

19/20 November 2016

Hosted by the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna (Austria)  
Spitalgasse 2, Court 2, Entrance 2.3, 1090 Vienna



*CHESS (China and the Environment in the Social Sciences) and the Department of East Asian Studies at the University of Vienna welcome you to the*

# CHESS Workshop 2016

## Local Climate Change Governance & Resource Management in China

**Keynote speaker:**

Wang Yongchen, Green Earth Volunteers

## Welcome Address

Issues revolving around climate change governance and resource management activities in China have ignited heated debates both in the country itself and abroad. Beyond doubt, China faces a multitude of environmental challenges – ranging from climate change-related impacts such as soil contamination, water scarcity and forest fires, to the overexploitation of natural resources. These problems have been tackled from two sides. On the one hand, the Chinese state – at both the central and local level – has implemented top-down remedial action by issuing regulatory and policy measures. On the other hand, civil actors and other stakeholders have initiated bottom-up approaches to tackle these challenges, in particular in urban areas. Given these impetuses from above and below, the question is how these approaches have affected climate change governance and resource management activities at the local level. Is the resulting dynamic one of conflict, or rather one of cooperation?

CHES (China and the Environment in the Social Sciences) has organized the workshop with the purpose to discuss current and pressing issues on climate change and resource scarcity in China and to foster exchange between international scholars in this research field. We are proud that we were able to gather a group of excellent researchers and practitioners from all over Europe, the US, China, and Taiwan at our university. The workshop will open with a keynote speech by Wang Yongchen, an internationally renowned Chinese environmentalist and journalist, who focusses on the media's role in water conservancy. The subsequent four panels over the upcoming one and half days are an exciting mixture of topics revolving around water politics, resource recycling, community development, and energy politics. We hope that discussions will also lead in future collaborations and joint activities.

We wish everybody an enjoyable conference and fruitful discussions!

CHES (**C**hina and the **E**nvironment in the **S**ocial **S**ciences)

