalismus und Streben nach hegemonialer Kontrolle des Raumes und über verbleibende Ressourcen. Die Konstruktion neuer Räume und neuer Raumdifferenzen treten dabei als synchrone Phänomene auf.

Diese geopolitischen Diskurse haben nicht nur Auswirkungen auf die Konstruktion von Räumen, sondern auch auf die Bedeutung der mit räumlicher Herkunft verbundenen Kategorien von Zugehörigkeit. Wirtschaftliche Räume erfahren eine geopolitische Umdeutung, so das bereits von De-Globalisierung die Rede ist; die Freiheit und Diversität wissenschaftlichen Austauschs wird unter territoriale Vorbehalte gestellt; technologisch ermöglichte transkulturelle Räume sollen territorial wieder entflochten werden und lösen digitale Migrationsbewegungen aus (Tiktok; Xiaohongshu); und die Gestaltung sozialer Räume wird von den Global Playern – allen voran USA, China und Europa – unterschiedlich interpretiert und erlebt.

Das Panel geht über die Diagnose gegenwärtiger politischer Raumverhältnisse hinaus und strebt eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Transformation von Raumkonstruktionen an. Das Panel ist offen für eine breite Palette von Beiträgen aus den Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften, Politik-, Wirtschafts-, Regional- und Sprachwissenschaften.

Presentations:

The Spatial Relationships of Guoxue

Philip Scherer (University of Tübingen)

Guoxue is the comprehensive, inherent discipline of Chinese studies in China, serving as an interdisciplinary alternative mainly to fields such as Chinese philosophy, Chinese history, linguistics and literary studies. Although Guoxue is still not officially recognized as a distinct subject by the Ministry of Education, it is valuable to discuss the disciplinary and spatial boundaries between Guoxue and the various alternative subject areas, which often overlap in content but differ in their methodological approaches. Furthermore, the existence of Guoxue raises questions regarding the spatial distinctions between native and foreign, traditional and modern, scholarly and popular. Reflecting on these questions leads to an examination of the social, political and methodological implications of identifying with 'Guoxue'. Central to these considerations is the definition of "guo" within Guoxue, which ties into the ongoing debate about the nature of China/Zhongguo as an ethnic, cultural, or institutional identity.

Deutschlandbild und mediales Deutschland-Framing in China

Ruirui Zhou (University of Hamburg)

Der Beitrag untersucht diskursanalytisch die mediale Konstruktion des Deutschlandbildes in chinesischen Medien. Während die deutsch-chinesischen Beziehungen lange vor allem durch ökonomische Verflechtungen und geopolitische Interessen geprägt waren, rücken zunehmend transkulturelle und soziale Austauschprozesse in den Fokus. Zentrale Bedeutung kommt dabei der medialen Produktion von Wahrnehmungen und Deutungsmustern zu, die Wissen und Images generieren, gesellschaftliche Bedeutungszuschreibungen prägen und so eine „andere Wirklichkeit“ (Reckwitz 2019; Berger & Luckmann 1966) mitkonstituieren. Im Zentrum steht die Analyse jener medialen Konstruktionen, die insbesondere die urbane chinesische Mittelschicht adressieren. Die zunehmende Sichtbarkeit Deutschlands in chinesischen Medien verweist aufwachsendes öffentliches Interesse, das kulturell wie politisch motiviert ist. Zugleich diversifiziert sich das Deutschlandbild durch den Bedeutungsgewinn selbstverlegter Medienakteure, was nicht nur zu pluralen Perspektiven, sondern auch zur Reproduktion von Stereotypen und zur Fragmentierung der Berichterstattung führt. Unterschiedliche diskursive Positionierungen erzeugen stabile, teils widersprüchliche Deutungsmuster des Deutschlandbildes im chinesischen Öffentlichkeitsraum.

Germanistik im Umbruch: Sprache, Raum und akademische Zukunft in China

Anno Dederichs (University of Guangzhou)

China ist auf dem besten Weg, eine führende Wissenschafts- und Innovationsnation zu werden. Gleichzeitig scheint in China das Interesse an Fremdsprachenstudien im Allgemeinen und an der Germanistik im Besonderen zu schwinden. Die führenden Universitäten des Landes verzeichnen rückläufige Einschreibezahlen in den entsprechenden Studiengängen. Ein Trend, dem die Fachbereiche entgegenzuwirken versuchen.

Diese Situation steht im Zusammenhang mit mehreren ineinandergreifenden Entwicklungssträngen: Zum einen spiegeln sich hier noch die Auswirkungen der pandemiebedingten Einschränkungen wieder. Zweitens zeigen sich darin die Folgen des gesellschaftlichen Wandels in China in den letzten Jahrzehnten und die Verschiebung der globalen Machtverhältnisse. Schließlich scheinen die technologischen und digitalen Entwicklungen die Notwendigkeit von Fremdsprachenkenntnissen zunehmend in Frage zu stellen. Auf der Basis von Interviewmaterial mit Wissenschaftlern und Studierenden an chinesischen Eliteuniversitäten werden in diesem Beitrag die Vorstellungen von Raum, Entwicklung und Zukunft der deutsch-chinesischen Wissenschaftskooperation im skizzierten Kontext konstruiert.

Panel 12:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 11:00–12:30 (Hörsaal IV)

Erinnerungskulturen in audio-visuellen Medien in asiatischen Ländern

Panel organiser:

Ümmü Zor (University of Bonn)

Die zweite Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts war von kriegerischen Auseinandersetzungen geprägt. Ehemalige Kolonialmächte und neue *Global Player* versuchten, durch militärische Interventionen ihren Einfluss in verschiedenen Gebieten zu erhalten bzw. auszuweiten, und stießen auf den Widerstand der lokalen Bevölkerung. Der Vietnam-

und auch der Korea-Krieg stellen beispielhafte Konflikte dar, welche über einen langen Zeitraum hinweg nachwirkten. Aber auch die ethnischen Konflikte auf Zypern beschäftigten die internationale Politik, bevor eine für die Konfliktparteien (un)befriedigende Lösung ausgearbeitet werden konnte.

Wie geht man heute in den jeweiligen Regionen bzw. Ländern mit diesen Ereignissen um? Auf welche Weise erinnert man an diese? Welche Gründe stehen hinter diesen Erinnerungspraktiken? Solche und ähnliche Fragen bieten spannende Ausgangspunkte, um zum Beispiel Spielfilme einer genaueren Analyse zu unterziehen. Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945) ist einer der wichtigsten Pioniere, die sich mit Erinnerungskulturen beschäftigten. Seine Arbeiten legten im westeuropäischen Raum den Grundstein für die Wissenschaft zur kollektiven Erinnerung, welche insbesondere in den 1980er Jahren florierte. Ein weiteres zentrales Werk ist auch *Lieux de Mémoire* von Pierre Nora, welches angesichts des damaligen Trends der Musealisierung eine breite Rezeption erfuhr. In den folgenden Jahrzehnten erlebten die *Memory Studies* theoretische Erweiterungen, zum Beispiel durch die Arbeiten von Aleida und Jan Assmann.

Wie sieht jedoch die mediale Geschichtsaufarbeitung in den asiatischen Regionen/Ländern aus?

Diese Panelsektion richtet sich insbesondere an Nachwuchswissenschaftler:innen, auch Studierende, die sich mit audio-visuellen Medien und ihrer Darstellung von Geschichte beschäftigen, um somit einen Beitrag zur Forschung im Bereich der Erinnerungskulturen in asiatischen Ländern leisten möchte.

Presentations:

Die Rezeption des Zypernkonflikts im türkischen Fernsehen am Beispiel der Serie Bir Zamanlar Kıbrıs/ Kıbrıs: Zafere Doğru

Ümmü Zor (University of Bonn)

Zypern, im östlichen Mittelmeer gelegen, war seit 1572 angesichts seiner geostrategischen Bedeutung ein wichtiger Teil des Osmanischen Reiches. 1878 ging die Verwaltung der Insel an das British Empire über, in das sie 1925 als Kronkolonie eingegliedert wurde. In der Folge verschärften sich die Spannungen zwischen den Bevölkerungsgruppen, die in den gewaltsamen Auseinandersetzungen zwischen 1963 und 1974 kulminierten. Trotz einer scheinbaren Lösung des Konflikts besteht dieser bis heute fort. Ziel des Vortrages ist die Untersuchung des Zypernkonflikts am Beispiel der türkischen Serie Bir Zamanlar Kıbrıs/ Kıbrıs: Zafere Doğru. Im Mittelpunkt steht die Forschungsfrage, wie die Vergangenheit aufgearbeitet wird. Welche Funktion kommt der Identität, welche je nach Zielsetzung politischer Akteure neu konstruiert wird, im Rahmen der geschichtspolitischen Narrativen zu? Der Vortrag gliedert sich in drei Teile: Zunächst wird ein ereignisgeschichtlicher Überblick gegeben. Anschließend wird im theoretischen Teil das Konzept des kulturellen Gedächtnisses erläutert, um im dritten Teil erinnerungskulturelle Aspekte zu beleuchten.

