

## Online Workshop “Racialisation and Social Boundary Making in Times of COVID-19” (2-4 December 2020): Abstracts and Author Details

### *Panel 1: COVID-19 Politics and Diplomacy*

#### **Disguising racism as political critique in mass media reports on Covid-19 in USA and Germany**

**Marius Meinhof**, Technische Universität Dresden and Bielefeld University

From early on, reporting of Covid-19 in Europe and USA was accompanied by an intense critique of the authoritarian regime in China. Some of these accounts described noticeable failures of the Chinese political system or echoed critical voices from within China. Some others, however, inserted their critique into an orientalist narrative which presented China as the authoritarian Other of the West. These orientalist critiques often reproduced racist stereotypes of Chinese people but rephrased them as a political critique.

My paper focuses on a set of instances of Covid-19-related news reports from Germany and the USA where I analyze the ways in which arguably legitimate critique on the political regime in China disguises racist stereotypes of Chinese or Asians. For example, depictions of “disgusting wet markets”, which use racist images of appalling Chinese eating habits, were framed as critique on the communist party permitting the existence of such markets.

In comparing a series of newspaper reports from Germany and USA I will point up their covert racism and analyze the strategies which authors and newspapers applied in their rejection of accusations that their reports were racist. In doing so, I will show how discourses of covert racism work by allowing racist stereotypes appear as legitimate critique.

#### **Biographical information**

Dr Marius Meinhof is currently working as lecturer in the Department for Sociology at the Technical University in Dresden. He received his PhD with distinction in Sociology at Bielefeld University. He specializes in postcolonial theory in China, as well as in notions of modernity and backwardness in China. He published a monograph on the idea of modernized consumption *Shopping in China* which won the award for best thesis by the German Association of Sociology in 2018. He also edited the special issue *Postcolonialism and China*. Since 2017 he has been working on a monograph on the history and social effects of the concept of ‘lagging-behind’. From September 2019 he will be primary investigator in a 3-year research project financed by a substantial grant from the German Research Association on the topic of construction of traditional family values and their relation to socialist modernization.

*Panel 1: COVID-19 Politics and Diplomacy*

**China's bilateral relations with Europe and the new positionings of Chinese diasporas after the initial Covid-19 outbreaks: a focus on Italy**

**Antonella Ceccagno**, University of Bologna and **Mette Thunø**, Aarhus University

This paper investigates China's varied official approaches towards European countries during the Corona pandemic and the implications for the Chinese diasporas in Europe. It first identifies how Beijing has responded to the different European political and media responses during the pandemic based on the two different cases of Italy and Germany. The second part explores the new links between Beijing's political reactions and corresponding transnational responses in terms of co-opting and organizing Chinese diasporic communities in local health and narrative fights related to the coronavirus.

We expect to identify two different foreign affairs approaches with significantly different implications for the Chinese diasporas in Italy and Germany. In Germany, Chinese migrants including students experienced ethnic and racial othering, but ethnic Chinese were targeted less aggressively by Beijing as soft power tools of the Chinese state. In Italy, early xenophobic targeting of Asian-looking people was followed by a full appreciation of the Chinese diasporas linked to the local perception of China guiding the world out of the pandemic. We hypothesize that the Chinese state proactively has mobilized the Chinese Italian associations' pandemic reactions for its own political purposes.

As such, this paper argues that the pandemic has significant but diverse impact on the shaping of the relationships between the transnational Chinese state and Chinese diasporas in Europe. The research question will be qualitatively approached based on textual analysis of official Chinese and European policy statements and press releases including Twitter memes, media in Europe and China with commentaries as well as semi-structured interviews with Chinese migrants in Italy.

**Biographical information**

Professor Antonella Ceccagno teaches Sociology of East Asia and China in Africa at the University of Bologna, Italy. For more than ten years she worked as the Director of the Center for Immigration Research and Services in Prato, Italy. She is interested in the emergence of new labor regimes and the role of migrants in processes of urban, regional, and industry restructuring. She also explores processes of workforce ethnicization/racialization. She has written extensively on the Chinese migrants in the Italian fashion industry. Her current research interests revolve around issues of im/mobility with a focus on migrant workers and transnational traders. She is the author of the book *City Making and Global Labor Regimes*, 2017. Recently, she coauthored The Chinese 'grid reaction' in Italy, on the Corona pandemic and the Chinese immigrants in Italy.

Associate Professor Mette Thunø is affiliated to Aarhus University, Denmark, where she teaches classes related to contemporary China issues in the Department of Global Studies, China Studies Section. Her primary research interest is in Chinese migration to Europe and in studying China as a diaspora state. She has written extensively on Chinese transnationalism from the perspective of the state and her current research project is on exploring the control and disciplining of the Chinese diasporas in the world enforced by the Chinese state. Her most recent publication is the Introduction chapter to a special issue of *International Migration* that she was also the co-editor of together with Professor Li Minghuan.

*Panel 1: COVID-19 Politics and Diplomacy*

**Suffering from and praising the performance of regime legitimacy: How Europeans in mainland China negotiate the COVID-19 crisis**

**Aldina Camenisch**, University of Amsterdam

Based on narrative online interviews with European entrepreneurs and professionals in Beijing, Shanghai and various cities in the Pearl River Delta, this paper investigates the impact of the current covid-19 pandemic on their private and professional lives.

Interviewees observe a widespread suspicion of foreigners as potential carriers of the virus, demonstrated for example by experiences of avoidance in daily encounters. They relate this uptick in xenophobia with the regimes' position that it has successfully contained the internal spread of the virus. Authorities and Chinese media seem to have 'othered' the virus and attributed it to foreigners – also those already residing in China - to enhance the legitimacy of their own measures vis-à-vis the domestic population.

