

# International Symposium on Eco-Mobilities: Kinopolitics and Kinopoetics in the Anthropocene

28-30/11/2024 (Thur - Sat)

WLB109, Dr. Wu Yee Sun Lecture Theatre, Shaw Campus, HKBU



Registration link:

<https://hkbu.questionpro.com/register-Sym-Eco-mobilities-28-30Nov2024>

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香港浸會大學  
HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY  
文學及社會科學院  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



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List of Speakers (Alphabetize by Last Name) :

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Wai Ping Yau  
Jessica Yeung  
Zimu Zhang  
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Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
Academy of Language and Culture  
Centre for Translation  
Department of Humanities and Creative Writing  
Department of Translation, Interpreting and  
Intercultural Studies



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Andrew Baldwin  
Durham University

# Race, Sedentarism and Planetary Consciousness: Kino-politics as Anti-racist Ontology



Andrew Baldwin  
Durham University

## BIOGRAPHY

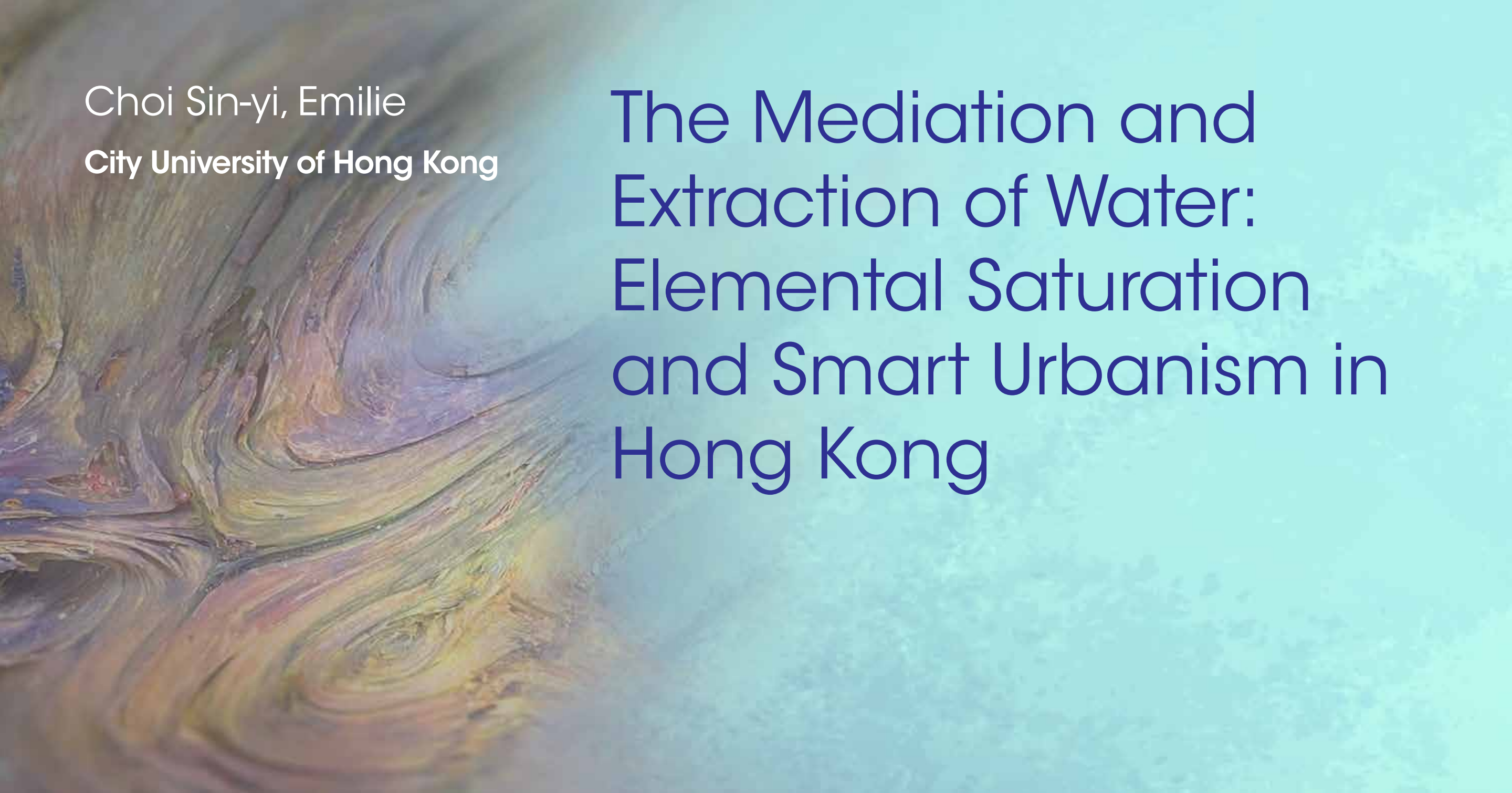
Andrew Baldwin is Professor of Human Geography at Durham University. His research examines the intersections of race, nature and geography in relation to: climate change and human migration; mobility and the Anthropocene; and settler colonialism. Informed by a mix of theoretical perspectives, including postcolonialism, poststructuralism, feminism, anti-racism and Black studies, his work seeks to understand how political authority is adapting to looming geohistorical phenomena like climate change and the Anthropocene. Many of these themes are explored in his book *The Other of Climate Change: Racial Futurism, Migration, Humanism* published by Rowman and Littlefield in 2022.

# Race, Sedentarism and Planetary Consciousness: Kino-politics as Anti-racist Ontology

## ABSTRACT

This paper argues that planetary social thought presents a fundamental challenge to current political discourse about climate change and human migration, or what is sometimes called 'climate mobilities'. Central to the political discourse on climate change and migration is a geographical imaginary in which people are anchored to place. Sedentarism is the ideology that follows from this imaginary, where the prior condition of the human is understood to be that of emplacement. Every person is said to have its place in the planetary order of things. There is a direct line between contemporary sedentarism and the cartography of nineteenth-century natural history and racial science, which is itself bound up with assumptions about climate and its dubious relationship to ideas of morality and right conduct. Planetary social thought confounds this imaginary through its appeal to the fluidity of the Earth system. It calls attention to the idea that the technology of emplacement at the core of racial science was being imposed upon what nineteenth-century geologists and natural historians already knew to be a geophysical system in motion. The result is that if we are to grasp 'race' as a system of meaning, the political force of this system, as it emerged in the nineteenth century, cannot be decoupled from the repudiation of the inherent instability of Earth. Drawing on Kant's ideas of race and those of Alexander von Humboldt, the paper traces the implications the founding repudiation of geology in racial science has for contemporary debates about climate change and human migration. It speculates that bound up in the politics of climate change are modernist anxieties about the undoing of the Earth system whose presumed stability was the imagined guarantor of the system of meaning we know today as 'race'.