The Kuomintang and Republican China in PRC War Films and Historical Dramas: Shifting Narratives of Memory and Ideology

Lala Samedova (University of Cologne)

The portrayal of the Kuomintang (KMT) and Republican China in PRC war films and historical dramas has shifted notably over time. Early productions emphasized KMT corruption and failure, particularly in the Civil War. More recent depictions, especially of the Anti-Japanese War, offer a more balanced image, portraying KMT soldiers as patriotic contributors to national resistance. However, Civil War narratives continue to delegitimize the KMT, reinforcing the CCP's historical legitimacy. This paper analyzes representations of the KMT in selected PRC films and TV dramas, exploring how shifts in political and economic conditions have shaped portrayals of national unity and historical memory. It reflects on how broader societal and media changes have contributed to more nuanced portrayals of the KMT and Republican China, particularly in relation to themes of patriotism and legitimacy.

Panel 13:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 14:00–15:30 (Hörsaal IV)

Cultural Narratives and Symbolism in Heritage Practices Across Asia and the Middle East

Panel organisers:

Désirée Kaiser (University of Bonn)

Julita Oetojo (University of Bonn)

Yusheng Bai (University of Bonn)

This panel explores the intricate ways in which cultural narratives and symbolism shape heritage practices across diverse regions of Asia and the Middle East. By examining specific case studies from Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and China, the panel investigates the interplay between socio-cultural resilience, identity formation, and memory preservation in the context of heritage.

Presentations:

Ritual and Resilience: Socio-Cultural Narratives in Saudi Arabia's Heritage Practices

Désirée Kaiser (University of Bonn)

Désirée Kaiser examines Saudi Arabia's evolving heritage practices through the lens of ritual and resilience. In her presentation, she explores how cultural narratives and traditional rituals are strategically mobilized to maintain a sense of continuity and socio-cultural identity amid rapid modernization. The presentation examines how traditional cultural expressions are mobilized to sustain collective identity in combination with rapid modernization. Focusing on Saudi Arabia's development agenda, this presentation explores how rituals, ranging from tribal poetry gatherings and camel races to regional festivals like Janadriyah, are integrated into national strategies to promote heritage tourism and diversify the economy. By analyzing community-led practices that emphasize continuity, the research highlights how heritage functions as a socio-cultural bridge linking historical memory with future ambitions. This presentation reveals the dual role of heritage: preserving localized traditions while supporting narratives of progress and unity.

Woven Symbols: Cultural Narratives in the Ikat Textile Traditions of Eastern Indonesia

Julia Oetojo (University of Bonn)

This study explores the cultural narratives embedded in the ikat textile traditions of Eastern Indonesia, focusing on case studies from Rote Island and Belu. These regions, located in the southwestern part of Eastern Indonesia, represent interconnected yet locally distinct ikat practices rooted in ancestral belief systems and social identity. Drawing on fieldwork and interviews with artisans across these areas, the research examines how ikat motifs function as a visual language that encodes cosmological ideas, hierarchical relationships, and intergenerational knowledge. Ikat textiles play an essential role in life-cycle ceremonies such as births, marriages, and funerals, acting as spiritual and social markers within the community. In response to shifting economic demands and evolving ritual contexts, artisans have adapted traditional forms while preserving their symbolic integrity. The study emphasizes how localized textile traditions like ikat shape broader global understandings of cultural heritage, identity, and resilience across diverse contexts of cultural expression.

Memory of Sage King:

Worshipping Shun as Intangible Cultural Heritage in Jiuyi Mountains, South China

Yusheng Bai (University of Bonn)

The centuries-old worshipping rituals dedicated to sage-king Shun in southern China's Jiuyi Mountains, once diminished in the twentieth century, have been revived since the 1980s. Rooted in a shared symbol of "Moral Ancestor" and cultural narratives surrounding Shun's virtues and filiality, various levels of local government and Shun Descendant Associations from China and Southeast Asia continuously renovated the Shun Temple Complex, and revitalized the public ceremonies. The celebration was listed as a national heritage element in 2011, and a collaborative commemoration was promoted to include Macao and Laos in 2022. Drawing upon understudied archive sources, fieldwork visits and heritage discourse, this paper unfolds the current developments of worship ceremonies to Emperor Shun in a significant place of his recorded burial, shows its intersection with heritage making and touristic use, and argues that the celebration continues to evolve while anchoring cultural memory

and collective identity in a rapidly changing society. Together, these presentations reveal the shared and divergent mechanisms by which cultural narratives underpin heritage practices across vastly different contexts. By bringing together scholars working on diverse regions, this panel fosters an interdisciplinary dialogue on the ways cultural symbolism and narratives serve as pillars of heritage preservation and cultural resilience. It invites participants to reflect on the broader implications of heritage practices for socio-cultural cohesion and identity in an increasingly interconnected world.

Panel 14:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 16:00–17:30 (Hörsaal IV)

Labour and Global Production Networks in Asia

Panel organisers:

Michaela Douth (University of Bonn)

Oliver Pye (University of Bonn)

Kartika Manurung (University of Bonn)

The central role of Asia in the Global Production Networks (GPNs) that now dominate the global economy is well established. Asian countries are not only starting or central processing points for many GPNs such as the garment industry, palm oil, or electronics. East Asian and Chinese capital increasingly shapes downstream further processing, high-tech production, and research and development. This is connected to an ongoing and radical transformation of the built environment—the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative is the best example. Asian-centred GPNs are thus transforming Asian societies—economically, socially, politically and culturally. However, mainstream economic geography, with its focus on lead firms, suppliers, value capture and managerial perspectives often neglect or erase from the picture the lives and experiences of the workers who re/produce them.

This panel aims to unpack the black box of the businesses along the supply chains to look at the new proletariats across Asia. Which groups of workers are involved at different production stages and locations of different GPNs? What different labour regimes characterize the supply chain in different locations? How is social reproduction spatially different and linked to spaces of production? What crises and conflicts arise around the re/production of labour? What socio-ecological problems become visible in GPNs? What organizing initiatives and collective struggles can be observed? What transnational organizing strategies and Asian-wide networking are emerging?

Presentations:

Labour Geographies of Global Production Networks

Michaela Douth (Presenting author, University of Bonn)

Oliver Pye (Presenting author, University of Bonn)

Anne Engelhardt & Tatiana Lopez

This conceptual paper takes a look at Global Production Networks from a Labour Geography perspective. It gives an overview of recent scholarship that is starting to fill the gap identified by GPN scholars and labour geographers. Can we view GPNs as a history of interlinked struggles by workers in different places? How can we address the multi-scalarity of GPNs in our analyses? What different spatial dynamics such as place, territoriality, network and scale are at play? How does spatial agency of workers play out in the vertical nodes and horizontal embeddedness of GPNs? How can we integrate social reproduction theory and non-human nature into our analysis of GPNs? How far have we come in developing Labour Geography analyses of GPNs, and what remains to be done? We use different empirical examples of labour in Asian GPNs to illustrate our approach.

Layered Labor Regimes in the Philippine Oil Palm Frontier

Caroline Hambloch (Presenting author, University of Bonn)

Helena Perez Nino & Carlo Arceo

This paper examines labor regimes in agricultural global value chains (GVCs) within frontier economies, focusing on the spatial expansion of commodity frontiers. Drawing on qualitative research in Palawan, Philippines—an emerging site of oil palm production—we analyze how companies and labor contractors organize labor in a layered system that does not rely on overt discipline or coercion. Contrary to assumptions about frontier zones, we find that workers are integrated through fragmented employment relations and diverse contractual arrangements, but without the need for direct control. We argue that labor regimes in such contexts are shaped by both

local market dynamics and the competitive pressures of global production—what we conceptualize as the interaction of horizontal and vertical drivers. These layered regimes stabilize labor supply while limiting overt resistance. The paper contributes to debates on uneven development and GVCs by offering a more nuanced understanding of labor incorporation in commodity frontiers.