On the other hand, most interviewed foreigners agree in considering the Chinese response to the outbreak of the corona virus as a success overall. They by and large support the measures of the Chinese authorities to contain the pandemic and to mitigate its economic consequences. What is more, interviewees praise the population in China for its compliance with state measures, especially the consistent wearing of face masks. Thereby, a narrative emerges in which 'we' (the state and the population) in China are mastering the corona crisis better than 'you' (the authorities and the populations) in Europe.

This paper thus argues that how European foreigners in China navigate the covid-19 era is marked by an ambiguous stance towards the performance of regime legitimacy of Chinese authorities. While they criticise the 'othering' of the virus as non-Chinese, they support other state measures and re-inscribe themselves in a Chinese collective from which they are simultaneously excluded as potentially virus-carrying foreigners.

**Biographical information**

Aldina Camenisch is an anthropologist with a special interest in understanding the mobility of Europeans to non-western contexts against current shifts in global power hierarchies and the related (re-)negotiation of social and economic positions of migrant groups and individuals. In her PhD, completed at the University of Basel in 2019, she investigated the trajectories and positionalities of Swiss professionals in Mainland China. Her postdoctoral research at UvA explores how 'whiteness' is commodified and performed in so-called white face jobs in China and, relatedly, the economic and cultural signification of images of the white, occidental 'other' and the Chinese 'self' in Chinese business contexts. She also investigates how European professionals and entrepreneurs in mainland China navigate the covid-19 crisis economically, socially and politically. Recent publications include articles in the journals *Transitions: Journals of Transient Migration*, and *International Migration*.

*Panel 1: COVID-19 Politics and Diplomacy*

**To Trust or not to trust? Face masks in China-Europe relations — A comparison of Sino-French and Sino-British relations**

**Emilie Tran**, Hong Kong Baptist University, **Yu-chin Tseng**, University of Tübingen

At the crossroads of sociology and international relations, this interdisciplinary paper explores how the Covid-19 outbreaks have impacted on China-Europe relations.

Unfolding the critical moments of the COVID-19 outbreaks, this paper characterizes the evolution of China-Europe relations with regards to the facemask. That simple object of self-protection against the coronavirus has strikingly become the bone of contention between peoples and states. In the face of this situation, we argue that the facemask is the prism to illustrate (1) the transnational links between China and its overseas population, (2) changing social perceptions of China and Chinese-looking people in European societies, and (3) the advent of China's mask diplomacy and its reception in Europe.

Comparing the shifting political discourses and social perceptions of China and the Chinese in two European settings — France and the UK —, the common denominator appears to be the reduced trust, if not outright distrust, between individuals and communities in the French and British contexts, and in Sino-French and Sino-British relations at the transnational level. Using (dis)trust as our analytical framework, the paper examines the social perceptions of China and Asian-looking people in France and the UK in the first two months of the outbreak in China. As the epidemic unfolds throughout Europe, the facemask becomes a politicized object, both at the national policy and diplomatic levels.

Adopting a qualitative approach, our dataset comprises: official speeches and statements; press releases; traditional and social media contents (especially through hashtags such as #JeNeSuisPasUnVirus, #IAmNotAVirus, #CoronaRacism. etc.); and interviews with governmental officials, Chinese, French and British community members.

**Biographical information**

Emilie Tran is Assistant Professor of European Studies and the French Stream Coordinator Department of Government and International Studies at the Hong Kong Baptist University.

Yu-Chin Tseng is Assistant Professor at the Department of Chinese Studies University of Tübingen Germany.

*Panel 2: Migrant Labour in Pandemic Times*

**“Best” vs. “pure” English teachers: How the coronavirus pandemic intensified racialized labor at Chinese virtual education companies.**

**Raviv Litman**, University of Amsterdam

Studies have shown that English teaching has been dominated by white EuroAmerican teachers. This paper develops on this research to look at the recent emergence of new racialized values within virtual English teaching. In the Chinese context, virtual English teaching companies employ a mix of Filipino and EuroAmerican teachers. Middle class Chinese increasingly hire Filipinos while more affluent Chinese prefer North American teachers. I compare the customer perceptions as well as the hiring and working conditions of these two major groups of virtual teachers. Based on data collected primarily between January and August 2020, I examine social media discussions by Chinese parents who review the quality of various teachers' labor as well as the self-reporting of labor practices by the teachers themselves. Disentangling the connections between consumer tastes and racialized labor, this paper shows how after the covid-19 pandemic the perception of English teachers in China has been increasingly tied to class-based consumer tastes and uncovers a shifting racial border defining who teaches the children of wealthy consumers, and who teaches the children of the Chinese middle-class.

**Biographical information**

Raviv Litman is a PhD candidate in anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. He is part of the Chinawhite ERC research project of Shanshan Lan at the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research and specializes in critical whiteness studies and the English teaching industry, as well as the application of digital technologies in education. Litman published an article in 2019 on the use of multimedia in state sponsored social reproduction of the family with the title “Singaporean Societies: Multimedia Communities of Student Migration” in a special issue of the journal *Migration, Mobility and Displacement*.

*Panel 2: Migrant Labour in Pandemic Times*

**Prisoners of the body? Class, (im)mobility and pandemic politics**

**Dina M. Siddiqi**, New York University and **Hasan Ashraf**, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh

Anthropologists have noted the ways in which the current pandemic has led to the Othering of bodies along existing social, religious and ethnic fault lines, as with “Asians” in the United States, or Muslims and others (those who “look Chinese”) in India (Irfan Ahmad). Scholars have also traced the transformation of erstwhile friends into dangerous “enemies within,” as happened with expatriate populations forced to return to Bangladesh from viral hotspots such as Italy (Nusrat Chowdhury). This paper adds to the emerging scholarship on the embodied effects of the pandemic by foregrounding the relatively neglected role of class in the production of bodies perceived to be socially dangerous.