Choi Sin-yi, Emilie  
City University of Hong Kong

# The Mediation and Extraction of Water: Elemental Saturation and Smart Urbanism in Hong Kong



Choi Sin-yi, Emilie  
City University of Hong Kong

## BIOGRAPHY

Choi Sin-yi (Emilie) is a Ph.D. candidate at the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong. Her thesis studies the role of elemental media and infrastructure that underpin smart cities and urban intelligence in East Asia. Her research interests primarily revolve around film, media, and technology studies, focusing on critical infrastructure studies, environmental media, digital humanities, and media networks in East Asia during the Cold War era. Her work has been published on *Modernism/modernity*. She is also a co-editor of a special issue, "Post-2019 Hong Kong Cinema: Paradox and Polarization," in the *Journal of Chinese Cinema* (forthcoming) and a forthcoming Hong Kong film anthology.

# The Mediation and Extraction of Water: Elemental Saturation and Smart Urbanism in Hong Kong

## ABSTRACT

Smart urbanism is often associated with problem-solving technologies like 5G telecommunications, ubiquitous Wi-Fi systems, tech parks, big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT) within urban contexts. As many scholars suggest, urban studies have a longstanding tradition of critically exploring the interface between space and digital technologies. However, beneath these "smart logics" lies a crucial yet often overlooked component of urban infrastructure: nature. My study aims to uncover the role of water by examining how it is extracted, managed, and mediated within the discourse of "smartness."

Drawing on the theoretical framework of media studies, particularly the concept of elemental media proposed by John Durham Peters, which argues that natural elements such as air, earth, fire, and water serve as communication media. Peters emphasizes that these elements shape our experiences and interactions through the lens of media technology. In this context, my study excavates the saturation that underlies the infrastructure of smart urbanism, exploring specifically water as a vital element for digital technologies and computation, like undersea cables that form internet networks, cooling systems that support data centers, and ocean sensing technologies serve as digital infrastructures that monitor sea pollution and plastic waste while tracking rising carbon dioxide levels and climate change. Through a critical analysis of the intersections between water and media infrastructure informed by cultural anthropology, this research aims to deepen our understanding of the relationship between digital media and nature in East Asian smart cities, particularly Hong Kong.

Highlighting the material dimensions of digital culture and their reliance on natural resources and energy, this study challenges the dominant notion that media technology comprises solely digital and virtual components by adopting an interdisciplinary approach and connecting to the discursive-material configuration and narrative framing of nature concerning non-human entities. Like how Mél Hogan unfolds "material-discursive conceptualization of nature" to scrutinize how big tech monopolizes the natural resources and the control and framing of nature in a neoliberal condition (Hogan 2018, 636-640).

This study further argues that digital mediation operates as an extractive process and questions the justice owed to nature within a digital milieu deeply rooted in techno-capitalism. For example, according to Mél Hogan's article "big data ecologies," Big Tech companies often utilize the discourse of "green ecology" to control and monopolize natural resources and shape the narrative of nature in a neoliberal logic (Hogan 2018, 636-640). Patrick Brodie's concept of "green extractivism" illustrates how digital infrastructures enable more efficient resource extraction practices, noting that "the expansion of capitalist activities, however 'green,' will always require sacrifices" (Brodie, 2024, p. 14). Drawing on Elizabeth Povinelli's notion of "geontologies," the research delves into the evolution of biopower into "geontopower" through the mediation and extraction of water within the logistical framework of smart infrastructure.

This study, therefore, aims to unpack the prevailing narrative on smart cities and their perceived "smart" and "efficient" technological utilization by examining the environmental consequences of large-scale technological advancements and regarding water as a logistical force to transport and organize resources, information, and economic mobility in the face of techno-capitalism of smart urbanism.





Creighton Connolly  
The University of Hong Kong

# Governing Urban Nature in and beyond “the Zone”

# Governing Urban Nature in and beyond “the Zone”

## BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Creighton Connolly is Assistant Professor in the Department of Urban Planning and Design at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). He obtained his PhD in Human Geography from the University of Manchester (2016) on the controversies over edible birds nest farming in Malaysian cities. He is author of *Political Ecologies of Landscape* (Bristol University Press, 2022) and *Pandemic Urbanism: Infectious Disease on a Planet of Cities* (Polity Press, 2022). His current research spans topics including the political ecologies of land reclamation, large-scale infrastructure projects, participatory governance and planning, heritage management, and the relationships between urbanisation and infectious disease.

## ABSTRACT

The unprecedented pace and scale of urbanisation across Asia and the Pacific has brought about considerable socio-ecological impacts and vulnerabilities associated with the expanding ecological footprint of cities and the metabolic processes associated with them. As such, various types of spaces in and around cities have been carved out for the conservation of nature, to increase the quality of urban living, and to mitigate the harmful effects of urbanization on terrestrial ecologies. Yet, as contributors to this symposium will demonstrate, there are myriad movements of nature within and beyond such zones, which have thrown their overall effectiveness into question and raised broader questions about multi-species encounters, vulnerabilities and collectivities. As such, there has been renewed emphasis on “urban rewilding” and other ways of achieving “multi-species flourishing” in cities, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This makes the exploration of future urban natures and the recognition of new kinds of socioecological assemblages an important task for urban political ecology.

This paper will present some preliminary findings from an ongoing research project related to the forms and potential of multi-species governance in contemporary urban planning, based on case studies in Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia. The paper argues that urban planning and governance in the region would benefit from an approach based on multi-species flourishing, which recognises the myriad interdependencies of humans, animals and other organisms and promotes regeneration of the biosphere. The arguments and observations are based on a review of the literature on this topic, and ethnographic research in the case study sites.



