



International Conference

# Buddhism after Mao: Exploring Chinese Models of Religious Production



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Inalco  
Salles 4.23 - 4.24  
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# **BUDDHISM AFTER MAO: EXPLORING CHINESE MODELS OF RELIGIOUS PRODUCTION**

Paris, October 17-18, 2014

Salle 4.24, Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales/Sorbonne Paris Cité

## ***Schedule of Panels***

### ***Friday October 17***

**9:00-9:15 am: Welcome and Reception**

**9:15-9:20 am: Introductory and Welcoming Remarks by Ji Zhe**

#### **9:20 am-12:00 pm PANEL I**

##### **Negotiating Legitimacy: Doing Buddhism with the Communist State**

**Alison Denton JONES** (Harvard University)

*The State as Master Framer?*

*Urban Lay Buddhists Contending with the P.R. Chinese State's Multiple Frames for Religion*

**Claire VIDAL** (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense)

*At the Heart of a "Nebula" of Religious and Political Organizations:*

*Doing Putuoshan Buddhism and Creating a Sacred Space in Post-Mao China*

Coffee/Tea Break (Salle 4.23)

**André LALIBERTÉ** (University of Ottawa)

*The Development of a Buddhist Charity in Beijing*

**Susan K. MCCARTHY** (Providence College)

*Learning from Lei Feng on the Bodhi Path: Buddhism, Charity and the Party-state in China*

Discussant: **Vincent DURAND-DASTES** (INALCO)

#### **12:00-2:00 pm LUNCH**

#### **2:00-5:30 pm PANEL II**

##### **Building Strategies: Multiple Actors and Manifold Games in the Buddhist Transformation**

**HUANG Weishan**黃維珊 (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

*Buddhist Gentrification in Urban China*

**Brian J. NICHOLS** (Mount Royal University)

*Tourist Temples and Places of Practice:*

*Charting Multiple Paths in the Revival of Monastic Buddhism in Contemporary China*

Coffee/Tea Break (Salle 4.23)

**ASHIWA Yoshiko** (Hitotsubashi University) and **David L. WANK** (Sophia University)

1. *Transformation of Buddhism within Contemporary Revival in China:*

*Backgrounds, Resources, and Strategies of Abbots in Nanputuo Monastery*

2. *Buddhist Devotees and State Control in Contemporary China's Buddhism:*

*A Comparatively-Informed Analysis as seen in Xiamen City*

Discussant: **Nicolas SIHLÉ** (CNRS)

## **Saturday October 18**

**9:30 am-12:00 pm PANEL III**

### **Restoring Continuity: Monastic Tradition and Beyond**

**Wu Jiang 吴疆** (University of Arizona)

*Spatial Analysis of Buddhist Monasteries in Contemporary China*

**Daniela CAMPO** (Université Paris Diderot)

*Bridging the Gap:*

*The Religious (and Political) Offspring of Republican Buddhist Leaders in Post-Mao China*

Coffee/Tea Break (Salle 4.23)

**Ester BIANCHI** (Università degli Studi di Perugia)

*Restoration, Adaptation and Standardization of "Correct" Ordination Procedures in Contemporary Chinese Buddhism: A Tentative Evaluation*

**Ji Zhe 汲喆** (INALCO) and **Jieyu 戒毓** (The Buddhist Academy of China)

*Schooling Dharma Teachers: The Buddhist Academy System and Elite Monk Training*

Discussant: **Vincent GOOSSAERT** (EPHE)

**12:00-2:00 pm LUNCH**

**2:00-5:30 pm PANEL IV**

### **Gathering Buddhists: New Spaces, Updated Practices**

**Gareth FISHER** (Syracuse University)

*From Top to Bottom and Back Again:*

*Exploring the Popularization of Buddhism in Twenty-First Century China*

**Stefania TRAVAGNIN** (University of Groningen)

*Buddhist Cyber-Activities in Contemporary China:*

*Assessing Contexts and Modalities of Online Buddhist Ritual Practices*

Coffee/Tea Break (Salle 4.23)

幸福来**XIN Fulai** (Anshan Temple)

堕胎婴灵超度法会：当代中国佛教的一种新仪式

**Esther-Maria GUGGENMOS** (University Erlangen-Nuremberg)

*The Buddhists' Fascination with Divination:*

*Tracing the Tentative Formation Process of a Believers' Community*

Discussant: **Adam Yuet CHAU** (University of Cambridge)

**5:30-6:30 pm DISCUSSION OF PUBLICATION PLANS, CLOSING REMARKS**

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## Abstracts

### PANEL I

**Alison Denton JONES** (Harvard University)

***The State as Master Framer? Urban Lay Buddhists Contending with the P.R. Chinese State's Multiple Frames for Religion***

In China today, Buddhism is one of five state-recognized religions. While the legal legitimacy of these five formal religions is clear, the *cultural legitimacy* of religion in the contemporary P.R.C. is contested. In recent years, the P.R.C. state has moved from actively promoting a very negative frame for religion to simultaneously promoting conflicting framings of religion; I identify the two most important as the well-recognized "Religion is Anti-Modern" frame and the more positive "Religion is Socially Beneficial" frame.