Drawing on ethnographic observations and discourse analysis, we examine the transnational trade-labor-state nexus as it plays out on the ground through the bodies of Bangladeshi garment factory workers. As elsewhere, the rhetoric of saving the economy at all costs dominates state and industry responses. We argue that workers’ bodies are caught in the crosshairs of competing narratives of lockdown and saving the economy. A series of seemingly arbitrary decisions on factory closure forced the hand of workers, who had little choice but to travel long distances on foot to return to workplaces they had left days earlier. The flows of people, of visibly mobile laboring bodies, quickly became susceptible – as much to the coronavirus as to rumor, humor, and stigma. Worker mobility generated fear, suspicion, and mistrust, undoing many existing social relations. Landlords turned away imagined or actually sick tenants. Those returning to villages faced rejection and violence. Workers articulate this experience in terms of being ‘prisoners of their bodies,’ a phrase we unpack and theorize in relation to the politics of racialized othering.

**Biographical information**

Dina M. Siddiqi: Clinical Associate Professor, Global Liberal Studies, New York University  
Hasan Ashraf: Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh

*Panel 2: Migrant Labour in Pandemic Times*

**“Buyel’ ekhaya” (Go back home): experiences of xenophobia by African migrants during the COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa**

**Linda Musariri Chipatiso**, University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa

The countrywide lockdown which began on the 26th of March, 2020 with the aim of “flattening the curve” of COVID-19 related cases brought South Africa’s economy to a standstill. Thousands of people, particularly those within the informal labour sector were affected. With the aim of providing the much-needed relief to the affected individuals and impoverished communities, the South African government rolled out cash based and food relief projects which furthermore exposed multiple inequalities that continue to hide within the ‘normalcy’ of life. The competition over the scarce resources intensified the margins of distinction resulting in the ‘othering’ of non-South Africans. The distinctions of who is West African, East African or Southerner were amplified, codes of indigeneity or nativism were called into picture, tribal margins were drawn and violence became a useful tool to reorder categories and bring back social boundaries. Those who were identified as the ‘other’, having been disqualified based on citizenship, indigeneity and nativism bore the brunt of widespread violence, which included physical and verbal attacks and mass deportations. Using data obtained via online based interviews and social media outlets, this paper describes experiences of xenophobia by African migrant men and women in South Africa during the prolonged lock down of 2020. Interviews were solicited among a group of migrant men and women who were part of an ethnographic study that focused on masculinities and violence in South Africa from June 2017 to February 2018.

**Biographical information**

Linda Musariri Chipatiso has just completed her PhD studies in Medical Anthropology with Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research (AISSR) at University of Amsterdam. She is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. She is a qualified demographer and an artist. Broadly her research interests focus on migration, masculinities, violence, gender and the role development interventions in knowledge making, shaping narratives and identities in Africa.

*Panel 3: Navigating Borders and Boundaries*

**COVID 19 and racialised risk narratives in South Africa, Ghana and Kenya**

**Leona Vaughn**, University of Liverpool, **Allen Kiconco**, University of the Witwatersrand **Isabel Zattu Ziz**, Kibabii University Kenya, **Nii Kwartelai Quartey and Collins Seymah Smith**, James Town Community Theatre, Ghana

The global pandemic of COVID 19 has revealed that eugenicist ideas about claimed racial propensity or ‘magical’ immunity for illnesses about African people and people of African descent, alongside the colonial logics for using African populations for testing vaccines, persist in popular 21st century thought. Indeed, the statistical evidence shows that Black and other minoritised people in the West are more likely to die of COVID 19 than their white counterparts. What is less well known is how the immunity mythology which emanated primarily from the Global North racialised risk narratives, has impacted on the practical and political risk narratives for preventing COVID 19 infection in African countries.

This project brings together academics and community-based researchers in South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, to co-design rapid research to explore the racialisation of risk narratives for preventing COVID 19 infection in their respective countries.

Between May and July 2020, researchers examined social media, media, government policy and local radio. They drew upon Critical Discourse Analysis/Content Analysis to identify and collate local examples of the risk narratives about prevention of COVID 19 infection.

They compared and analysed local risk narratives to those in Western media to explore how or if the racialised understanding of the risk of infection appears, and how or if it intersects with narratives on gender, age, disability, socioeconomic status, citizenship status or sexuality.

**Biographical information**

Dr Leona Vaughn (Primary Investigator), Derby Fellow (Slavery and Unfree Labour Research Theme), University of Liverpool. Developing anticolonial methods and methodologies which centre minoritized groups in research, including safeguarding.

Dr Allen Kiconco, University of Witwatersrand South Africa (Co-investigator). Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Political Studies, University of the Witwatersrand. Expertise on modern slavery, gender and conflict in East and West Africa.

Isabel Zattu Ziz, Kibabii University Kenya. Senior Media Technician, Kibabii University, current MSc in Communication Studies at Rongo University, collaborating with Community Media 4 Kenya, creating sustainable initiatives with local communities.

Nii Kwartelai Quartey & Collins Seymah Smith, James Town Community Theatre, Ghana: Collins Seymah Smith, Theatre Director and Researcher, leading and managing all community outreach education programmes across Accra including antislavery and gender-based violence prevention. Nii Kwartelai Quartey, experienced researcher, particularly in the use of arts-based methodologies and ethnography GPS mapping for HIV prevention and modern slavery.

