



# Workshop on Asian Urban Peripheries

8 December 2023  
09h00-16h30

AAC 0 06, EPFL  
<https://epfl.zoom.us/j/62502247017>

Speakers: Yimin Zhao, Florence Graezer Bideau, Thierry Theurillat, Helena Roux, Mengke Zhang, Yiqiu Liu, David Gogishvili, Sylvie Tram Nguyen, Maurice Yip

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# Programme

09h00-09h05 **Florence Graezer Bideau** (EPFL)  
Opening Remarks

## Session 1 | Beijing Peripheries

09h05-10h05 **Yimin Zhao** (University of Zurich and Renmin University of China)  
The Ontological Politics of Becoming Urban: Making and Interrogating Jiehebu Urbanism in Beijing

Drawing on recent discussions on the urban frontiers in and beyond China, this talk aims to move a step further and questions how the multiple realities of becoming urban are enacted and contested spatially, socially and politically in line with the “official urbanism” in Beijing. Empirically, the talk will bring to the fore three critical moments in the ontological politics of becoming urban, namely, the government of paper, the weaponisation of home and the suspension of everyday life.

10h05-10h25 **Florence Graezer Bideau** (EPFL) and **Thierry Theurillat** (HEG-Arc)  
Introduction of the SNSF Project “Uses of Cultural Heritage at the Beijing Winter Olympic Games of 2022”

This project first places the 2022 Beijing OG within an economic evolution perspective in line with the financialization of land and housing. It is argued that consumption-based activities play a key role in the ongoing urbanisation enhanced by the new State paradigm of ecological civilization at the city-region scale. Second, it explores the social aspects, focusing on the social engineering dimensions of urban transformations and the impacts of using cultural heritage to promote societal modernity and sustainable urbanism.

### *Coffee Break*

10h30-11h10 **Helena Roux** (EPFL)  
Aesthetics of Industrial Heritage: Putting the Fringe under the Spotlight, A Case Study of Shougang

The Beijing 2022 Olympics served to implement long-term regeneration policies for the former steel factory of Shougang, at the periphery of the capital city. Physical intervention, urban marketing, and commodification are used as tools for promotion. Which economic, cultural and social strategies do they reveal, and how does the industrial aesthetic participate to shape urban lifestyles and practices?

11h10-11h50 **Mengke Zhang** (EPFL)  
Leveraging the Beijing Winter Olympics for the Beautification of Villages in Chongli

Beautiful countryside projects represent a local government initiative to leverage the Olympics for external investment and political support to fuel excessive development ambitions. However, as a relatively weak local government on the mountain periphery of Beijing, long trapped in poverty, its external support was fragile, resulting in discursive rural planning, overconstruction, heavy debt, and social disruption.

11h50-12h30 **Yiqiu Liu** (ETHZ)  
The Cost of Green: Everyday Speculation in Beijing's Urban Greening

Beijing's contemporary urban greening initiatives have led to widespread displacement of residents and the vanishing of traditional village communities. Intriguingly, rather than opposing these developments, many villagers have become unexpected allies in the greening process. The research explores how the anticipation of speculative futures has transformed villagers' everyday experiences, aligning them with the goal of state-led de-densification.

## Session 2 | Asian Urban Peripheries

14h00-14h40 **David Gogishvili** (UNIL)  
Geography and Aspirations of Cultural Flagships in Asian Cities

Culture has become a major component of policies to reshape cities around the world. In this paper, I trace the proliferation of a high-profile material manifestation of this process - cultural flagships - in cities in Asia from 1990 to 2019. I show that its strong growth in parts of Asia signifies a shift from the established cities of high culture in the Global North to the Global East, and the emerging worlding narratives of the major cultural institutions involved in this process.

14h40-15h20 **Sylvie Tram Nguyen** (EPFL)  
Territorial Configurations Uncovering Peri-Urban Hybrids in the Vietnamese Mekong Delta

Atlas narratives of the evolution of different hybrid models which have pushed the Delta towards progressively anthropogenic structures. Revealing complex dynamics of local and global forces driven by water techno managerial investments, ending in peri-urban hybrids, as the Vietnamese Horizontal Metropolis.

15h20-16h00 **Maurice Yip** (UNIL)  
Revisiting Pattern as a Geographical Concept and Reflecting on Policy Mobilities

This presentation on the travelling of urban knowledge attempts the following questions: To what extent does urban transformation result from policies? What else is mobile in shaping urban transformation? How can the very classical geographical concept of pattern, which is being revisited and refreshed, contribute to an alternative perspective on urban transformation?

16h00-16h30 Concluding Remarks

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