Intersectional Grassroots Organizing Strategies for Just Transition: Lessons Learned from Indonesian and Malaysian Palm Oil Plantations

Kartika Manurung (University of Bonn)

This presentation examines the socio ecological processes underpinning Global Production Networks (GPNs) in the palm oil industry, focusing specifically on Indonesia and Malaysia. It argues that GPN profitability is maintained through the externalization of ecological degradation and social reproduction costs, particularly unpaid reproductive labor predominantly undertaken by women. Utilizing grassroots organizing and empirical data research within the Transnational Palm Oil Labour Solidarity (TPOLS) alliance, the analysis emphasizes participatory water monitoring as a strategic approach to challenge pollution, land disputes, and occupational health risks. Employing a decolonial feminist framework, the presentation foregrounds intersections between labor exploitation, gendered precarity, and environmental issues. It advocates for a transformative just transition strategy that democratizes GPNs through empowering local community agencies and bridging environmental, labor, and Indigenous justice movements. The study illustrates that socio-ecological reproduction is a pivotal domain of exploitation and resistance within modern global capitalism, advocating for community-oriented structural transformation in plantation economies.

Panel 15:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 09:00–10:30 (Hörsaal V)

Japan in Germany:

Japanese Migration Patterns, Economic Impact, and Binational Initiatives

Panel organiser:

Vanessa Tkotzyk (University of Frankfurt)

Since the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, Japanese outbound migration finds itself on a downward trend. As a result, the number of Japanese nationals residing abroad dropped from 1,410,356 in 2019 to 1,293,565 in 2023 (Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2024). However, statistics show that some migration destinations were so predominantly desirable in the last couple of decades that large Japanese communities formed in certain places in the world – one of which being Germany. In 2024, Germany is still the main destination for Japanese nationals in the EU with a history of great Japanese investment, especially in the Rhine-Ruhr Area. As a result, the impact of the Japanese expansion on the local socio-economic landscape is clearly visible to this day. However, there is hardly any scientific literature or previous research on the Japanese presence in Germany as a whole, let alone on the driving factors of Japanese nationals and companies and their migration or relocation choices. This is mostly because the assumed homogeneous Japanese community in Germany consisting of expatriates and their families was perceived as an unproblematic model minority with little scientific significance and their numbers were relatively small in comparison to other migrants (Tkotzyk 2024). In a time in which Germany continuously struggles to encourage new foreign investment and attract foreign skilled workers, those who shaped geographic parts of Germany's main industrial area need to be considered. Thus, this panel sheds light on what Japanese (highly skilled) individuals and companies find desirable about Germany as a potential destination for their settlement.

This panel follows the Japanese diaspora's path in Germany from its beginnings in line with the economic investments in the Rhine-Ruhr Area over the diversification of the community. It combines micro-, meso-, and macro-level approaches, taking the economic perspective and the personal perspective of individuals into account while also considering facilitating factors such as state programs or local initiatives. On the whole, the panel aims to lay the groundwork for three main insights for policymakers and economic actors: 1) It sheds light on business locations in Germany as Japanese business hubs and thus provides insights into the branch strategies of Japanese companies. 2) It analyses the growing heterogeneous community, thus illuminating the needs of highly skilled Japanese migrants and Germany's desirability as a potential migration destination. 3) It considers binational programs and initiatives, thus giving insights into possible facilitating factors.

Presentations:

Between “Little Tokyo” and Being on their Own: Germany’s Desirability for Japanese Migrants

Vanessa Tkotzyk (University of Frankfurt)

Japanese expatriates were perceived as representatives of the whole Japanese community in Germany until the new century. Not only is the community more heterogeneous than expected, Tkotzyk’s (2024) findings also reveal that Dusseldorf holds a special position among Japanese communities in Germany. This presentation is based on my dissertation findings as well as semi-structured interviews with experts on Germany’s Japanese community and with Japanese individuals from the five largest communities in Germany and areas with a low population of Japanese immigrants. The interviews were conducted as part of the EU-funded project “AspirE – Asian prospects in (re)migration to/within the EU”. I will answer the question of what makes Europe and Germany desirable for Japanese migrants, discuss their geographical distribution and the main characteristics of the five biggest Japanese communities in Germany, and their advantages and disadvantages for Japanese migrants.

Binational Programs and Initiatives in Education and Science: Facilitating Factors in Municipal Exchange Through City Twinning Between Germany and Japan

Antonela Mihaljevic (University of Cologne)

After World War II, cities worldwide sought partnerships to strengthen connections. This includes binational programs in education and science, particularly through city twinning, between Germany and Japan. Focus is placed on the higher education sector, highlighting factors that facilitate successful academic and scientific collaborations, such as student and staff mobility. Despite pandemic-related interruptions, mobility between the two countries has increased in recent decades. Key to success are institutional support, shared objectives, and the involvement of universities, research institutions, and local governments, helping to overcome challenges like cultural differences, education systems, and lack of funding. Through case studies of successful binational programs, best practices and strategies are highlighted that have contributed to the growth of long-term academic partnerships. These initiatives not only promote joint research projects, cooperative educational programs but also the expansion of academic networks, which can be seen in the mobility of academic staff and students.

Panel 16:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 11:00–17:30 (Hörsaal V)

Intersecting Feminisms: Cultural and Social Realities of Chinese Women

Panel organisers:

Chen Qi (University of Freiburg)

Anastasia Kostromina (University of Würzburg)

Leshan Li (University of Heidelberg)

Chinese feminism has developed through complex historical trajectories, influenced by transnational ideas and shifting socio-political conditions. In the Late Qing Dynasty, male intellectuals framed women’s liberation as part of a nation-saving agenda, drawing on Japanese and Anglo-American feminist thought. Since the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party in the 1920s, feminist concerns were often subordinated to revolutionary goals and class struggles. The reform era of the 1980s brought neoliberalism and Western feminist theories to China, sparking critical reflection on the socialist feminist legacies of the Mao era. Today, grassroots activists and ordinary women, empowered by the Internet and an increasing awareness of regional and national identities, continue to reshape “Chinese feminism”.

This panel examines the intersections of feminism, marginalization, and identity in Chinese and global contexts through an interdisciplinary lens. By analyzing cultural representations and social dynamics, it explores how Chinese women across diverse settings resist traditional gender norms, navigate complex power structures, and redefine spaces of empowerment. Aligning with the conference’s focus on interdisciplinary exchange, this panel situates “Chinese feminism” within its historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts. It explores how Chinese women navigate broader systemic changes and transformations, inviting critical reflections on modernity, cultural identity, and power dynamics.

Presentations:

Performing Confucian Scholar-Officials:

How Three Courtesans Empowered Themselves by Redefining the Confucian Human Dignity

EnDe Tang (Humboldt University of Berlin)

The presentation employs in-depth case studies and draws on Judith Butler's gender performativity theory, exploring how three marginalized courtesans in late Ming and Early Qing, Li Xiangjun 李香君, Liu Rushi 柳如是, and Cui'e 翠娥, performed Confucian scholar-officials and appropriated their utterances to assert their dignity, challenging the moral and legal hierarchies as well as binary gender narrative. Using a reading against the grain approach, it critically examines historical narratives shaped by patriarchal power structures. This study not only highlights a distinct dimension of Chinese feminism but also offers an alternative interpretation of Confucian human dignity, refuting the notion that the dignity of scholar-officials was an exclusive gender privilege of elite men.

Reflections on Gender Roles in Late Imperial Chinese Women's Writings

Joshua Puttkamer (University of Freiburg)

Modern Chinese feminist research is a subject usually focused on present and recent decades, but nonetheless must not disregard its roots in the rich history of traditional Chinese culture that still shape many of the core issues women are confronted with in their daily lives. In order to develop a deeper understanding of women's roles in Chinese culture, feminist research thus has to work in tandem with Chinese gender history. A historical research approach particularly influential to feminist research resides in the study of women's historical perception of their gendered role in culture and society. Drawing on Ming-Dynasty women's mourning poems written to lament the death of friends or relatives and introducing resonance and dissonance as central concepts employed to analyse women writers' perception of the environment that they both shaped and were shaped by, this presentation will discuss how women in late imperial China reflected on central gendered problems.