*Panel 3: Navigating Borders and Boundaries*

### **Barriers and mobility in China during the Covid-19 pandemic**

**Zhen Ma**, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

The world rarely sees a pandemic of such a scale. The ongoing spread of the virus in many countries and its aftermath in China have created barriers and social borders in almost every corner of the world. As the country hit by the Corona-virus most heavily in the beginning, Chinese people both in Wuhan, the center of the pandemic, and elsewhere, experienced intense barriers. The borders of traditional Chinese administrative units from village, township, county, to city and finally to province all became barriers. All these localized barriers function as a fractal of borders. Borders and facemasks were understood by Chinese people and the authorities in general as the two main reasons why China could control the spread of the virus in a relatively short time. However, since early March 2020, when the country started to reopen, the mobility of the whole society was rebuilt on the promise of long term digital infrastructure to continue to monitor citizens.

In this article, I will provide some evidence and analysis on how China has successfully controlled the virus by creating multiple internal borders during the critical days of the pandemic and along its national borders when its neighboring countries started to be affected by the virus. I will then review how China started to build a digital database which connects citizens' ID numbers to telephone number by authenticating telephone number with real names. With this data base and other technology supports, China developed a "healthy QR" code to enable or prohibit people to move between barriers. I argue that internal borders, international borders, and continuing access to citizen databases by regimes of healthcare have together facilitated a discourse of successful pandemic response within China.

### **Biographical information**

Dr. Zhen Ma is a postdoctoral researcher works in the Department of Religious Diversity in Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. She is currently working on a project dealing with transnational interactions between Southwest China and Myanmar, with a focus on two interrelated issues on Theravada Buddhist networks and cross-border marriage.

## **Stasis, rush and state time: crossing Asian borders in a pandemic**

**Ed Pulford**, University of Manchester

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and state-led responses to it, produced radically new temporal orientations for people across the world. Best characterised as contrasting senses of stasis and rush, these ranged from feelings of being suspended “out of time” during lockdown to an urgent need to act experienced by those caught far from home when the outbreak began. Drawing on such observations of Covid’s global effects, this paper examines cases of people both rendered static and compelled to move across state borders in Asia during the first months of the pandemic. As millions of PRC citizens were locked down, non-citizens in the country had to decide whether to leave. Among my interviewees for this paper are Russians ordinarily resident in China who, on being “repatriated”, had to abandon well-established lives and most of their possessions, compounding the sense of existence being put on hold. Later, with the virus under control in China but spreading throughout Russia, Chinese citizens in Russia experienced an inverted sense of repatriation rush. These experiences together encode a disorienting mix of urgency and boredom, but all demonstrate how pandemic temporalities across the spectrum are tethered to states as political and spatial entities. Whether expressed in the panic around “out of place” non-citizens posing a threat, or in the measures taken by state authorities, the stretching or compression of time unfolds in proportion both to varying state-society relationships, and inter-state relations. As I will show, seeing this reveals the new ways in which a viral crisis makes border and state effects manifest in everyday life.

### **Biographical information**

Ed Pulford is an anthropologist and Lecturer in Chinese Studies at the University of Manchester. His research and teaching focus on cross-border relationships at both everyday and state levels between China, Russia and Korea, and on variant experiences of socialism in these countries. His first book *Mirrorlands* is an anthro-historical account of life in the Sino-Russian borderlands narrated via a travelogue through the region.

*Panel 4: Negotiating Mobility Regimes*

**Evacuation stories from Wuhan: Transnational families, legal consciousness and whiteness in times of Covid-19**

**Willy Sier**, University of Amsterdam

In the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak in Wuhan, the city's mixed-status families became frontpage news. Foreign governments started to evacuate their citizens from Wuhan, creating problems for families with partners with different citizenship status and children with double nationalities, who could not be evacuated together. In this high pressure moment the bright spotlight of the international media shone on the murkiness surrounding China's immigration policy. Which state do these people belong to? Are they Chinese or are they foreign? Should families always have the right to stay together? The stories of family separation and the emotional reactions to them did not only make claims about who belongs where, but also about what a "proper" family looks like.

This article first sets out what the options are for mixed-status families in China, connecting to studies about people's legal consciousness, as it argues that migrants in China – irrespective of whether they are married to Chinese citizens – move "with the law", meaning that they navigate legal frameworks as best they can, trying to make them work for them. It argues that mixed families' strategies are an extension of overall migrant strategies in China. Yet, as has also been shown in studies of mixed families in Europe and the United States, state policies become personal when they enter the private domain, affecting people's sense of citizenship and relationship with the law. This study of mixed-status families in China in a time of crisis, when "living with the law" becomes much more difficult, sheds light on the precarious situation of mixed-status families in China. It also highlights how imagined hierarchies of gender, race, and nationality influence how China's relatively vague migration laws are implemented on a case-by-case basis.

**Biographical information**

Dr Willy Sier works as a postdoctoral researcher in the ChinaWhite project in the Department of Anthropology of the University of Amsterdam. She focuses on reconfigurations of whiteness in the context of romantic relationships between White western women and Chinese men. Her PhD-research (2020) examined the role of Chinese higher education in shaping rural-urban relations in Wuhan. Her recent publications include "Daughters' Dilemma's: the role of female graduates in rural households in Hubei province, China" (*Gender, Place and Culture*) and "The Price of Aspirations: Education Migrants' Pursuit of Higher Education in Hubei Province, China" (*The European Journal of Development Research*). She has also conducted research on labour migrants' return to work after the lockdown in Wuhan.