Simon C. Estok  
Sungkyunkwan University

# Migrations Back: Passive Re-wilding of Urban Areas



Simon C. Estok  
Sungkyunkwan University

## BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Simon C. Estok, Professor and Senior Research Fellow at Sungkyunkwan University (South Korea's oldest university), has published extensively on ecocriticism and Shakespeare in *PMLA*, *Mosaic*, *Configurations*, *English Studies in Canada*, *English Language Notes*, and others. Estok is author of five edited collections and the award-winning monographs *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia* (Macmillan 2011) and *The Ecophobia Hypothesis* (Routledge 2018). His most recent book is *Slime: An Elemental Imaginary* (2024, Cambridge UP), and he is currently writing *The Agony of Water in an Age of Climate Change*, which will be the inaugural book in the Bloomsbury Blue Humanities Series, forthcoming 2026.

# Migrations Back: Passive Re-wilding of Urban Areas

## ABSTRACT

There has been a steady migration back into Canadian and American cities of plants and animals that have been forced out of their ancestral spaces by colonizing humans. There are many roots of this passive re-wilding. One of these is perhaps in what Portuguese philosopher Sergio Arias has rather idealistically called “metaphysical changes in the conception of nature [ . . . that] are associated with the hybridization of nature and culture, an ontological distinction of modernity that touches its end in the Anthropocene.” The reality, however, is that there seems to have been rather a tightening of control over nature, as more and more of the terrestrial and hydrological systems of the planet fall victim to clear-cutting and drag-netting. Moreover, environmental responses to human inhabitation have been opportunistic. Invasive plants thrive where they are not supposed to be—the Himalayan Blackberry, for instance, introduced to the Pacific Northwest by Luther Burbank in the 1880s, is flourishing along the west coast of Canada and the United States, strangling its competitors, smothering buildings, and making the ground unpassable with its thorns and thickets. Racoons and skunks, meanwhile, are everywhere. In spite of starry-eyed idealists who promote the concept of half-earth re-wilding, the migration of plants and animals into urban spaces has not been welcomed, and this suggests a very large gap in how we imagine passive versus active re-wilding. Perhaps one of the reasons that passive re-wilding does not have much of a fan base is that it signals an agency of nature that we still simply cannot accept, an agency that triggers our ecophobic responses. My talk will argue that if indeed we are serious about re-wilding, then it will have to be on more capacious terms than ecophobic anthropocentrism allows and that we will really need to think through what “re-wilding” means and if we actually want it in practice or in theory only.





Alex K. Gearin

The University of Hong Kong

# Bodily Vibrations: Ayahuasca's Kinetic Agency in Cross-Cultural Health



Alex K. Gearin  
The University of Hong Kong

## BIOGRAPHY

Alex K. Gearin is a cultural anthropologist who has researched psychedelic networks and practices across the globe. His book *Global Ayahuasca: Wondrous Visions and Modern Worlds* (Stanford University Press, 2024) explores the psychoactive plant brew ayahuasca cross-culturally. He has published widely on the intercultural ethics of medical tourism, spirituality and Indigenous healing traditions, and metaphors and literacies of psychedelic medicine. He is an Assistant Professor at Medical Ethics and Humanities Unit, The University of Hong Kong.

# Bodily Vibrations: Ayahuasca's Kinetic Agency in Cross-Cultural Health

## ABSTRACT

This paper considers the global eco-mobility of ayahuasca, an Amazonian psychoactive medicine typically made of two plants. Taking an anthropological approach, it focuses on the brew's kinetic healing capacities within alternative spirituality groups in Australian society, examining human visceral, bodily encounters with the vine's purgative forces – its capacity to shake, stir, and clean the body from within. These bodily vibrations, often manifesting through purging, sweating, and visionary experiences, speak to a deeper and more primal type of biosemiotic communication between plant and human. The vine's kinetic agency is not only sensed as nonhuman agency but also experienced physically and narratively, unsettling the boundaries between the spiritual and physiological and between plant lives and human bodies. This paper reflects on the vine's ability to mobilize these profound bodily experiences in culturally specific ways, drawing us into broader conversations about cross-cultural health, the body, and plant agency.





Haomin Gong  
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

# Eco-Mobilities in Postsocialist China's Ecocinematic Imagination



Haomin Gong  
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

## BIOGRAPHY

Haomin Gong is an Associate Professor of Chinese at Lingnan University, Hong Kong. His most recent publications include *Eco-Writing in an Age of (Un)Natural Crisis* (special issue of *Prism: Theory and Modern Chinese Literature*, co-edited with Ban Wang, Duke UP, 2024), *Ecology and Chinese-Language Cinema: Reimagining a Field* (co-edited with Sheldon Lu, Routledge, 2020).

# Eco-Mobilities in Postsocialist China's Ecocinematic Imagination

## ABSTRACT

This essay discusses four Chinese ecofilms and explores their distinct representations of eco-mobilities. It first examines Wang Jiuliang's *Plastic China* (2016), in which the hyper-mobility of commodities (waste plastic) is put in sharp contrast with the ironic stuckness of migrant workers who are in the business of processing the commodities. The film exemplifies the poignant neoliberal condition. On top of the fact that international capital conspires with Chinese developmentalists to produce the aforementioned contrast in the classical Marxian sense, eco-consequences are shifted in time and space through their mobility granted, guaranteed, and justified by global capitalism. Eco-mobility, in this sense, is essentially a manifestation of the mobility of capital, which manipulates the distribution of ecological resources and consequences and simultaneously creates mobility and immobility through commodification of the ecosphere.

The second film this essay studies is Jia Zhangke's *Still Life* (2006), a film about forced eco-migration as the result of the construction of the Three Gorges Dam. The film not only presents socialist-style mass mobilization, postsocialist development with regard to the massive change of the environment, and the immobility caused by the increasing irrelevance of socialist socio-cultural relationships and by the assault of postsocialist commodification, but it also creates a sense of "poetics of stillness" that the director deems more fundamental to the texture of everyday life.