## Workshop Schedule

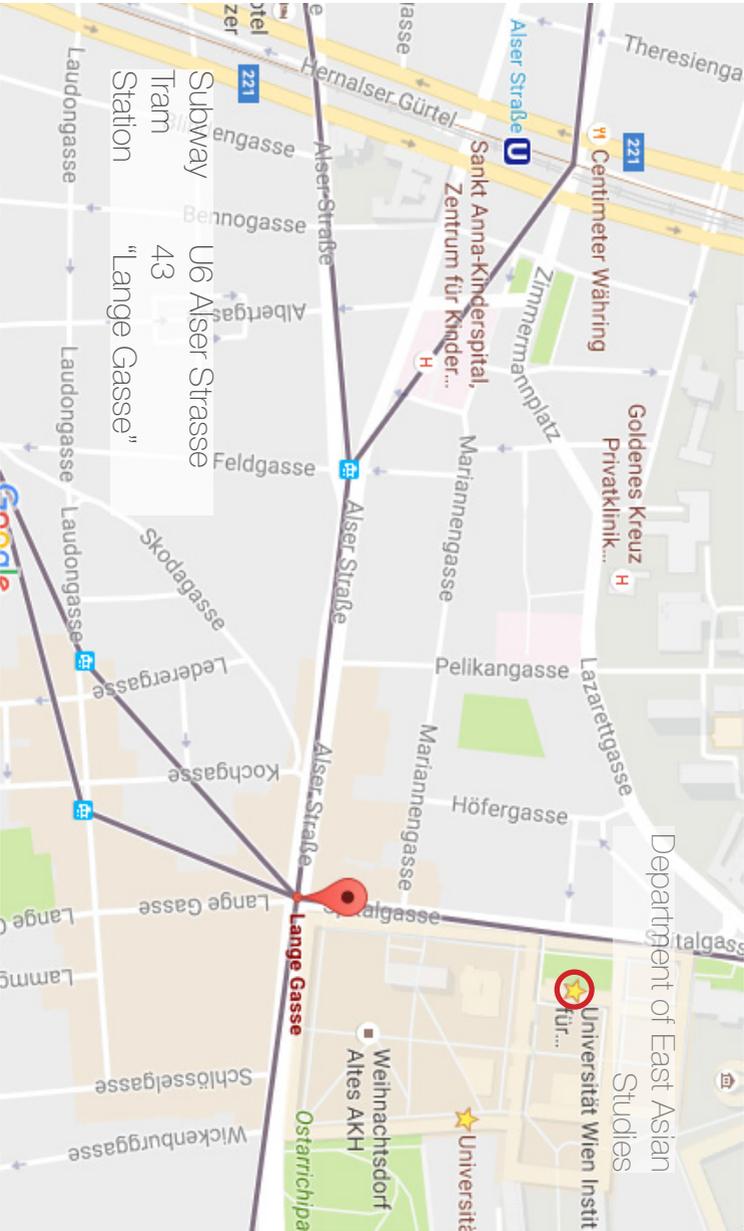
Saturday 19 November 2016	
8.30-9.00	Registration
9.00-9.30	<b>Welcome Speech</b>
9.30-10.30	<p><b>Keynote speech</b></p> <p>Yongchen Wang: "China's water crisis: The role of media in water conservancy."</p>
10.30-11.00	Coffee break
11.00-13.00	<p><b>Panel 1 NON-STATE ACTORS AND AGENCY</b>  <b>CHAIR: Benjamin Steuer, BOKU University / University of Vienna</b></p> <p>Emina Popovic: "China's advocacy groups' influence on decision-making in environmental policy issues."</p> <p>Jan Philipp Laurinat: "Green university development in China – student perceptions of sustainability-related initiatives at Peking University."</p> <p>Eva Ignatuschtschenko: "Informal e-waste sector in China and challenges for the effective integration of the informal into the formal system."</p> <p>Liang-Yu Chen: "The role of experts in China's local climate change governance: A case study of Guangdong Province."</p>
13.00-14.30	Lunch
14.30-16.30	<p><b>Panel 2 STATE ACTORS AND RESPONSIVENESS</b>  <b>CHAIR: Sabrina Habich, University of Vienna</b></p> <p>Yanzhu Zhang: "Mind the gap: Balancing growth and water security in China promoting water quality trade in China."</p> <p>Benjamin Steuer: "Is China's regulatory system on urban household waste collection effective? An evidence based analysis on the evolution of formal rules and informal practices."</p> <p>Yongdong Shen &amp; Anna Lisa Ahlers: "<i>Consultative Authoritarianism</i> at the Grassroots? Facilitating Industrial Air Pollution Control in China by Staging 'Triangular Talks'."</p> <p>Iza Yue Ding: "Responding to environmental challenges: Symbolic performance in China's local governance."</p>
16.30-17.00	Coffee break



17.00-18.30	<b>Panel 3 URBAN STUDIES</b> <b>CHAIR: Anna Holzmann, University of Vienna</b>  Julia Aristova: "The role of local governance in rolling out low carbon technology in China."  Nele Fabian: "Refuse as a Resource? 20th Century Urban Development and Historical Strategies of Waste Management in Hong Kong and Shanghai."  Tia Kansara: "Community and barefoot architecture in China: Community development initiatives in the Ju'er Hutong neighbourhoods."
19.00-	Dinner

Sunday 20 November 2016	
9.00-10.30	<b>Panel 4 FILM AND REPRESENTATION</b> <b>CHAIR: Thomas Immervoll &amp; Julia Marinaccio, University of Vienna</b>  Yongchen Wang: Film screening  Kiu-wai Chu: "When Ecocinema Meets Environmental Governance."
10.30-11.00	Coffee break
11.00-12.30	Wrap-up session
12.30	Lunch