*Panel 4: Negotiating Mobility Regimes*

**Caught in the middle: Chinese international students studying in the US in times of COVID-19**

**Jing Yu**, University of California, Santa Barbara

Chinese international students have increasingly become the most visible student group in American campuses. The breakout of COVID-19 has not only revealed increased xenophobia and persistent racism against Asian Americans but also triggered heated discussions on social media about Chinese students' overseas studies. This sudden pandemic has made us realize hostility and discrimination are not confined in the host country, because for mobile students across national borders, hate discourses can come from two sides.

With neo-nationalism widely spreading in both China and U.S., Chinese students are caught in the middle, racialized in the host country and labeled as out-group members in their home country. When US president was quick to use the term "Chinese virus" to associate the infection with an ethnicity, Asian people, including Chinese students, immediately faced a resurgence of the "yellow peril." Meanwhile, those who manage to go back to China also feel unwelcome from co-nationals: they are either portrayed as "giant babies" who have been spoiled by their ultra-rich families or criticized about their utilitarian intentions by voting with feet. Both nation-state-based narratives has left international students under the radar of equality and social justice discourses.

I, therefore, propose to conduct an online ethnographic study to investigate American and Chinese media discourses of Chinese students to uncover negative framings governed by racial and nationalistic ideologies. I plan to collect data from Facebook, Twitter, Weibo, and WeChat, to explore 1) how are Chinese international students discursively constructed online during COVID-19? 2) how do students respond to these racialized and stigmatized media representations?

**Biographical information**

Jing Yu is a fifth-year PhD candidate in Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at University of California, Santa Barbara. She received M.A. in TESOL from the Ohio State University in 2015. Her research interests focus on international student mobility, recruitment, and enrollment as well as lived experiences of international students in the context of American higher education. In her dissertation, she majorly explores issues on inequality in international student mobility on a global scale and Chinese international students' racialized experiences on and off the campus in the US. Ethnographic methodology has been adopted to investigate dissonances of institutional missions and international students' realities. Her research responds to the growing need for insights into how to increase global equality in study abroad and student mobility.

*Panel 4: Negotiating Mobility Regimes*

**China's Lost Dreamers: How young western entrepreneurs renegotiate their aspirations, skills and racial capital in pandemic times**

**Christina Kefala**, University of Amsterdam

Against the background of the substantial changes that the current coronavirus pandemic brought to many people's lives, this research investigates the effects on young western entrepreneurs in China who returned to their home countries or migrated to other countries in the West due to China's lockdown. While previous studies have mostly examined China as an emerging destination offering professional opportunities for international migrants, this paper focuses on the experiences and the positionalities of young, educated, middle-class entrepreneurs leaving China. It highlights the varying impact of the corona crisis on the businesses, the social status, and the identities of these foreign entrepreneurs by portraying their migration experience and their social positioning before and during the pandemic.

Based on eight months of online ethnographic fieldwork (February 2020 - September 2020), 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews with western entrepreneurs who left China at the beginning of the pandemic were analysed. Through their narratives, this paper illustrates their different trajectories and their professional and socio-cultural reorientation due to the outbreak of the virus. Initially aspiring to live in China and to establish themselves as cosmopolitan individuals within the entrepreneurial sector, the research participants had to reframe their mobility aspirations as their migratory pathways were re-directed to countries in the West. This onward mobility is experienced as a transformative process. While their cosmopolitan identities as skilled migrants in China were strongly based on their whiteness, this paper demonstrates how dimensions of their "white capital" were adapted and re-defined as these young western entrepreneurs left China and re-established themselves in western countries.

**Biographical information**

I am a graduate of the School of Social Anthropology at Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens (Greece) and received my Master in Sociology from the School of Social Development and Public Policy at Fudan University in Shanghai (China), with a scholarship from the Chinese Government (CSC). Currently, I am a PhD student at the Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR) at the University of Amsterdam in the ChinaWhite project. Specifically, my doctoral research focuses on "Performing whiteness in China's entrepreneurship sector". My interests include race in migration, young professionals in China, entrepreneurial business practices in China, and Chinese society and culture.

*Panel 5: Online Racism and Solidarity*

**Digital racism in pandemic times**

**María do Mar Castro Varela**, Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in Berlin and **Yener Bayramoğlu**, Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in Berlin

This paper examines the proliferation of racist images and narratives in the context of Covid-19 crisis in Germany. While racist and heterosexist discursive strategies that associate viruses to certain racialized and sexualized bodies is not a new phenomenon in pandemic studies, the recent outbreak throws new light on these processes. Unparalleled in the history of pandemics, the outbreak of Covid-19 is intertwined with the broad implementation of digital technologies in novel ways. This makes it imperative to explore the digital as an integral part of the analysis of the narratives about the disease.

By synthesizing a multi method approach of expert interviews, digital ethnography, and critical discourse analysis, this paper will show how digital media simultaneously functions as a space where on the one hand, racism is (re-)produced, and on the other hand resisted. As a case study, it will focus on the activist work of Korientation, a newly established (post-)migrant organization and social network that documents racism against Asian Germans in the context of the outbreak of Covid-19. By creating a digital archive of racist experiences, the organization fights against the discursive strategies that tie German Asians to the disease. By exploring the complex relationship between racism, pandemics and digital media, this paper will illustrate how images of coronavirus are attached to racialized bodies, and how activists are combating the racialization of the disease in online spaces. Furthermore, we will present a brief analysis of Diaspora.Asia.Podcast., podcast series on diaspora in Germany from an Asian perspective.