Finally, the essay investigates Frant Gwo's sci-fi films *Wandering Earth I & II* (2019, 2023), highly popular blockbusters known for their wild imagination of the "Wandering Earth Project" that aims to move the Earth out of the solar system. This project occasions two types of mobilities—physical (saving the humans by physically moving the Earth) and disembodied (saving the humans by digitalizing human brains). The films' insistence on the former not only shows its ambiguous attitude towards the utopian/dystopian future of the disembodied posthuman existence but also reveals its complicated and compromised Leftist propensity.



Wenxi Hu

The Chinese University of  
Hong Kong

# The Mobilities of “Trash Fish”: Ocean Crisis, Marine Fishery, and Environmental Narratives in Contemporary China



Wenxi Hu  
The Chinese University of  
Hong Kong

## BIOGRAPHY

Wenxi Hu is a Ph.D. graduate from the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her doctoral project explores the waste-human experience in contemporary Chinese film and media. Her research interests include environmental humanities, film and media studies, and contemporary Chinese literature and culture. Her orcid is <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3581-767X>

# The Mobilities of “Trash Fish”: Ocean Crisis, Marine Fishery, and Environmental Narratives in Contemporary China

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the mobilities of “trash fish”—marine species discarded as waste due to their perceived low economic value—and their role in exposing the ecological and economic crises of contemporary China’s marine environments. Building on the theoretical frameworks of Blue Humanities and multispecies narratives, this research explores how trash fish traverse ecological and economic boundaries, symbolizing the fragility of marine ecosystems under human exploitation.

The concept of “trash fish” broadens the understanding of marginalization, traditionally associated with human migrants, to include non-human subjects within the framework of kinpolitics (Nail, 2015; 2019). By tracing the historical development of the “trash fish” phenomenon within the context of China’s marine fishery laws and practices, this study elucidates why these species have become a critical environmental and ethical issue. Through archival research and textual analysis, the study highlights how trash fish, as mobile and marginalized lives, reveal disrupted ecological chains and challenge extractive capitalist ideologies that prioritize economic profit over ecological balance.

Positioned within broader environmental narratives, this study contributes to Blue Humanities and eco-cinema by foregrounding the non-human agency of trash fish and their capacity to critique human-centered frameworks. It demonstrates how ecological narratives centered on marginalized marine lives offer new perspectives on ecological justice and interspecies interdependence, advocating for a shift from commodification to recognition of ecological roles.





Benjamin Iaquinto

The University of Hong Kong

# Tourism Mobilities in the Anthropocene



Benjamin Iaquinto  
The University of Hong Kong

## BIOGRAPHY

Benjamin Iaquinto is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography, University of Hong Kong. His research explores the environmental and political implications of tourism mobilities. His work has appeared in outlets such as *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *Geohumanities* and *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. He is an Associate Editor of *Tourism Geographies* and a Steering Committee member of the Australian Mobilities Research Network.

# Tourism Mobilities in the Anthropocene

## ABSTRACT

While tourism researchers are very aware of the threats posed by climate change, tourism research often presents ominous tourism futures in abstract terms through an array of statistics, models and figures. Or it uses detached writing styles that obscure what it might actually be like as a tourist under extreme conditions. Or it presents the future of tourism as being just like the present but with better technology. Building on the growing interest in creative work in cultural geography and the geohumanities, this talk provides a thought experiment for imagining what tourism would be like in a world of intensifying climate change. Informed by contemporary climate science research and the focus in mobilities theory on the embodied experiences of movement, the talk will imagine the social extremes that might emerge on a planet undergoing climatic extremes. It will present three scenarios for what tourism mobilities in the Anthropocene might be like ranging from the optimistic to the cataclysmic, which are intended act as a coping mechanism for the potentially disastrous future ahead of us.





Fiona Y. W. Law

The University of Hong Kong

# Straying between Hiatus and Stasis: Kino-topography of Feline Fluffiness in Hong Kong



## BIOGRAPHY

Fiona Y. W. LAW is a lecturer in Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include Hong Kong studies, film/visual studies and animal studies in the Asian context, with particular focus on the relationship between cinematic and literary representations, healing narratives, visual cultures, animal welfare, ecofeminism, and urban culture. Her writings can be found in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, *Animal Studies Journal*, *A Companion to Hong Kong Cinema*, *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, and *Archiv Orientální*, among others.

# Straying between Hiatus and Stasis: Kino-topography of Feline Fluffiness in Hong Kong

## ABSTRACT

Images of fluffy animals are important sources of restorative energy in today's highly digitalized world in which different mediations overlap each other with intersections, chance encounters, and interruptions. From the accidental occurrence of a runaway emu, sightings of yellow-crested cockatoos, to sharing of images and stories of feline shopkeepers among passersby, the fluffiness of animals in quotidian digitalized environment has become a spiritualized hallmark of creaturely vulnerability that needs to be sustained, circulated, or taken as the source of minuscule resistance to the 'megamorphosis' of global eco-trade, local political crisis, and inter-regional socio-economic restructuring. In this age of hypermediation and movement-oriented world, the habituated everydayness of digital communications over anonymity, placelessness, and mobilities somehow creates its inversion, namely the affective binding among urban beings and a growing consciousness of sited communities through the fluffy ones.

With the growing number of community members in Hong Kong narrating their personal encounters with community cats across the mobile yet ephemeral social media platforms as assemblages, this paper explores the poetic marvelling among the representational and discursive boundaries of these stories of hiatus. Through mediating their observational tactics, ethics of encounter, and intermediary poetics as online communities, how do these urban dwellers feel (re)connected with the stranger-creatures as a means of intimate empowerment through a visibility of multitudes on the move?

Starting with the proposition that multitudes of mobilities lie in the varied scales of movement and fluidities across space and borders, this paper focuses on unravelling the meanings of everyday commute – how do routine, gridded movements evoke serendipitous and seemingly insignificant inter-species encounters in Hong Kong, and how do these transient narratives inform us of a different understanding of kinopoetics? By examining the co-existence and dialectics of eco- and kino- in the age of Anthropocene when living things and more-than-human beings are unavoidably on the move while creating environment of dwelling at the same time, it raises the questions of how to redefine the figure of the migrant beyond human structures. If, as according to Thomas Nail, that the migrant is defined by social motion like expansion and expulsion, then who are the feline strayers whose space of abode is subject to hiatus, stasis, and conditioned mobilities?