Conquering Death:

Female Death, Tragedy, and Emotions in New Opera during the Mao Era (1949–1966)

Leshan Li (University of Heidelberg)

Between 1949 and 1966, xingaju (新歌剧, "new opera") prominently featured women-centered narratives. This paper, drawing on historical and musicological approaches, examines the evolving portrayals of female death—whether through killing, suicide, or self-sacrifice—as a lens into the ideological shifts within the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) cultural policies and gender narratives. In particular, it highlights how middle-level cultural workers, operating within the ambiguities of Party doctrine, interpreted and reshaped the revolutionary role of women. Each depiction of death, along with subsequent scenes of mourning—whether expressing sorrow or inciting vengeance—functioned as a form of emotional instruction, articulating the Party's changing vision of different political periods and the emotions deemed appropriate to them. Over time, the emergence of a quasi-religious resurrection motif on stage marked the symbolic death of tragedy in Chinese theatre. This retreat from negative emotion, accompanied by the rise of hollow miraculous imagery, foreshadowed the ideological climate of the Cultural Revolution, where affective intensity gave way to political religion and emotional vacuity.

Presentations:

Feminist Analysis of the "Leftover Women" in Contemporary Chinese Film and Television

Lingping Guo (University of Southampton)

This study explores the cinematic representation of "leftover women" in contemporary Chinese films through a postfeminist lens. Following China's rapid modernization and urbanization, many women delayed marriage in favour of higher education and careers. In response to this shift, the state coined the term "leftover women" in 2007, targeting unmarried, educated women over 27. Focusing on the nü hanzi (tough woman) archetype, this research compares two contrasting films: *Women Who Flirt* (2014), a commercial romantic comedy, and *Send Me to the Clouds* (2019), an independent feminist drama. Through textual and cultural analysis, it examines how

these characters negotiate traditional gender expectations—either through strategic conformity or resistance. While mainstream films often disguise traditional femininity as empowerment, independent films provide more critical and layered depictions of women's agency. This study contributes to feminist film discourse by revealing how postfeminist narratives are adapted within the Chinese cultural and ideological framework.

Reconstructing Chinese Womanhood in UK Higher Education

Qiao Dai (University of Glasgow)

My research examines how Chinese women international students in UK Higher Education (UKHE) (re)construct Chinese womanhood. Using life history and arts-based methods, I engaged 56 participants who often viewed themselves as embodying contradictory forms of “modern” and “traditional” Chinese womanhood. Their experiences in UKHE heightened their awareness of, and resistance to, the homogenisation, belittlement, restrictions, and contradictions embedded in prescribed ideals of Chinese womanhood. They also developed towards diverse, autonomous, feminist, and integrated subjectivities, with a strong emphasis on autonomy.

I conceptualise how their autonomy and the complex power dynamics between China and the UK shape their sense of these contradictions. I further identify three ways their autonomy interacts with heteropatriarchal and neoliberal ideologies in their (re)construction of self, where UKHE plays a significant, complex role. My research grounds these transformations within the participants' social contexts, envisioning new possibilities for Chinese womanhood that resist transnational systems of domination.

Love Under Global Capitalism: A Preliminary Online Ethnography of Chinese Women Abroad

Yunjia Zhang (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven)

This preliminary study explores how love, as a socially and historically constructed idea, is navigated by Chinese women living abroad amidst the pressures of global capitalism. Through online ethnography within the “Women Overseas” community, I investigate how migration, neoliberalism, and questions of legal status shape intimate relationships. Love, often idealized as pure emotion, appears intertwined with pragmatic concerns and unequal global structures. Based on participatory observation, this paper examines how women balance emotional needs and strategic considerations, including partnerships with Western men to secure residency. Influenced by Alain Badiou's notion of love as “minimal communism”, I ask whether love can exist outside commodification today. Rather than assuming a singular colonial-modern framework, I emphasize the situated, fragmented experiences of individuals navigating shifting expectations of gender, mobility, and intimacy. Combining personal reflection and anthropological inquiry, I argue for understanding love as an embodied and contextually shaped form of knowledge.

Slot 3: Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 16:00–17:30 (Hörsaal V)

Presentations:

Empowerment and Resistance:

Negotiating Chinese Female Migrants' Digital Dating Experience in Europe

Zixuan Zhang (Free University of Berlin)

This study examines Chinese female migrants' digital dating experiences in Europe through one year of fieldwork across multiple European countries. The research argues that digital dating plays a multifaceted strategic role in the early stages of migration. First, it functions as a “rite of passage”, enabling women to assert sexual agency constrained in mainland China and challenge gender norms. Second, it facilitates resistance through selective identity concealment or amplification, developing strategies against hegemonic Chinese femininity constructions and Western Orientalism. Third, it intersects with middle-class cosmopolitan aspirations, accumulating cultural and social capital for transnational mobility. Digital dating emerges as a critical “third space” for negotiation, self-construction, and empowerment, where Chinese female migrants navigate Chineseness, perform gender, and explore non-normative relationships, constructing hybrid identities beyond Western Orientalist and Chinese patriarchal frameworks.

Ways out: Migrant Domestic Workers Finding Their Community

Chen Qi (University of Freiburg)

The progressive neo-liberal turn in the 1990s in China has probably produced the largest-scale migration in human history: the job markets in urban areas draw rural residents like a magnet, thus producing the population that is

called “打工工人”. At the same time, the competitive labor markets have mostly either downgraded or excluded women: in the 90s, almost 60% of the laid-off workers were female. The 30 million of migrant domestic workers, mostly women, is the result of these socio-economic processes and the privatization and partial commercialization of reproduction. This study, based on ethnographic fieldwork, aims to reveal the exploitations that these women sustain, the community-based program designed to empower them, as well as the ethical and methodological dilemmas involved in the process. It is part of a bigger project Grassroots Feminism in Contemporary China, which strives to acknowledge and analyze different women’s communities in today’s China with a general vision of women’s liberation.

Reproductive Rights and Pronatalism in Russia and China

Anastasia Kostromina (University of Würzburg)

The topic of reproductive rights has gained significant attention in the US and Europe, where recent political shifts to the right have ignited heated debates over access to abortion and family planning. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the discourse on reproductive rights in Russia and China through the framework of biopolitics, focusing on how state policies regulate reproduction as a strategy for managing populations. Both nations legalized abortion and other women’s rights earlier than most European countries, implementing these changes through top-down approaches. Today, both countries are enacting pronatalist policies to address declining birth rates, framing reproduction as a national imperative. By comparing the socio-political contexts and ideological framing of reproductive governance in Russia and China—both operating under systems distinct from Western democracies—this study highlights both comparability and divergence, revealing how each state wields power over reproductive choices in service of national priorities.

Panel 17:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 09:00–10:30 (Festsaal)

The Indo-Pacific’s Contested Future: Identity Formation, Domestic Politics and Conflict Prevention Amid China-US Strategic Competition

Panel organiser:

Mark Philip Stadler (University of Bonn)

Igor Sevenard (University of Duisburg-Essen)

This panel assembles diverse perspectives and case studies to critically assess how the Indo-Pacific is navigating transformative changes amid the on-going China-US strategic competition. As China has been evolving from a rising power to a great power, its influence continues to grow, while US presence appears increasingly uncertain. This panel therefore grapples with the capacities and strategies of Indo-Pacific nations, as they confront contemporary challenges in an increasing multipolar world. Particularly, China in the wake of its self-proclaimed “peaceful rise” is of notable significance, as it has developed a governance model centralized on power and entrenched in authoritarian structures while too emphasizing its commitment to good governance and cooperation. These internal designs shape the country’s international posture, influencing both its Indo-Pacific diplomacy and Beijing’s strategic behaviour amid the increasing great power competition. These internal designs also shape the country’s international posture through externalization, from great power diplomacy and periphery diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific, to Beijing’s strategic behavior amid intensifying great power competition in the region and globally.

Simultaneously, the Indo-Pacific nations are facing an increasingly unstable environment. Intensifying territorial and maritime disputes have led to closer regional cooperation and the development of alternative structures to respond to this unstable environment. But how effective will these be in mitigating China’s assertiveness and an unreliable US partner in the future? While realist studies tend to focus on great power competition, they often neglect the strategies of middle and small powers. For this reason, this panel pays closer attention to such approaches as ASEAN centrality, AUKUS, the East Asian Community, and other forms of cooperation between Indo-Pacific states such as Indonesia and Japan.