**Biographical information**

Prof. Dr. María do Mar Castro Varela is professor of Social Work and Pedagogy at the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in Berlin. Prof. Castro Varela has expertise in gender and queer studies, postcolonial theory, critical migration studies, and discourse analysis. She published several monographs including *Unzeitgemäße Utopien. Migrantinnen zwischen Selbsterfindung und Gelehrter Hoffnung* and *Postkoloniale Theorie. Eine kritische Einführung* in German.

Dr. Yener Bayramoğlu is a postdoc researcher at the Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences in Berlin. Bayramoğlu's research focuses on digital ethnography, queer studies, critical migration studies, intersectionality, media studies and social inequalities.

*Panel 5: Online Racism and Solidarity*

**Somatic nationalism in covid times: Infodemic, islamophobia and new forms of online transnational muslim solidarities in India**

**Sanam Roohi**, Georg-August University Göttingen

The paper studies the role of hate-speech in redrawing online community boundaries during the COVID-19 pandemic in India. To control the spread of the virus, the Hindu right-wing regime invoked somatic nationalist ideals of a healthy (Hindu) body and deployed the metaphor of war – ‘fighting’, ‘defeating’ and ‘killing’ the enemy or the virus. Just as it imposed the world’s most stringent lockdown amidst global outcry, members of Tablighi Jamaat became the center of media attention when some of its members were found to be infected. Thereafter, each of these metaphors used for the virus converged within the Muslim body. The narrative fashioned by the mainstream media and the ‘Hindu Twitter’ pathologized Muslim bodies as the enemy or the virus that was weakening India. This narrative was swiftly rebutted by members of the ‘Indian Muslim Twitter’. With hashtags and tagging of international handles, Twitter for the first time saw prominent Arab Muslim voices lending support to Indian Muslims in their fight against the idea of Muslims as primary spreader of COVID-19. Even as the online space saw extreme hate speech, it became a platform to counter it through transnational forging of online solidarities. Taking the pandemic as an episodic instance that provides insights into the processes of social boundary making and breaking, the paper argues that such instances reveal how right-wing regimes have harnessed infodemic in virtual spaces to rally support against the perceived enemies of their body politic. Further, it also interrogates the possibilities and limits of transnational solidarities built on online spaces.

**Biographical information**

Sanam Roohi is a Alexander von Humboldt postdoctoral fellow at Centre for Modern Indian Studies, Georg-August Universität, Göttingen, Germany, currently researching the transnationalisation of the Telangana movement in India. As a social anthropologist, her work straddles the themes on transnational resource flows and their ramifications on caste-and-religious inflected community formations. With a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Amsterdam, her research outputs include publication of a few book chapters and articles in journals including *Modern Asian Studies*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *International Political Sociology* and *Ethnic and Migration Studies*, apart from a co-produced film on diaspora philanthropy. She was a 2018 SSRC InterAsia Fellow at the Global and Transregional Studies Platform, Georg-August University and a Marie Curie COFUND fellow at Max Weber Kolleg, Erfurt, between September 2018 - August 2020. She is on the editorial board of *Comparative Migration Studies* journal.

*Panel 5: Online Racism and Solidarity*

**Performing “foreign friend” during the Covid-19 pandemic: transnational white masculinities in Chinese social media**

**Ke Ma**, University of Amsterdam

This paper studies western male vloggers’ online self-representations during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the West is increasingly lampooned on Chinese social media. By analysing the western male vloggers’ self-representations before and after the outbreak, I examine how they maintain and increase their popularity and how white masculinities are performed in such a precarious online environment. This paper’s findings attest to the privilege and precariousness of white masculinities in China informed by two dominant interlocking discourses about Western male migrants: Western males as the “superhero” who signifies modernity and power and as the “foreign trash” who takes advantages of China. This study shows that the images of western male vloggers do not easily fall into either narrative about white men in China. During the pandemic, western male vloggers construct an alternative image of “foreign friend” on Chinese social media by highlighting family dimensions of masculinity, embodying Chinese male ideals, and accenting their political and cultural identification with the Chinese.

**Biographical information**

Ke Ma obtained her B.A. in English and Literature at the Minzu University of China and research M.A. in Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam. Her fields of interest are visual arts, globalization studies, and China studies. Since 2019, she has been working for Chinawhite Project as a Ph.D. researcher. Her Ph.D. project looks into multiple versions of whiteness enacted through foreign actors, models, and vloggers’ performances in China’s media, fashion, and entertainment industries.

*Panel 5: Online Racism and Solidarity*

**Racialization in Twitter debates at times of a border and pandemic crisis: The meanings and ideologies associated with covid-19 hashtags and the refugee issue**

**Maria Avraamidou**, University of Cyprus

Europe's latest border crisis at Turkey's and Greece's borders, late February and throughout March 2020, coincided with the enactment of the covid-19 pandemic. When Turkey declared the suspension of the EU-Turkey migration deal of March 2016 (the deal), ten thousand of people moved towards its borders with Greece and Bulgaria aiming at crossing to other European countries. In responding, Greece hermetically closed its borders citing health reasons and specifically the pandemic; Greek security forces violently stopped migrants from crossing. The highly mediated events prompted an anti-migrant rhetoric by far-right EU politicians in mainstream and social media (e.g. Italy's Salvini) while the EC President Ursula von der Leyen, declared that Greece is Europe's shield. The events were tweeted, retweeted, shared and liked across several social media. In shaping the debate, twitter users used a set of hashtags associating migration and asylum policies with the new virus (e.g. #corona, #covid19). This work in progress examines the ways the outbreak of the covid-19 re/shaped the migration debate in the microblog reformulating exclusivist ideologies like nationalism, xenophobia and islamophobia. The racialization of migrant others is at the center of the study, drawing from critical social media and migration/ race studies. In doing so, it uses to a small extent metrics to offer the broader picture of the debate and its connections to the pandemic and then focuses on a qualitative thematic and discourse analysis of tweets. The study aims at illustrating how restrictive approaches to migration intermingle with coronavirus discourses not in order to democratize the migration debate but rather to further its repressiveness across national reception contexts.