Daren Shi-chi Leung  
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

# Feeding Pigs: (Im)mobilities of Pigswill in Colonial Hong Kong



Daren Shi-chi Leung  
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

## BIOGRAPHY

Daren Shi-chi Leung is a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Cultural Studies at Lingnan University. His interest lies at the affective-material politics of food and waste, exploring their relationships with technology, history, and community within China and beyond. His scholarly contributions have been featured in academic journals, including *Cultural Studies*, *Peasant Studies*, and *Science, Technology and Human Value*. He is currently working on an RGC-funded project about Waste Commons that integrates action research, embodied teaching, and community engagement to address the waste challenge in Hong Kong.

# Feeding Pigs: (Im)mobilities of Pigswill in Colonial Hong Kong

## ABSTRACT

At its peak in the 1980s, Hong Kong's pig industry boasted up to 1,700 farms, playing a crucial role in feeding the city's burgeoning population. The daily feeding of pigs relied on the collection of pigswill (saushui) from dining venues across the city. Transported to farms via carts, trucks, and boats, this practice established a form of circularity and intimacy between humans, animals, and the rural-urban divide. The decline in local pigswill consumption was not merely due to the adoption of soy-based feeds popularized by global meat capitalism. Rather, it was a prolonged process of immobilization, disrupting the metabolic intimacy discussed by Law and Mol (2008). This was not due to a mandated ban, as seen with the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the UK or a recent one of African swine flu in China. Here, I follow pigswill through oral histories and archival research. I argue its immobility was an unintended consequence of colonial policies aimed at environmental hygiene and creating a "nuisance-free city." This occurred in two ways: i) the spatial segregation of rural lands, expanding "Prohibited Areas" to control pollution and odour from livestock waste, which affected new town residents; and ii) the establishment of "Hygiene Blackspots" in urban areas, where littering (e.g., kitchen scraps in public spaces) was penalized to combat rodent nuisances. Staying with the (im)mobility of pigswill reveals us a contesting space for understanding the "complex, messy, sometimes silent practice" of feeding local pigs. Today, pigswill become known as food waste (cyukyu), contributing to the environmental burden on the city's dwindling landfills. This paper aims to explore eco-mobility in a way that offers a decolonial critique of the affective-material world-making involved in both the spatial and olfactory biopolitics of feeding a city's pigs.





Kwai-cheung Lo  
Hong Kong Baptist University

# (Im)mobility of the “Vietnamese Boat People” and the “Chinese White Dolphin” in the Greater Bay Area Borderscape



## BIOGRAPHY

Kwai-Cheung Lo, Professor and the Department Chair of Humanities and Creative Writing at Hong Kong Baptist University, is the author of *Ethnic Minority Cinema in China's Nation-State Building, Excess and Masculinity in Asian Cultural Productions, and Chinese Face / Off: The Transnational Popular Culture of Hong Kong*. He also co-edited *Chinese Shock of the Anthropocene: Image, Music and Text in the Age of Climate Change, Entangled Waterscape in Asia*, and a Chinese-language anthology entitled *Re-Sighting Asia: Deconstruction and Reinvention in the Global Era*.

# (Im)mobility of the “Vietnamese Boat People” and the “Chinese White Dolphin” in the Greater Bay Area Borderscape

## ABSTRACT

This presentation parallels the different (im)mobility experiences of the “Vietnamese boat people” and the “Chinese white dolphin” in the Greater Bay Area’s complex borderscape, examining how the political ecology of the border space constructs “racialized” bodies and mobility injustice in a world of non-dualist framework.

About 200,000 Vietnamese refugees fleeing war, poverty, and political repression sought asylum in Hong Kong between 1976 and 1997. They came to Hong Kong’s waters in waves across the South China Sea by barely seaworthy vessels. Thousands more died trying to complete the perilous journey. They saw the then British-ruled Hong Kong as a sanctuary, but most of them ended up in closed camps that were heavily guarded to stem the further influx of illegal migrants. They were named “boat people” in Hong Kong to describe how they arrived by sea. A stigmatized label was imputed onto them as aggressive, criminous, deviant, sinister, less-than-human creatures, even though Hong Kong residents rarely have any personal interaction with the Vietnamese refugees. However, the confinement of and hostility toward the refugees should be grasped in the intersection of the Cold War and the post-Cold War context of the Sino-British negotiations over the city’s future, against which local Hong Kong residents feel politically powerless.

The Greater Bay Area, aka the Pearl River Delta, has been a political borderscape crisscrossed by the continental power center (Guangdong or China interior) and the two colonial island enclaves (British-Hong Kong and Portuguese-Macau). In the face of China’s rise, the two socio-political and economic colonies from the space of islands were reunified with the mainland continent at the end of the twentieth century. The central government attempts to convert the Greater Bay Area into a major economic driving force for China’s further development. However, the political ecology of the cross-border space continues to set the region apart. Approaching Hong Kong’s handover to China in the 1990s, the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin has been chosen to symbolize the integrating force to tie the disparate island geographies across distinct political boundaries. The Chinese name these humpback dolphins living in the estuary waters south of the Yangtze River “Chinese white dolphin” (Zhonghua bai haitun). Literally as “sea pig” in the Chinese language, the marine mammal has been designated as a “giant panda of the sea” that symbolized and served as a mascot of Hong Kong’s reunification with China in 1997 and later for the integration of the Pearl River Delta cross-border region as a whole, because dolphins have been romanticized as loving, loyal animals that cherish family bonds.

However, the economic integration that brings the Pearl River Delata’s islands and the mainland together as the Greater Bay Area via frequent sea traffic and mega-infrastructure projects, such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, threatens the dolphins’ survival. Similar to the Vietnamese refugees’ closed camps that deter mobility, the compensatory marine parks set up to provide dolphins with safe havens have become obsolete because of the further disturbance of infrastructure constructions like the Hong Kong Airport’s third runway, rendering it impossible for the dolphins to enter the area.

I study how the Eurocentric or Sinocentric modernity of dualism contains the mobility of those categorized as less-than-human or more-than-human and de-mobilizes the production of other possible worlds.