The panel addresses questions central to current Asian and security studies: how does great power competition inform domestic politics and regional cooperation? How do narratives of legitimacy, status, modernity, and development shape the regional and global order? How do the Indo-Pacific states engage with institutional frameworks beyond or within either the US-led or China-led international order? Are there viable alternatives to the US-led framework, and if so, how are these alternatives being conceptualized and implemented? By integrating

conceptual and methodological approaches from various fields, this panel promises a nuanced examination of a contested order in the Indo-Pacific and the respective reactions of regional actors. Through roundtable discussions, paper presentations, and interactive exchanges, the panel seeks to foster robust academic dialogue aligned with the conference's goal of advancing innovative scholarship and enhancing interdisciplinary collaborative networks.

Presentations:

The Will to Lead and the Demand for Leadership: Beijing's and Washington's Contested Leadership in the Indo-Pacific

Richard J. Cook (Nankai University)

The dawn of China-US peer competition has ushered in a status quo of instability marked by mistrust, misperceptions, and uncertainty, compounded by competing visions and ambitions for regional order. In the Asia-Pacific, Beijing and Washington are locked in a contest for regional leadership. Leadership, however, requires both the will to lead and demand for leadership. Therefore, how do will and demand for leadership impact Beijing and Washington's efforts to provide regional order? It finds that while US will to lead is showing signs of ambivalence, China's will and ambition have grown markedly. Nevertheless, regional demand represents a stark contrast, as Washington's leadership is still considered more desirable to that of Beijing's. This divergence adds to the region's strategic complexity, compelling regional states to navigate the intensifying geopolitical and geo-economic juxtaposition of Sino-US influence. While the US remains an indispensable leader, China's rising influence continues to challenge existing assumptions about regional hierarchy, order and leadership.

Shaping the Future: The Global Community of Shared Future as Identity-Forming Construct or Sloganistic Narrative Strategy?

Igor Sevenard (University of Duisburg-Essen)

China's "Global Community of Shared Future" (人类命运共同体) is assessed as a strategic narrative embedded in China-US rivalry. Using social constructivism and strategic-narrative analysis, the study asks whether the slogan constitutes an identity-forming construct capable of reshaping Indo-Pacific norms or remains a flexible rhetorical device. It traces the narrative's production and diffusion through close textual analysis of leadership speeches, UN resolutions, Belt and Road white papers, and regional summit communiqués. Preliminary findings indicate partial internalization: ASEAN documents selectively adopt the lexicon to hedge against bipolar pressures, whereas Japanese policy papers reframe it within liberal order discourse to contest its normative pull. The paper links narrative competition to domestic legitimation and regional cooperation choices, contributing to the panel's examination of identity formation, domestic politics, and conflict-prevention strategies in a contested Indo-Pacific order.

Authoritarianism Goes Global?

Decoding Chinese Communist Party's Narrative on the Whole-Process People's Democracy

Li Rongxin (Jinan University)

In an era marked by intense competition between China and the West for dominance of democratic discourse, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) introduced the concept of the "Whole-Process People's Democracy (Quanguocheng Renmin Minzhu 全过程人民民主 WPPD)" in 2019. Within just a few years, a comprehensive discourse system spanning various domains including politics, economy, society, culture among others has been meticulously constructed. Remarkably scarce are academic studies focusing on the WPPD, with many simply dismissing it as an extension of the CCP's authoritarianism. However, this paper seeks to unravel the discourse construction of the WPPD via a quantitative investigation by following an analytical framework centered on keyword-associated words-text and contextual analysis, we endeavor to address the logic and substantiation posed by the WPPD, and its relation to the preceding democratic discourses in China. However, we refrain from delving extensively into its practical manifestations. We leave unresolved the question of whether, and to what degree, the WPPD may ultimately serve as a reconciliatory mechanism for addressing Chinese authoritarianism.

China's Peripheral Terraformation and Order-Building through Coordinated Economic Corridors in Pakistan and Myanmar

Maximilian Ohle (University of Tübingen)

Rising powers commonly seek to alter existing arrangements of the international system through the export domestic governance models. Among them, China is of particular interest, as it has embarked on order building projects in its peripheral zone, specifically within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While China has already established special economic and free trade zones in its domestic domain, it is also seeking to utilize this model to construct “coordinated economic corridors” abroad. To assess the viability of China’s strategy, this paper analyzes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), exemplifying how China has been canalizing domestic characteristics of its own economic policies into extrinsically orientated geopolitical and geo-economic projects, readapted to the regional conditions in Pakistan and Myanmar. It concludes that while downplaying that Beijing would seek hegemony, the Chinese authorities orchestrate these projects in a way that they befit to China’s ambitions to set rules and norms beyond Western-centric paradigms, enabling it to canalize Chinese power projection into the international system and challenge US preponderance.

Indonesia @ Indo-Pacific: ‘Bebas Aktif’ towards a Global Middle Power?

Mark Philip Stadler (University of Bonn)

The Republic of Indonesia’s ‘Bebas-Aktif’ (“independent and active”) foreign policy has its roots in Mohammad Hatta’s “paddling between two rocks” speech in 1948 stressing the need for Indonesia in its anti-colonial struggle to stay neutral between the US-led Western bloc and the USSR-led communist bloc in the emerging Cold War. Bebas-Aktif paved the way to Indonesia becoming a strong promotor of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of states, which had one of its founding moments in the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung. Amongst the 29 attendants of the conference were India and China, the former still being part of the NAM, the latter having observer status now. The conference broad about the Ten Principles of Bandung including: 2. “Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations”, 5. “Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations” and 7. “Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country”. What is the role of the Republic of Indonesia in the Indo-Pacific as an emerging global middle power still following the Bebas-Aktif policy today?

Panel 18:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 14:00–15:30 (Festsaal)

Exploring Highland-Lowland Dynamics in Asia: Agency, Diversity, and Governance

Panel organisers:

Nguyễn Hoàng Duy (University of Hamburg)

Melina Kaiser (University of Hamburg)

The diverse topography of much of mainland South and Southeast Asia reflects the broader dynamics of majority and minority populations in the regions: On the one hand, fertile lowland areas sustain large populations and economic development with their accessible terrain, which facilitates agriculture, trade, and transportation. In contrast, vast highland regions, characterized by rugged and elevated terrain, have historically enabled its populations to elude centralized governmental control by creating natural barriers against lowland forces. Consequently, the social structures of these regions differ significantly. Lowland areas tend to accommodate more sizeable settlements and facilitate government intervention through taxes or policy enforcement, contributing to these regions’ dominance in administrative and economic activities. Conversely, the relative isolation of highland areas results in smaller communities that tend to prioritize subsistence living and cultural autonomy, reflecting a deeply rooted resistance to external influence. As a result, significant power hierarchies exist within South and Southeast Asia, often privileging majority groups across various spheres, including society, culture, and politics.

However, while many prevailing narratives tend to depict highland groups as homogeneous entities, historical realities are far more nuanced. Nowadays referred to as ethnic minorities, these groups comprise highly diverse peoples with distinct histories and cultural identities. Furthermore, these groups possess strong agency, proactively shaping their historical trajectories rather than remaining passive subjects of dominant narratives. They

actively participate in negotiating the relationship with what is nowadays regarded as the majority population. In fact, numerous historical examples illustrate highland communities asserting their power and challenging lowland authorities, emerging as formidable adversaries capable of challenging or resisting central lowland rule. Consequently, lowland governments frequently sought to extend their influence into highland areas, driven both by the desire to extract resources and by strategic considerations, as securing control over these often unruly regions served to bolster the lowlands' overall security and stability.

This panel invites contributions that examine the relationship between flatlands and highlands, represented by different actors in various parts of mainland South and Southeast Asia and at different points in time. In particular, it welcomes analyses of the numerous attempts made over time to leverage the relationship between highland and lowland populations, along with the various strategies employed to govern them. These contributions collectively provide a multi-faceted picture that represents some of the diverse realities and histories that have, over time, intertwined to create a complex trajectory of flatland-highland interaction and majority-minority dynamics across mainland Asia.