**Biographical information**

Since completing my PhD in Communication and Internet Studies (December 2015), I developed a research and teaching portfolio in media, culture and power with a particular focus on media approaches to migrant and refugee reception, and their interplay with nationalism and ethno-racialization in the context of global divisions and inequalities. Before taking an academic turn, I held professional posts with UNHCR and anti-racist NGOs as well as journalism posts. In December 2018, I gained a post-doctoral award (Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation) to study international and social media, press agencies and forced human mobility from the global south to the north. [My research](#) is published in peer review journals like the *Journal of the European Institute for Communication and Culture*, *Javnost*, *the Journal National Identities*, *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, *the Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* and others.

*Panel 6: Perceptions of Overseas Chinese*

### **The framing of Chinese foreign workers in Indonesian online media during COVID-19 outbreak**

**Putu Agung Nara Indra Prima Satya**, Parahyangan Catholic University Indonesia and **Formas Juitan Lase**, Christian University of Indonesia

The stereotyping of Chinese foreign workers in Indonesia is increasing rapidly during the COVID-19 outbreak. Before the outbreak, the Indonesian society already has a negative perspective towards Chinese descendants or Chinese workers who portrayed as troublemaker by several parties in Indonesia. They were perceived as “job-stealer” and even “communist agents” who tries to take over this country. Now, they are also accused as a deadly virus-carrier. This portrayal added a new dimension into the negative image of Chinese workers in Indonesia. Furthermore, we can identify the stereotyping of Chinese workers based on the news in online media. They performed as an outlet in which the stereotyping can be seen from their released news. Based from their point of view in delivering the news, we can analyze the preferences of the media towards Chinese workers. Hereinafter, this paper will try to answer the question: “How the Indonesian online media frame the image of Chinese workers during the COVID-19 outbreak?” The grounded data for this research will be collected from online news of two prominent media: Kompas.com and Republika.co.id. The Kompas.com is a secular-based online media, while Republika.co.id represents the Islamic-based media. We will analyze the news for six months from March 2020 (when Indonesia officially published the first COVID-19 cases) until August 2020 (when Indonesia is expected to recover from the COVID-19). We will use the framing analysis with qualitative approach. We will also combine it with the identity formation concept to explain the stereotyping that befell to the Chinese workers.

#### **Biographical information**

Putu Agung Nara Indra Prima Satya is a lecturer in the Department of International Relations Parahyangan Catholic University. He earned his bachelor’s degree in Gadjah Mada University Indonesia and his master’s degree in School of Peace and Conflict from the same university. Nara is teaching the courses of identity politics, international politics and peace studies. His research interests are ranging from the identity-based conflict, violence, radicalism, identity politics and diaspora studies.

Formas Juitan Lase is a lecturer in the Department of Communication Christian University of Indonesia. She earned her bachelor’s degree in Christian University of Indonesia and her master’s degree in Department of Communication Studies in Diponegoro University in Indonesia. She is teaching the subjects of digital journalism, qualitative research methods, and communication & gender. Her research interests are journalism, and media & gender.

Panel 6: *Perceptions of Overseas Chinese*

**Yellow peril redux: How the COVID-19 pandemic is fostering racial discrimination toward Asian Americans**

**Nobuko Adachi**, Illinois State University

In this presentation I examine the currently increasing incidents of xenophobia and racial hatred demonstrated against people of Asian descent in the United States due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I argue that these incidents are not unique to the present crisis, but are deeply related to a perpetual-foreigner stereotype that is still prevalent in the United States. To do so, I look at the language and metaphors used toward the Asian American community regarding the pandemic. Ever since this emergency began, the media have made comparisons of the pandemic to “Pearl Harbor,”—with the country being at “war”—and described it using racially-loaded terms like “the Chinese virus.” This careless scapegoating language—used by high government officials like the President down to local county board members—carelessly stokes fear, bias, and blame, whether intended or not. However, in the already tender racial climate of the country, these metaphors and labels contribute to the dissemination of widespread misinformation through social networking, as well as false news stories of the most preposterous kind (such as the coronavirus was intentionally developed in a Chinese laboratory for nefarious purposes, or that the Communist Chinese are stealing American vaccine secrets). “China” and “Communist” have become the new replacements for the “Yellow Peril” warnings heard at the beginning of the twentieth century. Under such a social, political, and linguistic environment, Asian Americans, and Asians living in the United States are subject to no end of verbal abuse in the media and daily life.

**Biographical information**

Nobuko Adachi is Professor of Anthropology at Illinois State University and is co-editor of *Pan-Japan: The International Journal of the Japanese Diaspora*. Her interests are in Asian American studies; diaspora theory; and transnational migration. She is the author of *Ethnic Capital in a Japanese Brazilian Commune: Children of Nature* (2017), the second author of *Language, Culture, and Society: Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology* (2017), and the editor of *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents, and Uncertain Futures* (2006). She has written some two dozen articles on transnational migration and identity, including “‘But It’s Our Mother Tongue!’: The Japanese Language as Spoken in a Japanese Brazilian Community” (*Japanese Language and Literature*), “Japanese Brazilians: A Positive Ethnic Minority in a Racial Democracy” (*Studies on Asia*), and “The Dynamics of the Racial and Ethnic Categorization and Classification Process: Labeling, Race-ing, and Ethnic-izing in a Japanese Brazilian Commune” (in German, in *Polylog*).