Serpil Oppermann  
Cappadocia University

# Aquatic Mobilities through the Lens of the Blue Humanities



## BIOGRAPHY

Serpil Oppermann is professor of environmental humanities and director of the Environmental Humanities Center at Cappadocia University. She has served as the 7th President of EASLCE (2016–2018). She is one of the signatories to the “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity: Second Notice” (2017) and the “World Scientists’ Warning of Climate Emergency” (2020). Oppermann has written extensively on postmodern, posthuman, new materialist, and ecocritical theories, and is interested in the expressive creativity of everything that is more-than-human in the intersections of science studies and the environmental and blue humanities.

Oppermann is the author of *Ecologies of a Storied Planet in the Anthropocene* (West Virginia UP, 2023) and *Blue Humanities: Storied Waters in the Anthropocene* (Cambridge UP, 2023). She is the editor and co-editor of seven collections and over 100 essays and articles on ecocriticism and environmental and blue humanities. Among them are *Material Ecocriticism* (Indiana UP, 2014), *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), both co-edited with S. Iovino, and *Turkish Ecocriticism: From Neolithic to Contemporary Timescapes* (Lexington Books, 2021), co-edited with Sinan Akilli. She is currently co-editing *The Bloomsbury Handbook to the Blue Humanities*, forthcoming in 2026.

# Aquatic Mobilities through the Lens of the Blue Humanities

## ABSTRACT

The ocean, climate-changed and haunted by human presence, is a dynamic site for diverse aquatic mobilities and migrations, which range in size from microscopic zooplankton to marine mammals as they navigate towards habitats replete with nutritional resources and favorable life conditions. Aquatic migrations are vital for sustaining biodiversity, manifesting in both localized vertical movements and long-distance horizontal migrations, such as those undertaken by whales who annually traverse the coastal waters of 28 nations and the open ocean, covering immense distances. Throughout these extensive journeys, whales fertilize marine environments, thus fostering the vitality of marine ecosystems. Sea turtles, sharks, dolphins, and various fish species also undertake seasonal migrations, but they all struggle with anthropogenic pressures and the physiological challenges inherent in their migratory patterns. These species frequently cross paths with humans in physically socially, culturally, and politically contested spaces.

In this paper, I will read these aquatic mobilities through the lens of the Blue Humanities, which invites a reevaluation of aquatic ecosystems as lively zones inhabited by diverse species with intelligence of their own, as opposed to the previous sea conceptualizations as surfaces “upon which humans, objects, and ideas traveled backward and forward” (Hoffmeyr 2019, 2). Reconceptualizing planetary waterscapes in terms of their multispecies relationalities marks the fundamental dimension of the blue humanities, illuminating the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman lives. This perspective compels us to consider the warning signals emanating from migratory passages not on a micro level of human experience but on a geographical scale, where human-nonhuman connections break and tear at the contact zones, and narratives become increasingly strained by hegemonic socio-political epistemologies and anthropocentric ideologies.



Belinda Smaill

Hong Kong Baptist University

# The Great Barrier Reef as Destination: Tourist Film and Epochal Storytelling



## BIOGRAPHY

Belinda Smaill is Professor of Film and Screen Studies at Monash University. Her recent work focuses on the ethical, cultural and institutional issues that pertain to the presentation of the environment and biodiversity on screen. She is the author of *The Documentary: Politics, Emotion, Culture* (2010), *Regarding Life: Animals and the Documentary Moving Image* (2016) and co-author of *Transnational Australian Cinema: Ethics in the Asian Diasporas* (2013). She has also published widely in journals including *Screen*, *JCMS* and *Camera Obscura*. She is currently the lead investigator on the Australian Research Council funded project, "Remaking the Australian Environment Through Documentary Film and Television."

# The Great Barrier Reef as Destination: Tourist Film and Epochal Storytelling

## ABSTRACT

From the moment Captain James Cook's *Endeavour* was almost wrecked attempting to navigate through the Great Barrier Reef, it has been iterated and reiterated in the Western imagination. Following Cook's travails in 1770, the reef came to be seen as a nefarious trap for sailors. In the 20th century impressions of the islands, coral reefs, waterways and beaches of the Great Barrier Reef have been dominated by a different kind of travel story – the tourist narrative. Since the formalisation of the tourist industry in the 1930s, promotional films have educated viewers about how to be tourists, while also shaping expectations about the nonhuman environments they will find at their destination. Tourist film of the 1930s and 1940s, often used as newsreels, was key to the commercialisation of Australian wilderness as a nation building project. By the 1950s, aided by developments in underwater and colour photography, Great Barrier Reef had become the jewel in the crown of Australian nature. The 1960s brought the Save the Reef campaign and a new environmental consciousness. It also brought the new age of jet aviation and a shift in focus for tourist film. With coral bleaching events, the last decade has seen the Great Barrier Reef become a barometer of the biotic precarity of climate warming. Promotional aesthetics have shifted to marry tourism explicitly with eco-education about the reef and the threats it faces. This paper tracks how film travelogues have sought to educate audiences about the meaning and value of the reef at pivotal moments from the 1930s to the present day. It argues that the reef is a site of epochal storytelling—it has been a constant presence in Australian, and even international, environmental consciousness. Tourist film has realised this in rich and influential ways, visualising biotic change while disavowing the politics of environment and mobility that underpin the tourist gaze.



The background of the slide is an abstract composition. On the left side, there are swirling, textured brushstrokes in shades of brown, purple, and yellow, resembling marbled paper or a close-up of a rock surface. On the right side, the background is a solid, light blue color. A faint, white silhouette of a dolphin is visible, swimming from the left towards the right, positioned behind the text.

Enoch Yee-lok Tam  
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

# The Semiotics of White Dolphin Precarity: Fantasizing Harmony, Wildlife Regeneration, and the Power of Suffering



Enoch Yee-lok Tam  
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#### BIOGRAPHY

Enoch Yee-lok Tam is a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Digital Arts and Creative Industries at Lingnan University. His research engages with film historiography in Chinese-language film, Hong Kong film history and film policy, and East Asia's creative and media industries. Currently, he is working on a book project examining the development of Hong Kong's independent documentaries in the post-handover period. He co-authored *Indiescape Hong Kong: Critical Essays and Interviews* in 2018, a collection of critical essays about local independent films and interviews of independent filmmakers.