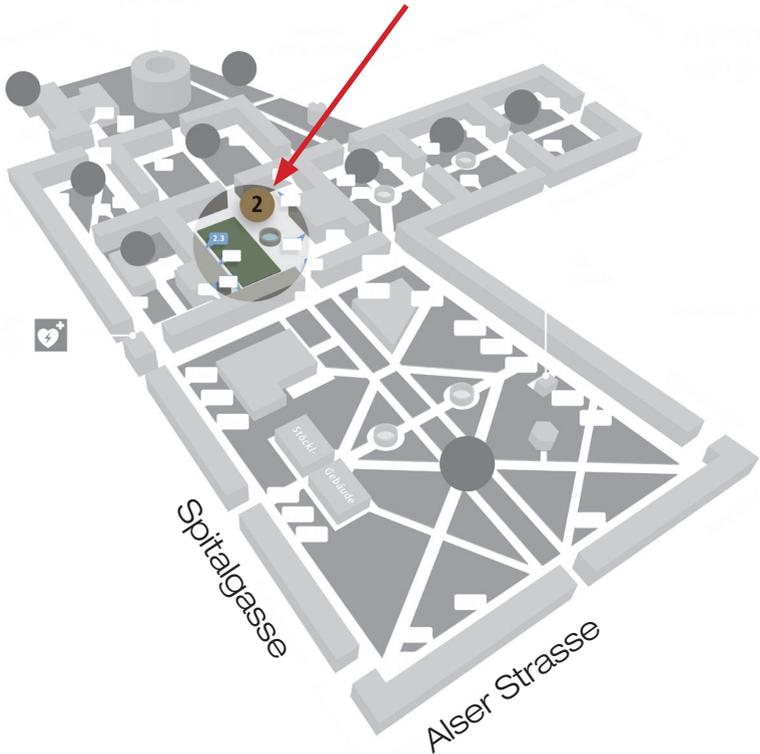
Map of Surroundings





Campus Map

Department of East Asian Studies  
Spitalgasse 2, Court 2, Entrance 2.3



Tram station "Lange Gasse" via  
43, 44, 5, 33 



QR: Original map

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## Keynote speaker

*Wang Yongchen*

Green Earth Volunteers

### China's water crisis: The role of media in water conservancy

Wang Yongchen is the founder and president of the environmental NGO Green Earth Volunteers and a former senior reporter for China National Radio. She initiated and hosted the two pioneering radio programs “Classroom on Wednesday” and “Journalist’s Salon”. Wang has won several national and international journalism awards, such as the Prize for Environmental News in 1994, and the Earth Award in 2001. Furthermore she was selected as the World Environment Figure by Conde Nast Traveler in 2004. Over the past decades, she has incessantly reported on and engaged with a wide range of environmental issues in China, such as hydropower dam construction at the Nujiang River in Western China and air pollution in Inner Mongolia.

## PANEL 1 - NON-STATE ACTORS AND AGENCY

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### China's advocacy groups' influence on decision-making in environmental policy issues

The empirical analysis of five case studies in the field of environmental protection, triangulated with interest groups self-assessment of influence, are set out to investigate the influence of both business advocacy groups and citizen groups on policy-making. 56 interviews are conducted with NGOs, business associations, scholars and journalist that took part in policy-making in selected policy-events, or attempted to create public opinion related to the events. Policy process method has been used to examine advocacy groups policy preferences, their advocacy strategies, developments through the process and final policy-outcomes. Statements of the informants that took part in selected policy-events were scrutinised and complemented with publicly available sources and documents provided by interviewees. The findings indicate that the success of NGO' direct lobbying remains limited, yet it shows that through their successful use of voice strategies their positions, to certain extent, get reflected in environmental policy-outcomes. Business interest groups, on the other hand, are proved to be influential even in the difficult lobbying conditions. By indicating bias towards business groups, even in the very salient policy-issues, the findings of this study are pointing out that Chinese government's priority is still given to economic development over environmental protection goals. Keywords: Environmental politics in China, Business actors, Citizen groups, Influence, Policy-making in China.