Presentations:

The King Resides in Flat Land:

Correlation between Mountains and Plains during the 15th Century Lê Dynasty

Nguyễn Hoàng Duy (University of Hamburg)

This presentation explores the relationship between the mountainous regions and plains of 15th century Vietnam, focusing on Lê Lợi, founder of the Lê Dynasty. Since the 11th century, the royal court struggled to control mountainous areas due to clan dynamics, kinship ties, and cultural differences, leading to a reliance on local governance systems in remote regions. In the 15th century, Lê Lợi emerged as a powerful local leader, securing the loyalty of the mountain people – crucial for his resistance against Ming authority. Taking advantage of the difficult mountainous terrain, he effectively leveraged trade routes to benefit tribal leaders and consolidate support. Following his coronation, power shifted toward the plains, emphasizing centralized authority while still drawing on the resources and allegiance of mountainous communities. Despite this, conflicts persisted between the court and the northern highlands, with the dynastic records documenting uprisings. This interplay between mountains and plains reflects Vietnam's political landscape during this transformative period and also in later centuries.

Ecologies of Power: Forest Conservation and Highland-Lowland Relations in Vietnam's Central Highlands

Melina Kaiser (University of Hamburg)

Vietnam's highland-lowland divide reflects broader Asian patterns, where ethnic diversity intersects with spatial and political asymmetries. The ethnic Vietnamese majority dominates lowland regions, while indigenous minorities inhabit mountainous areas like the Central Highlands – a region historically resistant to state control and connected to transborder kinship networks. This presentation explores how forest conservation through protected areas has become a key instrument in managing highland-lowland relations during the late 20th century. It traces the transformation of highland forests from subsistence and spiritual spaces into regulatory landscapes through which the state extends its reach into upland territories. Conservation efforts, while framed in environmental terms, often function as mechanisms of environmental rule, regulating land use and restructuring upland livelihoods. Yet highland communities are not merely passive recipients of state policy. They engage with, negotiate, and at times resist interventions. This analysis reveals how environmental governance operates as a key site for understanding agency, diversity, and state-making in Vietnam's multi-ethnic borderlands.

Panel 19:

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 16:00–17:30 (Festsaal)

Daten, Deutungen, Decisions:

Die Magie der Zahlen und das Primat des Politischen

Panel organisier:

Wiegand Körber (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg)

Im Oktober des vergangenen Jahres war es dann endlich so weit: Übereinstimmend berichteten Medien, dass die Neuauflage des indischen Zensus für das Jahr 2025 geplant sei; 2026 rechne man mit Ergebnissen. Weiterhin unklar ist jedoch, ob im Zensus die Kategorie *caste* erhoben wird, die Frage ist umstritten. Befürworter:innen weisen darauf hin, dass solche Daten notwendig sind, um soziale Gerechtigkeit gezielt umzusetzen und Diskriminierung sichtbar zu machen. Gegner:innen argumentieren, dass die Offenlegung von *caste* gesellschaftliche Spaltungen vertiefe und Begehrlichkeiten nach zusätzlichen Quotierungen befördere. Der Zensus ist der Klassiker der Auseinandersetzung um einen Datensatz mit enormer politischer Bedeutung, insbesondere in den hochgradig stratifizierten Gesellschaften Südasiens. Doch auch darüber hinaus ist eine Zunahme von Diskursen um und mit Zahlen in vielen Politikfeldern zu beobachten, was vor dem Hintergrund eines immer größer werdenden Volumens an verfügbaren Daten nur konsequent ist. In dem Maße aber, in dem Daten als Grundlage von politischen Entscheidungen und zum Argument für Machtverhältnisse Prävalenz erfahren, steigt die Bedeutung der Daten selbst – und auch die Bedeutung derer, die sie sammeln, kompilieren und in Zahlen verwandeln.

Presentations:

Quantifying the Population's Scientific Quality:

The Evolution of China's Scientific Literacy Survey

Franziska Marliese Fröhlich (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin)

In 2006, China's State Council issued its first Action Plan for Improving Nationwide Scientific Literacy. Increasing public scientific literacy has since been a political target. Progress on that path is measured through regular national surveys, and publicized in the form of a composite index, the public scientific literacy level. Since the first surveys conducted in the 1990s, the dimensionalization of "scientific literacy," the indicators as well as concrete survey items have undergone changes, reflecting political priorities and academic discussions. My paper addresses these developments. Specifically, I look at political action plans, survey data and academic discussions to analyse how the concept of scientific literacy has been defined, operationalized and measured from the 1990s to the present and investigate the rationale behind these transformations. I argue that the evolution of the concept and its measurement reflects changing conceptualizations about the country's scientific needs and what constitutes desirable citizenship.

Von Daten zu Identitäten: Die indische Diaspora und die Macht der Zahlen

Pierre Gottschlich (University of Rostock)

Der Beitrag befasst sich mit der numerischen Erfassung der indischen Diaspora und analysiert die Praktiken der statistisch untermauerten Konstruktion von kollektiven Identitäten. Hierbei steht zunächst die politische Definition von Zugehörigkeiten zu unterschiedlichen Kategorien der indischen Diaspora im Mittelpunkt. Durch eine kritische Analyse der zugehörigen statistischen Erhebungen und ihrer jeweiligen Interpretationen soll dann die Frage beantwortet werden, ob und inwiefern Zahlen nicht nur als (vermeintlich) neutrale Instrumente der Erfassung dienen, sondern auch aktiv Identitätskonstruktionen beeinflussen. Hierbei wird untersucht, wie statistische Erhebungen Zugehörigkeiten definieren, festigen oder infrage stellen können. Daten sind insofern nicht nur bloße Abbildungen sozialer Realitäten, sondern tragen möglicherweise auch selbst wesentlich zur Konstruktion kollektiver Identitäten bei.

Die Verwendung von SDG-Indikatoren im indischen Föderalismus:

Aus der UN vor Modis Karren

Wiegand Körber (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg)

Der SDG India Index misst die Performance der indischen Bundesstaaten bei der Erreichung der Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) und macht sie untereinander vergleichbar. Das NITI Aayog, wichtigster Think-Tank der

indischen Zentralregierung, hat den SDG India Index als Instrument zur Erreichung eines kompetitiven Föderalismus konzipiert, in dem die Bundesstaaten untereinander um Best Practices und Ressourcen konkurrieren. Darüber hinaus ist der Index Grundlage für die Verteilung eines geringen Teils der steuerlichen Mittel durch die Finance Commission. Dem Index und seinen Messergebnissen kommt so eine politische Bedeutung zu, die sich auch darin reflektiert, dass die Diskussionen um den Messgehalt der einzelnen Indikatoren zugenommen haben und der Index in Verteilungskämpfen als Argument genutzt wird. Der Beitrag bereitet diese Gemengelage auf und verortet sie in der zeitgenössischen Entwicklung des indischen Föderalismus, die durch zunehmende Zentralisierungstendenzen geprägt ist.

Der Süden als Retter in der Not?

Die Position der BJP in Südindien bei der letzten Lok-Sabha-Wahl 2024

Clemens Jürgenmeyer (Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg)

Clemens Jürgenmeyer möchte aufzeigen, wie eine oberflächliche Betrachtung von Wahlergebnissen zu falschen Einschätzungen der tatsächlichen Stärke oder Schwäche der Parteien in der politischen Landschaft Indiens führen kann. Dies soll am Beispiel des Abschneidens der BJP bei den letzten Lok-Sabha-Wahlen in den südlichen Bundesstaaten demonstriert werden, wo einerseits die BJP auf den ersten Blick deutlich zulegen konnte, andererseits jedoch mit diesem Zuwachs die Verluste im Norden des Landes nicht spürbar begrenzen konnte. Insgesamt gesehen ist die BJP in Südindien nach wie vor keine starke politische Kraft, die ihre politische Dominanz auf gesamtdischer Ebene nachhaltig stützen könnte. Anhand einer differenzierten Analyse der Wahldaten soll dieser Befund bestätigt werden.

