

LSE Global China PhD Working Group Seminar, 2022

Tuesdays, 5-6:30 pm via Zoom and in-person (CON 7.03)

This seminar is organized by LSE Global China PhD working group. It is for PhD students and early scholars at LSE working on China and global south related studies. It is a forum for discussions and questions on China in development contexts. Researchers from all theoretical backgrounds and methodological traditions are welcome. This seminar will be hosted in hybrid format, via Zoom and in-person at LSE.

If you would like to join the working group and/or attend the seminar, please email Yuezhou Yang (y.yang91@lse.ac.uk). She will send out a Zoom invite link ahead of each session.

This is an open-access research group. Please circulate this flyer in your networks to anyone who may be interested. Please contact us if you would like to present.

Regular Members

Bruno Binetti (IR) b.binetti@lse.ac.uk
The Political Economy of Chinese Infrastructure in Latin America

Felix Brender (IR) f.brender@lse.ac.uk
Sima Zhao's Intentions? Chinese Peacekeeping, Private Security Contractors and Securing Interests, Assets and Citizens in the Sudans

Yuezhou Yang (ID) y.yang91@lse.ac.uk
Property institutions and their explanatory power on Chinese agricultural investment in Tanzania and Zambia

Yunxiong (George) Li (GEOG) Y.Li181@lse.ac.uk
Chinese Outward Foreign Direct Investment, One Belt One Road Initiative

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| 25 Jan 2022 | Yuan Wang , Fellow at the Columbia-Harvard China and the World Program
<i>Presidential Extraversion: Understanding the Politics of Sino-African Mega-Infrastructure Projects</i> |
| 8 Feb 2022 | Weidi Zheng , Fellow at Dept. of Digital Humanities, KCL
<i>The Silent China: Towards an Anti-Essentialism Approach for South-South Encounters</i> |
| 8 Mar 2022 | Yuezhou Yang , PhD candidate at Dept. of International Development, LSE
<i>Institution-in-context: Land Rights Regimes in Zambia and How they Shape Chinese Investment in Zambian Agricultural Land</i> |

22 Mar 2022 **Roger Fon**, Fellow at Dept. of Management, LSE
Governance, Foreign Aid, and Chinese FDI

Abstract

25 Jan 2022 Yuan Wang, Fellow at the Columbia-Harvard China and the World Program

Presidential Extraversion: Understanding the Politics of Sino-African Mega-Infrastructure Projects

The past two decades have witnessed increasing scholarly analysis of China's growing presence in Africa. Where is African agency within the asymmetric power relations between China and African states? How do African actors use foreign-sponsored projects to achieve domestic objectives? Some analyses take a China-centered perspective, with divergent views about how Chinese economic engagement promotes or inhibits African development. Growingly, scholarly work recognizes the agency of African actors. I advance upon the *African agency* argument by proposing a concept of *presidential extraversion*. I argue that Chinese-sponsored projects in Africa have coincided with the host ruler's strategies for political survival. Internationally, African rulers have strategized among their available choices to ensure that the state received foreign finance and services on the most favorable terms. Domestically, they have instrumentalized Chinese-sponsored projects and loans to demonstrate their performance legitimacy and sustain patronage networks. I process-trace the Kenyan Standard Gauge Railway and Angolan Kilamba Kiaxi housing project, primarily relying on evidence collected in Kenya, Angola, and China from 2017-2019. The findings challenge the neo-dependency argument and show that despite Sino-African power asymmetry, African actors have the agency to shape this relationship to their advantage. The presidential extraversion argument advances upon African extraversion theory by locating the agency within the African political leaders rather than elites broadly.

8 Feb 2022 Weidi Zheng, Fellow at Dept. of Digital Humanities, KCL

The Silent China: Towards an Anti-Essentialism Approach for South-South Encounters

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has encountered much backlash locally and internationally and heated the contesting narratives of China's globalisation. Whilst China's state-led mass-mediated efforts overseas have attracted much scholarly attention, this article investigates the on-the-ground meaning-making process of China's presence in Africa by using the 2016–2017 Maasai attacks against a Chinese construction site in Kenya, part of a BRI infrastructure project, as an ethnographic case study. It argues that, despite the overarching binaries of 'China-Africa', 'predator-partner', and 'hegemon-subaltern' in media and academic representation, Maasai protestors primarily articulated China's presences into Kenya's dominant discourses (i.e. ethnicity, indigenous rights) and the political-economic complex. Chinese, Kenyan and international media, whether aware of these complicities or not, are each seeking the 'China-Africa' reality within one's own 'regime of truth', which only fosters mutual skepticism. An anti-essentialism approach is also proposed to capture the fluid, uncertain subjective positions and power dynamics within South-South collaborations.

8 Mar 2022 Yuezhou Yang, PhD candidate at Dept. of International Development, LSE

Repertoires of control: Contrasting land rights regimes and performance of Chinese agricultural investment in Tanzania and Zambia

The rising anxiety on ‘Chinese scramble’ in African farmland is fuelled by the lack of knowledge on two key features of China-Africa engagement: How do African states govern their national resource and regulate foreign access to land? In response, how do Chinese investors secure control of the land they required? In the studies of foreign land investment in Africa, almost all are interested in appropriation of customary land by powerful actors. Growingly, African land tenure scholarship and scholarly work on internationalization of Chinese companies recognize the vast diversity within land tenure arrangements and Chinese economic actors. I combine these two arguments and borrow the concept of repertoires of control (Gagné, 2021). I argue Chinese agricultural investors perform an array of strategies to assert continued land control in response to various property rights regimes in African countries—the laws, policies, and politics. The comparative study of Tanzanian and Zambian regulatory regimes of land tenure shows that the complexities of African countries’ national land laws, competition between central and traditional authorities over land governance, and local contexts and realities have created variegated playfield for investors to access to land resource and make claim of their legitimacy of land control. The findings challenge the weak African state and ‘land grabs’ arguments and show that the effects of the African national law, regulation, policy, and politics on the actual timing, location and form of investment projects are mediated by investor’s organizational structure and ingenuity.

22 Mar 2022 Roger Fon, Fellow at Dept. of Management, LSE

Governance, Foreign Aid, and Chinese FDI

This article examines how Chinese foreign aid interacts with the quality of the host country’s governance in shaping Chinese state-owned enterprises’ FDI in Africa. By analyzing the firm-level greenfield FDI data of Chinese state-owned enterprises between 2003 and 2014 and distinguishing between China’s official development assistance and less concessional forms of Chinese foreign aid, we reveal two main findings. First, the quality of the host country’s governance negatively affects Chinese state-owned enterprises’ FDI. Second, other official aid and loans from China negatively moderate the relationship between the quality of the host country’s governance and FDI by Chinese state-owned enterprises. Specifically, the tendency for Chinese state-owned enterprises to invest in locations with weak governance increases when their investments are integrated with less concessional forms of Chinese foreign aid in the form of other official flows and loans. Our results are robust to alternative measures of governance and different methodological approaches. The article challenges the traditional notion of institutional theory which assumes a positive relationship between governance quality and FDI attraction.