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## Green University Development in China – student perceptions of sustainability-related initiatives at Peking University

A growing number of Chinese higher education institutions (HEIs) promote “green university development” (绿色大学建设, GUD), i.e. they increasingly strengthen the topic of sustainable development in teaching and research and make efforts to green their campuses, reduce their ecological footprint as well as to raise awareness among students. Peking University (PKU) can be considered an exemplar for GUD in China. My paper will try to enrich the existing body of literature on sustainability in HEIs by answering the following questions. Firstly, how does PKU approach GUD? Who are the main actors? How do PKU’s efforts tie in with China’s national strategy of moving towards an “ecological civilization”? Secondly, how do students perceive and evaluate these sustainability-related initiatives? Do different student groups’ perceptions vary? Do perceptions change in the course of time students spend at PKU? Based on interviews and a questionnaire-survey conducted at PKU during fieldwork in 2016, I will draw the following conclusions: PKU’s official GUD agenda is essentially similar to international mainstream. There has been a wave of GUD at PKU around a decade ago which recently abated significantly. PKU’s top-down initiatives, e.g. campus planning, strongly depend on top-leadership’s determination. Within PKU’s administration, responsibilities regarding GUD are split up among several departments. This organizational set-up impedes progress. PKU student clubs’ various bottom-up projects constitute valuable opportunities for student participation in GUD. In general, PKU students are supportive of GUD-related initiatives on campus. However, many projects’ relatively weak publicity (宣传) and an insufficient incentive structure often impede students’ active participation. Subject of study and time spent at PKU do not have a significant influence on students’

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## Informal e-waste sector in China and challenges for effective integration of the informal into the formal system

The exponentially growing production of electronic appliances across the globe, alongside the increasing depletion of natural resources, has rendered electronic waste (e-waste) a resource rather than a waste management challenge. China, as one of the world's main recipients of e-waste, is facing a twofold burden. Not only are increasing amounts of e-waste generated domestically, but there is also a continuous flow of e-waste imported from other countries and regions, such as the United States, Japan, South Korea and the European Union, despite an import ban that was established in 2000. E-waste entering the country through illegal import is handled entirely by the informal recycling sector, which also covers the majority of the nationally generated e-waste. Recycling practices in the informal sector are predominantly at primitive levels and involve crude techniques, such as the open burning of printed circuit boards and wires to recover copper. These rudimentary techniques not only pose serious harm to the environment and public health, but they also result in inefficient recycling and resource recovery results. While the Chinese government has put substantial efforts into establishing a formal e-waste collection and treatment system, the integration of informal recyclers into that system remains a challenge. This paper analyses the structure of the informal e-waste sector in China and challenges that impede the effective integration of the informal into the formal system. It also identifies best practices domestically and internationally that may be applied to address these challenges and establish a sustainable e-waste management system in the country, which will allow China to recover valuable resources from e-waste and mitigate harm to the environment and human health.



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## The role of experts in China's local climate change governance: A case study of Guangdong Province

As the largest greenhouse-gas emitter and energy consumer in the world, China has received both external and internal pressures to take actions for curbing climate change. While researchers' huge efforts being paid to explain the discursive transformation of China in global climate politics, not only China's translation of its international commitments into domestic policies, but also the actual responses from the bottom are still expected for further exploration. Considering the experts' crucial role in the domain of climate politics has been recognized by scholarly work from many fields, how do experts' engagement in China's local climate governance is also required further investigation. Therefore, this paper aims to explain how local actors formulate and implement China's local climate policies. In case study of climate governance in Guangdong Province, this paper analyzes how the local experts co-produce climate policy with the authorities. Based on the primary data from interviews conducted in 2016 and the secondary data from relevant literature, the paper firstly gives an overview of the composition of experts which are highly involved in climate governance in Guangdong Province. Secondly, three policy pilots are selected as examples to illuminate how experts contribute to local climate policies: 1) the work of emission inventory, 2) the low-carbon province initiative, and 3) the emission trading scheme (ETS) in Guangdong Province. Lastly, the knowledge/power relations in climate governance in Guangdong Province, and its implications for understanding the central-local relations in Chinese climate politics will be in discussion.