Panel 6: Perceptions of Overseas Chinese

## **Racialisation, boundary-marking and protestation of Corona-racism in multicultural Europe**

**Maggi Leung, Yanbo Hao, Özge Bilgili and Rick Dolphijn**, Utrecht University

As the Coronavirus spreads, stigmatisation, prejudice and discrimination make their mark in many parts of the world. Reports on physical or verbal assault on people of Chinese/Asian appearance are abundant, also in many 'multicultural societies' in Europe. Anti-Asian racism has also led to higher financial losses for many Chinese and Southeast Asian (migrant) businesses and restaurants as compared to their counterparts. Prejudice also affects customers with Chinese appearance who are denied services. The new epidemic has given a stage for renewed racialised media discourse. In the Netherlands, Lex Gaarhuis and his song 'Voorkomen is beter dan Chinezen' provides an illustrative case. Many speak of the 'Corona-racism pandemic', denoting the rise of racialised acts and narratives since the advent of the new virus.

This paper presents the first insights from our pilot research '[COVID] COUNTERING THE VIRUS: DISCRIMINATION AND PROTESTATION IN MULTICULTURAL EUROPE'. Drawing on news and social media content analyses as well as qualitative interviews, we document the daily online and offline experiences of people of Chinese/Asian appearance connected to Corona-racism. We analyse the processes in which existing social relations and hierarchies are being intensified, contested, transformed and created. Conceptually, we draw on the 'intersectionality in discrimination' concept to underline the need to go beyond majority vs. minority dichotomous, ethnicity-centered framework in understanding racialisation and discrimination. Our findings show the key and intersecting role of other axes of differences such as class, gender, place and generations in shaping the processes of stigmatisation and actions in countering them.

### **Biographical information**

The research team is based at Utrecht University. It consists of scholars of interdisciplinary backgrounds, namely human geography, migration and diaspora studies (Leung, Associate Professor/Hao, Research Assistant), media and performance studies, philosophy, gender and postcolonial studies (Dolphijn, Associate Professor), social and behavioural sciences and social psychology (Bilgili, Assistant Professor). We collaborate with Stichting CommonFrames (Utrecht) that facilitate film education and media literacy for newcomers in the Netherlands.

In particular, Maggi (Principle Investigator) has examined through her research the geography and impact of migration and mobility (esp. education, labour and professional mobility), and the internationalisation of education. She has published on these topics in a range of geography and social science journals, including *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *Geoforum*, *Population, Space and Place*, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, *Globalisation, Education and Society*.

*Panel 6: Perceptions of Overseas Chinese*

**The effects of COVID-19 on Chinese immigrants in Buenos Aires, Argentina**

**Luciana Denardi**, San Martín National University Buenos Aires and **Clara Baumann**, University of Duisburg-Essen

Although Chinese workers and merchants had come to Latin America since the early XIX century, their migration to Argentina is a relatively recent phenomenon: After the first wave of Taiwanese families arriving in the 1970s, merchants, academics and highly skilled professionals from mainland China followed throughout the early XXI century. Despite the active participation of their heterogeneous community in the daily life of the receiving society, they are frequently facing ethnic discrimination.

Our study aims to shed light on two different but interrelated effects of Covid19 on Chinese immigrants in Argentina. Our hypothesis indicates that, while the outbreak of Covid19 has reinforced racial prejudices against ethnic Chinese, it contributed to the creation of new forms of empowerment of the discriminated minority: Using social media, they started to raise their voice and defend themselves.

Throughout this study, we combine data of ethnographic fieldwork with overseas Chinese in Buenos Aires conducted since 2012 with various strategies of online ethnography. In the first place, we elaborate on the prevalent prejudices against Chinese people in Argentina before the pandemic and point out their rather unorganised ways to respond. Secondly, we analyse how Covid19 is presented and related to China by public and social media in Buenos Aires. Thirdly, we review the responses by Chinese migrants on social networks, pointing out their increasingly strategic self-organisation. We conclude that social networks are used as strategic tools for empowerment, as they enable the formerly unheard minority to find and raise their voice against discrimination. Related questions for further research will be discussed in the final considerations.

**Biographical information**

Luciana Denardi, PhD, is a postdoctoral researcher at the National Council of Science and Technology (CONICET) and professor at the San Martín National University at Buenos Aires, Argentina. She started studying different aspects of Chinese overseas in Buenos Aires in 2012. Her PhD dissertation analyses the consequences of the strengthening of relations between the diasporic bureaucracy of the Chinese overseas and the Chinese State. For that purpose, she did ethnographic fieldwork to understand the identification process of immigrants, their associations, rituals and commercial relations with several actors in the city. She is currently working on the particularities of the migration process for women. Also, she elaborates different tensions that emerge in the moral evaluation of the educational process of Chinese descendants in Argentina in comparison with the education migrants received in China.

Clara Baumann (MA) is a doctoral researcher at the department of Sociology at the University of Duisburg-Essen in Germany, simultaneously participating in the International Max Planck Research School on the Social and Political Constitution of the Economy in Cologne. After receiving her MA in Regional Chinese Studies at the University of Cologne and studying several years in China and Latin America, she is currently working on the global influence of Chinese state and private investments and their effects on labor relations. Focusing on Latin America, she is particularly interested in regional transformations in Argentina and Colombia. Further areas of research are regimes of inclusion, exclusion and different forms of empowerment of migrants in an increasingly interconnected world.