Panel 20:

Thursday, 11 September 2025, 09:00–12:30 (Hörsaal II)

Migration in Contemporary South and Southeast Asia: Causes, Consequences, and Emerging Issues

Panel organisers:

Rohini Mitra (University of Bonn)

Antje Missbach (Bielefeld University)

South and Southeast Asia, home to nearly 20 countries and more than a third of the world's population, have historically been hotspots for highly diverse migrant and refugee movements. Over the past century, conflict, war, and (violent) political regime change in countries of the region, including Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh have led to large-scale displacements. The majority of these displaced populations are also hosted within the two regions, including in Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, India, and Indonesia, among others. For instance: the multiple armed rebellions and military coups in Myanmar over the latter half of the 20th century has created numerous refugee groups in other countries of the region including the Chin, Karen, Mon, and most recently, the Rohingya. Next to the forced migration movements in South and Southeast Asia (and beyond), there are also large-scale labour migration movements, with notable migration corridors emerging between and across various countries of the region including Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal, among others. Over the past decades, labour migration in various sectors, and of varying skill-level has become an important part of countries' economic, socio-political, and cultural development. Last but not least, in recent years, long-term and periodic environmental factors that are instigated by climate change, such as rising sea levels, floods, and cyclones, have also started to shape patterns of temporary and long-term displacement within and beyond both regions.

This panel aims to explore causes and consequences of contemporary migration in the countries of South and Southeast Asia. We are particularly interested in contributions that address:

- Emerging patterns of migration within the region, and their socio-economic and political consequences for nations and the region as a whole
- Current developments in forced migration and displacement within specific countries, and the region as a whole
- National and regional governance, legal processes, and policies towards various migration movements
- Lived experiences of displacement and migration in contemporary South and Southeast Asia including particularities of gender, youth, elderly, disabled, and other marginalized groups

- Host-refugee relations and impact of forced migration movements on host societies, socio-cultural and religious solidarities
- Multinational/onward/transit mobilities of migrants and the consequences for migration governance
- Politics of resettlement, sponsorship, and return within and beyond the region

Slot 1: Thursday, 11 September 2025, 09:00–10:30 (Hörsaal II)

Presentations:

Locating Bangladeshi Migrants in the Feminization of Migration

Maruf Lutfur (Ruhr University Bochum)

Traditionally, international labour migration in Bangladesh has been male-dominated, with restrictive policies limiting female participation. However, women's migration—particularly to the Middle East—is rising, marking a qualitative shift as independent female migrants become key actors. This paper examines how migration reshapes gender dynamics, exploring both migrants and left-behind families' experiences. It investigates how structural factors, individual agency, and femininity norms influence migration decisions, often challenging entrenched gender ideologies. Key questions include: How does changing places change the women who move? How do they navigate structural, cultural, and religious barriers? How do left-behind spouses renegotiate roles after migration? Focusing on Bangladeshi female migrant workers, the study centres on their lived experiences, revealing the broader social implications of their mobility. This paper highlights the interplay between migration, gender norms, and empowerment, offering insights into the evolving dynamics of labour migration in Bangladesh.

A Circular Move:

Climate Change and Patterns of Labour Migration Journeys in the Indian Sundarbans

Sourina Bej (University of Bonn)

Emerging patterns of migration understood in the context of climate change impacts, has remained centered around debates focusing on voluntary sedentariness, planned relocation and the entangled mobility-immobility. In locating the paper within this debate, I narrate the circular movement of labour migrants from rural households especially within the Indian Sundarbans delta, an active UNESCO wildlife conservation site. I observe that for most this movement is manifested amid contested state infrastructure; migration then is predominantly translated as accumulation or climate adaption strategies. Yet when aspects of daily aspirations tied to one's social status and dignity to have a thriving life are documented, I discuss through the role of emerging community contractors shaping the labour networks. Therefore, blending interviews and field ethnographic notes, I contend that consistent attempts to sustain one's migratory trajectory: entailing decisions to stay, migrate and return can also co-exist enmeshed within the mobility-immobility debates around climate migration.

Planned Relocation and its Adverse Ramifications:

How Climate Refugee Rehabilitation Projects in Bangladesh Reinforce Marginalization

Ataur Rahman (Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences)

This study examines the rehabilitation process of climate-displaced people by the government of Bangladesh, which ultimately reinforces social marginalization. Qualitative by nature, the study first reviewed literature on 11 relocation (Asrayan) sites across different regions as case studies. In depth interviews were conducted with 25 beneficiaries from a newly built relocation site. Using Johan Galtung's structural violence framework, the study illustrates the gradual process of marginalization in three stages. The initial stage begins with climate-induced displacement, where victims develop new survival strategies embedded in rural settings. However, rehabilitation in a top-down designed 'barrack house' obstructs natural adaptation process and restricts their access to basic rights, livelihoods, and social mobility as they enter the second stage of violence. In the third stage, relocating in distant place reinforces their categorization as 'outsider' and intensifies their struggle to integrate into the new social and cultural structure, leading to more deepening marginalization under state-controlled programs.

Presentations:

Everyday Insecurity in the Life of Jumia in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh

UK Mong Marma (Ruhr University Bochum)

This paper will discuss the lived experience of Mro indigenous peoples located in the immediate vicinity of military landscape in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh. Mro peoples is one of indigenous groups concentrated in the Chimbuk Hill, a small portion of larger mountainous range of Himalayas, south-eastern hilly region, particularly located in Bandarban district, Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. Their displacement from land in the process of securitization, characterized by the presence of a large military force, camps, cantonments, and the establishment of an artillery training centre to enhance their capabilities. Analysing their subjective-collective lived experiences, I will delineate how various forms of insecurity people encounter in their everyday lives while living in their familiar place, which is exacerbating their existence in future.

The Perils of Imposed Masculinity: Refugeehood and Gendered Violence in the Bangladesh–Myanmar Borderlands

Benjamin Etzold (Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies)

Anas Ansar (Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg)

The paper looks at how irregularity has become a decisive survival strategy and mode of resistance – a “weapon of the weak” (Scott 1985) – for the persecuted Rohingya community in the Bangladesh-Myanmar borderlands. Based on empirical study conducted in summer 2024, we argue that irregularity in everyday life practices is not an exception in the refugee camps in Bangladesh or elsewhere, but a continuum that has long been enmeshed in their forever pursuit of identity and citizenship in Myanmar.

Transnational onward Migration and Rohingya Experiences in India and Malaysia

Rohini Mitra (University of Bonn)

Anas Ansar (Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, Freiburg)

This paper examines the drivers, dynamics, and responses to Rohingya onward migration, focusing on their trans-local and transnational livelihoods in India and Malaysia. Drawing on empirical research in both countries, it explores how historical displacement patterns, mobility infrastructures, and evolving socio-political discourses shape their migration journeys, labour market experiences, and create forms of onward precarity in onward migration.

Panel 21:

Thursday, 11 September 2025, 09:00–10:30 (Hörsaal IV)

China's Digital Infrastructural Power: Smart Governance and the Digital Silk Road

Panel organisers:

Ningje Zhu (University of Bonn)

Katrin Bonarens (University of Würzburg)

Sina Hardaker (University of Würzburg)

In an era of rapid digital transformation, China's evolving digital infrastructure—encompassing data-driven surveillance systems, e-commerce and fintech ecosystems, social media platforms, and e-government arrangements—plays a pivotal role in reshaping political authority, economic relations, and societal oversight both domestically and globally. At home, the Chinese Party-state integrates these socio-technical tools into everyday life, thereby reconfiguring boundaries between the public and private spheres and fostering new relationships between government agencies, corporate tech giants, and citizens. From the digitalization of public services to the incorporation of surveillance and memory-shaping mechanisms, these infrastructures expand and entrench the state's capacity for control while also creating spaces for negotiation, adaptation, and contestation among various social actors.

Beyond China's borders, initiatives such as the Digital Silk Road (DSR) exemplify how digital infrastructure investments—involving major technology players like Huawei, Alibaba, Tencent, ByteDance, and others—are impacting economic growth, geopolitical alignments, and development paradigms across Asia. By exporting technological

models, e-commerce platforms, and digital standards, China extends its influence over local markets and governance structures, raising critical questions about digital sovereignty, economic dependencies, and the emerging architecture of international relations. Governments in Asia are increasingly entering strategic partnerships to adopt Chinese digital platforms and infrastructure, influencing sectors from retail to education and shaping the future of regional platform economies.

This panel seeks to integrate these domestic and transnational dimensions, offering interdisciplinary perspectives on the interplay between technology, ideology, power, and economic activity. We invite presentations that explore how China's digital governance model not only redefines state-society relationships at home but also reconfigures power dynamics and development trajectories regionally and globally. Through case studies and policy-oriented research, participants will help deepen our understanding of how digital transformations simultaneously enable new forms of authority and avenues of resistance.