## PANEL 2 - STATE ACTORS AND RESPONSIVENESS

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### Mind the gap: Balancing growth and water security in China promoting water quality trade in China

China's efforts to achieve water security stand at a crossroads. Decades of investment in infrastructure have dramatically improved flood control in major river basins, and major projects like the South-North Water Transfer Project have to a certain extent alleviated water scarcity concerns in parts of north China. In recent decades, the Chinese government has embarked on an ambitious series of policy experiments, including one of the world's largest pilot programs for water rights trading, extensive eco-compensation schemes, and recent experiments with integrated urban flood management. However, despite these investments and innovations, the effects of rapid growth, climate change, and urbanization present a three-dimensional challenge to water security in China. China's economic achievement over the past three decades is doubtlessly outstanding in the world's economic history. Yet, the fast growth driven by large-scale industrialization and urbanization is also coupled with severe environmental pollutions such as widespread water quality deterioration. Recent research has confirmed 70% of major surface water systems have suffered pollution. According to the National Environmental Statistics (2008), 20.8% of seven major rivers suffer extremely poor water quality and over half of the water regions are below grade III water quality. Water quality in China is much worse than 20 years ago. One of the major contributions of economics to environmental pollution control is the emission trading which can achieve environmental targets at lower social cost compared to traditional non-tradable and technology-based effluent control approach. Water Quality Trading (WQT) has been developed as an economic mechanism for water quality control, particularly total pollutant discharge. The WQT has been piloted and further developed in several countries around the world. Nevertheless, its application in China is still constrained by legislation gaps, policy conflicts, market immaturity and administration complexity. This research aims at understanding the current obstacles and suggesting the way forward.



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## Is China's regulatory system on urban household waste collection effective? An evidence based analysis on the evolution of formal rules and informal practices

As a consequence of the increase in environmental challenges in the People's Republic of China (PRC), research on the Chinese environmental governance system has surged in recent years. However, when it comes to academic inquiry into pollution management in urban areas of China, the field of municipal solid waste (MSW) management has received relatively little attention. This article will try to shed light on this subject, with dominant focus on the collection of urban household waste. Within this subject matter, the dynamic competition between formal and informal systems for obtaining and trading valuable recyclables from household waste (i.e. plastics, metals, paper and obsolete household electronics) will be highlighted. The following paragraphs will take a closer look at the history of urban waste collection practices, at the evolution of respective legislation and how weaknesses of the legal structure have enabled informal actors to set up networks for the collection and trade of household waste and among that Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE).

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## *Consultative Authoritarianism at the Grassroots? Facilitating Industrial Air Pollution Control in China by Staging “Triangular Talks”*

Research in the field of environmental governance in China most often discusses bilateral interfaces and interactions, such as popular protest against polluting companies, or NGO collaboration with local authorities, or local government collusion with enterprises and therefore sabotage of effective pollution controls. This paper examines a case in which a city-level Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB), in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, pressurized by popular protests and superior level policy mandates, started to employ a dialogue mechanism, which actually brought together city residents, enterprises as well as other government agencies in local air pollution control measures. Sharing information and building trust in a gradually more horizontal process, which we call “triangular talks”, apparently helped the local EPB to overcome its structural weakness in order to regulate the polluting companies and to alleviate residents’ complaints. Altogether, the EPB strategically mobilized the public to increase the effectiveness of existent policies vis-à-vis the businesses. We use a retrospective process tracing approach to explore how this trilateral consultation mechanism developed and transformed over the course of different stages and across Hangzhou Municipality. Trying to frame our observations conceptually, we come to critically review the strength of the “consultative authoritarianism” paradigm now so popular in descriptions of Chinese politics. We finally conclude, soberly, that although our single story is probably not representative of significant overall changes in Chinese environmental governance, it may provide hints on how opportunities for driving forward innovative and effective strategies at the local level grow against the background of recently enforced environmental protection policies.