# The Semiotics of White Dolphin Precarity: Fantasizing Harmony, Wildlife Regeneration, and the Power of Suffering

#### ABSTRACT

This paper examines how images of the white dolphin (Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin), positioned between ecological mobility and vulnerability, serve as a medium through which the eco-precarity of this species—residing and moving within the maritime regions of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan—is expressed and made visible in environmental documentaries such as *Chinese White Dolphin*, *Breathing Room*, *Sea of Noise*, and *Taiwanese White Dolphin*, *I'm Sorry* and *Dolphin Etude: Taiwan's Choice*. Specifically, I identify three representations of nature: harmonious nature under the protection of the nation-state; wildlife confronting urban hazards and diminishing biodiversity; and suffering nature resulting from human neglect. I discuss how each representation engages with distinct aesthetic traditions and ideological complexities arising from their respective production contexts. As socially symbolic signs, these interrelated depictions of the dolphin and its habitat not only advocate for the protection of endangered species but also reflect the historical experiences of nature within these three societies.





Jamie Wang

The Education University of  
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Emily Zong

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# Agential Distance and More-than-human Urban Mobility



Jamie Wang  
The Education University of  
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## BIOGRAPHY

Jamie Wang is an urban environmental humanities scholar, writer, and poet. She is Research Assistant Professor at the Education University of Hong Kong. Her current research examines sustainable urban-making, technological imaginaries, and multi-modal environmental narratives in the context of climate change and environmental injustice. Jamie is author of *Reimagining the More-Than-Human City: Stories from Singapore* published by MIT Press. She is co-editor of "Feminist Futures", a special issue series of *Feminist Review*.

Emily Zong  
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## BIOGRAPHY

Emily Zong is Assistant Professor of environmental humanities at Hong Kong Baptist University. Her research explores cultural imaginations of place, species, and climate in migrant and refugee narratives, with a focus on Asian diasporic literature and culture. She is the author of *Planetarity from Below: Decolonial Ecopoetics of Migration and Diaspora* (University of Michigan Press, forthcoming) and co-editor of *Decolonising Asian Diasporic Ecocriticism*, a forthcoming special issue of *Ariel*. Emily is also passionate about creative practices and has curated a few art exhibitions on waste, water, cows and buffalos, and soil.

# Agential Distance and More-than-human Urban Mobility

## ABSTRACT

Rapid urbanization and habitat fragmentation and loss have led to increased human encounters with animals. At the same time, the growing incorporation of green features to build certain kind of sustainable city has further brought the tension of cohabitation to a new scale. In the Asian metropolises of Singapore and Hong Kong and beyond, contact zones become "conflict zones" (Wadiwel 2018), promoting new debates about the politics and ethics of mobility and coexistence in urban landscapes.

While traditional conservation and wildlife management have relied on biopolitical infrastructures of containment, preservation, and culling, such boundary work tends to reveal a humancentric fixation on stasis that overlooks (ignores) the movement of nonhuman nature. Recent mobility studies emphasize not only how movements are shaped by embodied and lived encounters, but also that mobilities and spaces are co-produced and gain meaning by humans and other-than-humans (Hodgetts and Lorimer 2020). Bring a more-than-human mobility inquiry into human interactions and tensions with animals including macaques, cows, and buffalos in Singapore and Hong Kong, we propose that multispecies cohabitation does not mean the dissolving of boundaries, or cannot be rooted in an imagined dichotomy of isolation and harmony. Instead, more-than-human livability demands a rethinking of boundaries through "agential distance," a relational form of being together/apart that enables us to negotiate human-animal movements oriented towards differential umwelten, mutual respect, and affective atmospheres. Drawing on interviews, observations, personal experiences, we show how conservationists, residents, artists, and infrastructures (roads, bins, dung cleaning) participate in modes of agential distance to respond to specific contact and conflict in closeness with animal kin. In doing so, we examine the power relations shaping/hierarchising various mobilities and their social-ecological consequences, and demonstrate the complexity of urban multispecies mobility where living together requires cultivating a situated ethos that engages obligations of both collaboration and separation.





Wai Ping Yau

Hong Kong Baptist University

# Movement, Migration and Ecology in Hao Jingfang's Science Fiction Novel *Vagabonds*



Wai Ping Yau  
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## BIOGRAPHY

Dr Wai Ping Yau is an Associate Professor in the Department of Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University. His interests spans translation studies, adaptation studies, and Chinese and Hong Kong literature and cinema, with a teaching focus on translation, adaptation and intercultural studies. Yau's translations and publications reflect his engagement with the intersections of language, culture and cinema.

# Movement, Migration and Ecology in Hao Jingfang's Science Fiction Novel *Vagabonds*

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the intricate interplay between movement, migration, politics and society in Hao Jingfang's science fiction novel *Vagabonds* (*Liulang Cangqiong*, 2016), focusing on the protagonist's journeys between Earth and Mars. Set against a post-war backdrop characterised by divergent societal values—an egalitarian Mars and an individualistic Earth—the narrative serves as a critical lens for exploring contemporary cultural, social and political life, along with its ecological implications. This paper analyses how *Vagabonds* utilises these contrasting societal frameworks to investigate questions of agency, and how its aesthetic form portrays mobility as a complex interaction between society and ecology, revealing the implications of movement and migration in human encounters. By examining these themes, this paper aims to contribute to the broader discourse on how narratives of migration and mobility inform our understanding of cultural and political dynamics in a rapidly changing world.



Jessica Yeung

Hong Kong Baptist University

# YouTube and the Transborder Hong Kong Identity



## BIOGRAPHY

Jessica Yeung is Associate Professor of Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Studies in Hong Kong Baptist University. She researches cultural heterogeneity in China, focusing on Hong Kong and Uyghur cultures. She is author of *Ink Dances in Limbo: The Writings of Gao Xingjian as Cultural Translation*, and *Hong Kong's Third Way: the Anarchist People's Theatre of Augustine Chiu-yu Mok* (in Chinese). She has translated films and short stories by the Tibetan director Pema Tsenden including *Tharlo* and *Jinpa*, and created stage performances and participated in the making of independent films.