Presentations:

Fragmentation in Global AI Governance: A Comparative Analysis of China and Germany

Xin Jin (University of Bonn)

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a central arena of technological competition, prompting states to establish norms and rules that safeguard their strategic interests. This study addresses a central question: Why have China and Germany, two leading AI actors, pursued divergent paths in global AI governance? China focuses on exporting standards and norms targeting the Global South, while Germany expands its normative power using regulatory tools within the EU framework. It argues that the divergence between the two countries is not only driven by geopolitical tensions but also reflects profound differences in value orientations between their domestic epistemic communities. This research employs qualitative research methods, conducting a comparative analysis of China's and Germany's AI governance models through policy papers, legal documents, and expert interviews. It aligns with the panel theme by highlighting how China has leveraged the Digital Silk Road to export its governance approach through digital infrastructure projects.

China's State Gig Economy and the Hidden Work behind the Smart Authoritarian State in Shenzhen's Grid Governance

Ningjie Zhu (University of Bonn)

This article positions China's emerging "smart authoritarian state" within the wider theory of digital authoritarianism, explaining how AI, big data and algorithmic surveillance are systematically deployed to deepen Party-state control. A smart authoritarian state digitises governance yet, crucially, seeks intelligent, predictive capabilities that anticipate dissent and optimise public management. Alongside this concept we introduce the "state gig economy", where the state appropriates gig-work practices: short-term, flexible and precarious task contracts managed through algorithmic oversight. Drawing on literature that usually analyses commercial platforms, we reveal how Chinese authorities likewise mobilise on-demand labour for bureaucratic efficiency and continuous data acquisition. Empirically, the article dissects Shenzhen's "grid governance" programme, whose front-line workers function as gig labourers enabling seamless, algorithm-led monitoring. Contrary to official narratives of automation, the system paradoxically relies on large numbers of humans performing repetitive data tasks. Recognising this labour regime further refines understandings of digital authoritarianism and its material foundations.

Fighting the Japanese Invaders: Emotional Legitimacy through Making the CCP's History Experienceable

Frederik Schmitz (University of Bonn)

In its quest for emotional legitimacy, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is spreading an infrastructure of red memory bridging analogue and digital spheres. This red history aims to convince the people through the history of the CCP. Performatively "fighting" Japanese means visitors become part of the curated memory by interacting with their senses and bodies. Digital infrastructures also disseminate related content digitally, where netizens share and consume their experiences. The interplay between state-affiliated memory sites and customers becoming part of the propaganda industry by sharing their experiences on social media platforms. By doing this, the visitors first (re-)produce the intended messages and, second, advertise for others to join these shows. Building on participatory observation, interview, and online data, this paper examines the interplay between analogue and digital re-experiencing historical episodes, asking about emotional mechanisms that create emotional legitimacy for the CCP's rule.

The Rise of the Semiperiphery? China's Digital Expansion and Malaysia's Digital Dependency in the Age of Techno-Geopolitics

Yen-Chi Lu (University of Bonn)

There is a paucity of research that examines the Global South's perception and approach to China's digital expansion. This paper selected Malaysia as a case study to examine how Chinese ICT companies are reshaping the dependence position of a semiperipheral country in the digital realm. Drawing on expert interviews and the Digital Dependence Index (DDI), this paper argues that Chinese ICT companies face several structural constraints, including local conditionalities regarding various regulations, Malaysia's ability to diversify its suppliers, and the geo-economic condition favoring Malaysia's bargaining power.

Panel 22:

Thursday, 11 September 2025, 09:00–10:30 (Hörsaal V)

Resisting the Violence of Development: Stories from Indonesia

Panel organisers:

Venansius Haryanto (University of Bonn)

Tamara Soukotta (Erasmus University Rotterdam & Radboud University)

During the two rounds of leadership of the Indonesian president Joko Widodo (Jokowi), several parts of Indonesia experienced the violent cost of the Indonesian government's ambitions for their Mega Development Projects. These projects were promoted as the government's good intentions-deeds to further develop and modernize the country, particularly in the eastern part, assumed to be less developed, to bring Indonesia to the same level as the so-called developed countries. In reality, more often than not these projects were experienced by the communities they aimed to develop as violence that brought suffering to the people in the form of land dispossession, displacements, uprootedness, even natural disaster. In the face of the development projects imposed on them and the violent consequences of those projects, the people show resistance in various forms: protests, dialogues, using their bodies to stop the projects, even co-creating alternatives for the government's plan. Many of these are still ongoing.

One of the examples of the resistance to the violence of those development projects under Jokowi's administration is the resistance of Indigenous Manggarai communities in and around Labuan Bajo, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Labuan Bajo itself is one of the so-called "Ten New Balis" in Indonesia, and it is part of the national investment project in the tourism sector. This has been documented in a series of documentaries released in 2023, titled "Dragon for Sale" by Ekspedisi Indonesia Baru. Following the release of this documentary, two of this panel's convenors have argued in our recent article, "The Indonesian (Modern/Colonial) Dream of Development" that development projects imposed on the Indigenous Manggarai communities are in fact manifestations of Anibal Quijano's coloniality of power, and therefore inherently racist.

In this panel, from our starting point in Indonesia, we aim to shed light on the stories that speak of the violence brought by development projects in the context of Indonesia.

Presentations:

Beyond Conventional Journalism: Local Media and Radical Democracy

Adolfus Frederik (University of Ghent)

This paper discusses the role of media in actively supporting the indigenous movement against the state-led geothermal development project in Flores, Indonesia, using the case study of Flores, an independent local media. Combining online observation and in-depth interviews with journalists, editors, readers, and the local community, I argue that Flores plays a crucial role in the community movement by producing counter-narratives, strengthening political subjectivity, and creating political linkage among different movement actors. Flores employs a narrative centered on the local community's living space, emphasizing the interaction between humans and the environment. Beyond conventional journalism, it also actively engages in network-building and collective action with national media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), youth, and local communities. The network is facilitated through spaces of encounter such as Flores's WhatsApp group: Flores-news and updates, and Forum Titik Temu through which all parties share their knowledge and experience to strengthen their political linkage.

Lambo-Mbay Dam: Space, Place and Violence

Muntaza (University of Bonn)

Indonesia, during Joko Widodo's administration, has focused on infrastructure development. One of the projects was dam development. The government targeted 69 units of dam construction from 2014 to 2024. One of them is Lambo-Mbay Dam in Nusa Tenggara Timur Province. After more than 5 years dealing with resistance, violence, and conflict, the state project was finally built. Literature, mostly focusing on the economic or public participation, resistance and state violence, and political actor contestation at the local-global level, has yet missed exploring the space and place. My research shows how space and place significantly influence state persistence and violence for the development project.

The Green Coloniality and the Pacification of Indigenous Resistance in Flores Island, Eastern Indonesia

Venansius Haryanto (University of Bonn)

As part of its commitment to promoting a green development agenda, the Indonesian government has designated Flores, a small island in eastern Indonesia, as an investment zone for tourism and renewable energy. Although these developments are portrayed as models of sustainable development, they face strong resistance from indigenous community. Rooted in their indigenous worldview and broader critiques of environmental, social, and economic harm, the resistance seeks to unpack the development's claim of sustainability. However, various strategies have been employed to delegitimize indigenous resistance, ranging from coercion to more subtle forms of pacification. Drawing on the author's deep engagement with the issue, this presentation focuses on elaborating the government and corporation strategy to pacify indigenous resistance, accordingly, continuously impose the project on the community's living space. By examining these dynamics, the paper argues that green coloniality persists through the suppression and management of Indigenous opposition in the name of sustainability.

Development and Racism in Indonesia: In between Coloniality and Resistance/(Re)-Existence

Tamara Soukotta (Erasmus University Rotterdam & Radboud University)

As a paradigm invented following the process of decolonisation during which European colonisers were forced to leave their colonies, the very idea of Development is inherently racist. The racism in the underlying assumption of Development that those in the Western (former coloniser) world are (1) more developed than the rest of the world, and (2) capable of and therefore responsible to assist those who are less developed to be able to live a "decent, satisfying life" (Lepenies 2008: 206) according to the standard of Development. These racist assumptions then translate to the Development Project aiming at saving those deemed underdeveloped or less developed, at any cost – often at the cost of erasing their own ways of being and existing. This presentation looks into resistances of grassroot communities in Indonesia toward the violence of the Development Project imposed upon them as decolonial praxes resisting coloniality manifested in Development Project that are racist in both its assumptions and implementation.