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## Responding to environmental challenges: Symbolic performance in China's local governance

How do political authorities in China respond to mounting environmental problems? More over, on what basis do they succeed in securing public approval in the realm of environmental governance? In this paper, I explore the phenomenon of “performative governance,” defined as the symbolic display of governing, involving speech and behavior that convey symbols of “good governance,” such as transparency, responsiveness, competence and benevolence. From five months of participant observation at a local EPA in China, I argue in this paper that local EPAs engage in performative governances—in particular, symbolic responsiveness—as a strategy to garner public support sometimes at the expense of substantive improvement in local environmental quality. I further use comparative case studies to demonstrate that two conditions must exist for performative governance to arise as a salient strategy: first, low bureaucratic capacity—that is, the bureaucracy lacks capacity to substantively enforce policy; second, a low information environment—that is, citizens lack access to diverse information.

## PANEL 3 - URBAN STUDIES

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### The role of local governance in rolling out low carbon technology in China

Inspired by China's 11th Five-Year Plan, which calls for energy efficiency, reduction of carbon emissions and development of renewable energy sources, Chinese local governments hit the road towards a low carbon future. In 2007, Shenyang city invested some 10 billion Yuan in 188 geothermal heat pump (GHP) projects. GHP is a highly efficient and environmentally friendly technology for space heating, which relies on ground sources for heat extraction. And thus, Shenyang by far surpassed the former leader in GHP application: Beijing. This research project asks why did GHP implementation show exponential growth in Shenyang in the late 2000s relative to the modest growth trend in Beijing despite similar issues with air pollution and carbon dioxide emissions growth in both regions, cold weather winter patterns, and initially expressed interest in GHP technology by both local governments? Analysis of documents and interviews conducted with academics, businessmen and experts in the field suggests that the private sector has a very limited influence on the development of the GHP sector. The key decisions are made within a narrow circle of government officials, therefore, local governance appears to be a main driver for the stark regional variation in GHP promotion. It also calls attention to the role of individuals in the political decision-making. This paper draws on a theory of the political entrepreneur in attempt to explore the role of local government and local officials in the rollout of low carbon technology in China.



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## Refuse as a Resource? 20th Century Urban Development and Historical Strategies of Waste Management in Hong Kong and Shanghai

The cities of Hong Kong and Shanghai belong to the most waste-polluted metropolises in contemporary China. Viewed from a long-term historical perspective it seems that both had developed rather efficient and rationalized methods of waste treatment early on in their history of existence, which now lack proper regulation as they face overpopulation and mass consumption. A closer look at the particular history of both cities' waste management strategies since the late 19th century, however, reveals that their struggle for effective waste treatment solutions actually has a history much longer than just a few decades. In fact, mass waste production was simply a matter of population density already decades before the Communist era, with hundreds of tons of daily household and human waste (nightsoil) production in both cities. This paper traces back various solutions against waste accumulation that municipalities and residents in both cities sought and found for over a century before the late 1970s. It reconstructs early ideas and practices of sustainable waste treatment and specific ways of household waste usage as a resource (for example, for land reclamation, as fertilizer, or for second hand trade) under the unsteady influence of changing administrative systems in the case of Shanghai—opposed to a rather linear top-down process of rationalization in colonial Hong Kong. Western models of waste treatment and public hygiene were strongly influential, but both places followed a 'practical' approach with local characteristics, generally attempting for sustainability but only partially achieving it. A general underestimation of the future impacts of these methods slowly resulted in growing environmental damage and a necessity to spatially adapt the cities time and again to an ever-growing waste generation.