# YouTube and the Transborder Hong Kong Identity

## ABSTRACT

The ongoing wave of emigration since 2020 has drastically changed the demographic distribution, hence the ways of life, of Hong Kongers. Instead of a rupture with Hong Kong, a new connection with the territory is forged for the emigrants by digital means. Social media has enabled more than daily life communication between the diaspora and the remainers, it has also facilitated the imagination of a digital community. "Hong Kong" has transcended from the restriction of being a geographical location and become a locale - the agentic interactions taken place in Hong Kong have resulted in a nexus in which lives, knowledge and identities are all simultaneously embedded in double, if not multiple, transnational contexts.

Some of the most powerful shapers of this new transborder Hong Kong experience and identity are the Youtube influencers now residing in Taiwan, the UK and Canada. Many of them include in their video contents introductions and comments on affairs both in Hong Kong and their host locations. In this paper, I will analyse some of their videos and explore the process and contents of the new transborder Hong Kong identity that they are participating in constructing. I will ask questions including:

- What kind of frameworks and parameters of this new transborder identity of Hong Kongers in the digital space are being established? What are the ethical implications of speaking in absentia?
- If the "Hong Kongers" becomes a transborder identity built on shared values and history, in what ways can the traditional aspects of situatedness and embodiment in an identity be addressed?
- The process of building this new identity is undoubtedly fragmented rather than organised, and bottom up rather than assigned. In what ways do the agentic behaviours of the creators and consumers of these Youtube videos manifest themselves? How do they work with or resist the manipulation (if not determination) of algorithms?

Identity construction will be explored in this paper not only as a form of activism, but more importantly as a process of worlding. Digital technology will be discussed not as a condition of this identity, but as a constitutive element of it.





Zimu Zhang

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# Kinopolitics and Kinopoetics of a Snow Mountain: Mountaineering, Avalanche, and Climate Change



Zimu Zhang  
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## BIOGRAPHY

Zimu Zhang is an environmental humanities scholar working on visual culture, eco-cinema and ecofeminist arts. She is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Literature and Cultural Studies, The Education University of Hong Kong. She is the recipient of the 2022 Landhaus fellowship at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, LMU and 2023 VisitANTS fellowship in Critical Studies of Biodiversity and the Anthropocene Research at University of Oulu, Finland. Along with her academic research, Zimu also practices filmmaking and curation.

# Kinopolitics and Kinopoetics of a Snow Mountain: Mountaineering, Avalanche, and Climate Change

## ABSTRACT

January 3rd, 2023 marks the 32nd anniversary of the Sino-Japanese joint mountaineering accident on the sacred Tibetan snow mountain Khawa Karpo in Yunnan province in China, one of the most deadly accidents in mountaineering history. One night before their planned but controversial summit attempt against local Tibetan villagers' will (Guo 2012), all seventeen climbers died of an unexpected avalanche. 2023 was also the 25th and final year that the Japanese former mountaineer Kobayashi Naoyuki revisited the snow mountain to retrieve his deceased fellow climbers' remains to clean and purify the sacred mountain. During this long journey, he completely changed his movement on the mountain and his life trajectory, from vowing to a vertical ascent towards the apex to humbling circumventing the spiritual mountain with local villagers, and documenting the mountain's sacred landscape, pollution and climate change signals as a natural photographer. Through Kobayashi's contemplations, the reemergent locations of the once deeply buried remains could be used to calculate the melting speed of the glacier connected to Mt Khawa Karpo, uncovering bleak and rarely accessed information from existing scientific mapping (Kobayashi 2021). Kobayashi's photograph of recovered body remains on the glacier conveys a transcorporeal (Alaimo 2018) mourning for the more-than-human death in the Asian cryosphere.

In this article, I will read this tragedy and aftermath from an ecomedia lens (Cubitt 2005, Litzinger and Yang 2020) centering on its kinopolitics and kinopoetics, examining the webbed relations, hierarchical movements and cosmological aesthetics (Yü 2015) revolving around mountaineering history, death and more-than-human mourning in the melting Anthropocene.



Emily Zong

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# Implosion: A New Climate Imaginary



Emily Zong  
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## BIOGRAPHY

Emily Zong is Assistant Professor of environmental humanities at Hong Kong Baptist University. Her research explores cultural imaginations of place, species, and climate in migrant and refugee narratives, with a focus on Asian diasporic literature and culture. She is the author of *Planetarity from Below: Decolonial Ecopoetics of Migration and Diaspora* (University of Michigan Press, forthcoming) and co-editor of *Decolonising Asian Diasporic Ecocriticism*, a forthcoming special issue of *Ariel*. Emily is also passionate about creative practices and has curated a few art exhibitions on waste, water, cows and buffalos, and soil.

# Implosion: A New Climate Imaginary

## ABSTRACT

This paper engages a kinetic thought experiment of reconceiving climate migration from explosion to implosion. Kinopolitics considers the ontological movement of human and nonhuman agents as foundational in shaping social structures (Nail 2015). Contemporary debates about climate migration in Western media and policy, however, are dominated by a discourse of externality in which biopolitical fixation on stasis and borders contributes to pathologizing, racializing, and securitising climate migration as a crisis to be solved and stabilised. From this vantage, the climate migrant becomes a figure through which the implosive dynamics of climate change are made visible – not merely as its dramatic manifestations but as pivotal actors in a decolonial and integrated understanding of the root causes of displacement and environmental degradation.

With implosion, I invoke a new imaginary that recasts environmental challenges not as “natural” and sudden disasters, but as intensified and cumulative symptoms of our ecosocial environments that are collapsing inwardly – due to unsustainable practices of fossil fuel capitalism, extraction, and colonial racial inequality. The primary failure in the dominant climate migration discourse lies in its inability to present climate impacts as implosive buildups – rather than explosive externalities – of colonial geo-logics of racial subjection and capitalist extraction. The kinopolitics and kinopoetics of implosion consider the mutual worlding between humanity and Earth, calling for systemic changes that cannot be enacted by a modern biopolitics of control and containment. Instead, more just and collective planetary futures-to-come must be rebuilt from within, by recuperating the excess of mobility and restorying humans as ecologically response-able subjects.