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## Community and barefoot architecture in China: Community development initiatives in the Ju'er Hutong neighbourhoods

Environment governance and the reduction of further climate change will not be achieved without the full participation of ordinary people and stakeholders in China who live and work within the project and thus ensure replenishment. Additionally professionals need to work and live within a project so their professional expertise can be best utilised. This applies to architects and planners who have a vital role in helping local communities understand the long-term assets in local people committing themselves to the project. Ordinary people have the skills to survive in poor urban and rural areas especially when they see the benefits of working as an army of endeavour within the community. Ordinary people, if fully involved and seen as essential partners in a project, and whose aims and aspirations are encouraged by the living in-situ professional enablers, will go on to ensure that what has been achieved is not allowed to deteriorate. The community architecture and barefoot architecture China movement is where architects go into the community and work as enablers. Their presence on site persuades local politicians and businesses to invest in the project. These committed professionals with power and money gain confidence that their investment of time and finance into the project will not go to waste. Working closely with Prof Wu at Tsinghua University in Beijing, we have found community development initiatives on the Ju'er Hutong neighbourhoods to give architects the tools necessary to understand how to upgrade the local environment and give confidence to local residents.



## PANEL 4 - FILM AND REPRESENTATION

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### When Ecocinema Meets Environmental Governance

With growing concerns in climatic change, environmental hazards and worsening pollution problems at a global scale, there is a recent flourish of critical scholarship in ecocinema studies and eco-film criticism concerning the interplay between cinema and environmental issues. The scope of studies, however, has focused primarily on Western texts, at the neglect of specific environmental issues and representations of relationships of humans with the nonhumans, of the non-Western world. Recent scholarships such as Sheldon Lu and Jiayan Mi's *Chinese Ecocinema: In the Age of Environmental Challenge* have charted new directions toward ecocritical studies of contemporary Chinese cinema and media. This presentation discusses whether sociopolitical and cultural specificities shape films in ways that lead to different representations of the relationship between human beings and the physical environment, nature or the nonhumans. Being an emerging branch of environmental humanities, Chinese ecocinema studies addresses environmental issues on both local and global/transnational levels; at the same time it explores how, through cinematic representations of environmental thoughts in Daoist and Confucian philosophy and ethics; films provide a medium to promote shared common ecological concerns beyond national boundaries that reach towards earth, nature, and the more-than-human world. In short, this presentation examines the extent in which films and media of various genres address, or fail to address, the growing environmental problems on both local and global scales. By introducing major issues in ecocinema studies, this presentation aims to open a dialogue that focuses on the convergence of ecocriticism/ecocinema studies with environmental governance and resource management, in the context of China.





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Anna Holzmann holds a degree in Business, Economics and Social Sciences (BSc) from the Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Wien), and a BA in Sinology from the University of Vienna. Having spent one and half years studying abroad in Australia and the PRC, Anna is currently pursuing her masters in East Asian Economy and Society at the University of Vienna. She is employed as e-Assistant for Marketing and Project Assistant exploring the role of green spaces in city tourism at WU Wien. Anna's research interests include environmental issues in the PRC with a special focus on the management of (natural) resources and e-waste recycling activities, and various aspects of international relations within East Asia and the greater Asia-Pacific region.



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Julia Marinaccio holds a BA and an MA in Chinese Studies from the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna, and an MA in Political Science from the National Chengchi University in Taipei. In her current PhD research project she focuses on human capacity building in the Chinese public administration. She is currently holding a research and teaching position at the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna. In her research she focuses on cadre management and environmental governance in China.



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Benjamin Steuer is a doctoral candidate in Chinese Studies and a MA candidate in East Asian Economy and Society at the University of Vienna, Department of East Asian Studies. Using institutional and evolutionary economic approaches, his current research focusses on the evolution of socio-economic structures in the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. His PhD thesis (The Development of the Circular Economy in the People's Republic of China) sets a major focus on the treatment and recycling of wastes as well as on Cleaner Production strategies adopted by public and private actors. Mr Steuer holds courses on China's Circular Economy at the University of Vienna and works as a researcher at the Institute of Waste Management of BOKU University, Vienna.

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