This paper examines how these conflicting state-institutionalized frames for religion shape, and are used by, regular lay Buddhists as they attempt to understand and justify the place of Buddhism in urban China today. Lay Buddhists from different social locations prioritized these different framings to different degrees as they made sense of their own involvement with Buddhism and presented Buddhism to others. People for whom the "Anti-Modern" framing dominated proactively denied Buddhism is a religion to justify their involvement. Others focused on Buddhism's official legal status and the "Socially Beneficial" framing to emphatically claim the label of religion for Buddhism.

I explore how regular lay Buddhists contend with state frames for religion, showing the variety of narrative strategies lay Buddhists use to negotiate the relationship between the categories of Buddhism, religion, superstition, and national welfare. I conclude that the state's negative frame for religion is still salient, but no longer hegemonic, signaling an opening up of not just legal and physical space for religion in urban areas, but cultural and normative space. I also show that Buddhist teachers are producing robust narrative & categorical strategies for engaging negative and positive frames for religion.

**Claire VIDAL** (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense)

***At the Heart of a "Nebula" of Religious and Political Organizations: Doing Putuoshan Buddhism and Creating a Sacred Space in Post-Mao China***

Located in Zhoushan archipelago, Putuoshan is one of the four sacred Buddhist mountains in China. Since the 9<sup>th</sup> century, it has been the pilgrimage place of the famous bodhisattva Guanyin, celebrated in several Asian countries (Japan, Korea, and also Vietnam). At the beginning of the 1980s, the local authorities decided to rebuild the temples of Putuoshan. They wanted to make it a Chinese Buddhist high-place and thus a very important touristic spot in the Zhejiang province. Over the last few years, these politics of modernization have led to transformations in the conditions of pilgrimage as well as the living conditions of local people. These recent transformations are due to the confluence of local actors' interests. Several official organizations take part in the administration of religious affairs at different administrative levels (national, provincial, and local): the Commission of Religious Affairs (*zongjiao shiwuju* 宗教事务局), the United Front Work Department of Communist Party (*tongzhanbu* 统战部), and the Buddhist Association (*fojiao xiehui* 佛教协会). While their respective role are supposed to be officially defined, in reality they form of a "structural nebula". This nebula gathers a wide range of actors who contribute to developing Putuoshan, including some who are not part of state organizations, such as scholars. It takes the form of a framework in which the dynamics of relationships (negotiations, authoritarianism...) are informally established and through which the modalities of doing Putuoshan Buddhism are produced. From my ethnographic data, I will

analyze the characteristics of this nebula and the strategies that the Buddhist communities of Putuoshan have developed to promote their own visions of the modern Buddhism. I will conclude by showing how their responses integrate the different aspects of Chinese religious field, and at the same time elaborate another way to doing Han Buddhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**André LALIBERTÉ** (University of Ottawa)

*The Development of a Buddhist Charity in Beijing*

The paper discusses recent attempts by the Chinese Communist Party to control and orient the direction of Buddhism, focusing on a recently established Buddhist charity in Beijing municipality. Using as a theoretical framework an approach inspired by Bourdieu on the different strategies used by the state for the accumulation of symbolic power, the paper argues that after the disaster of the usurpation strategy used during the Maoist period, the CCP has opted for a strategy of imitation in order to harness the resources of religious institutions in helping it implement aspects of its social policies. The mixed results obtained by strategies of innovation for the four decades after Mao, and the unequal relation of power between an omnipotent party-state and Buddhist institutions handicapped by a climate largely hostile to religion having precluded the idea of establishing a strategy of cooperation, the strategy of imitation implies creating ex-nihilo institutions that will reproduce an institutional behavior that the state approves. The success of this strategy, however, relies on pliant actors that accept to fulfill that role. The paper will make clear the limitations to this approach: the limited resources bestowed to religious institutions for their development of philanthropy prevents them from having a greater impact in the delivery of social services. The paper will be based on Communist Party's instructions to its cadres on religious work, research on Buddhist charity by Chinese scholars, and participant-observation in the summer of 2014 to the activities of a six year-old Buddhist philanthropy based in Beijing municipality.

**Susan K. MCCARTHY** (Providence College)

*Learning from Lei Feng on the Bodhi Path: Buddhism, Charity and the Party-state in China*

In recent years the Chinese government has demonstrated increasing tolerance and support for faith-based charity. Certain types of Buddhist charity are particularly welcomed due to the perception of Buddhism as a core element of China's traditional culture. Regime encouragement also reflects the success of Buddhists in demonstrating, through charity, their loyalty to the regime and commitment to building the "harmonious society." Reflecting this success, at least one Buddhist non-profit, the Beijing Ren'ai Charitable Foundation, has served as a venue for grassroots Communist Party branch-building activities and the study of the "Lei Feng Spirit." That a lay Buddhist charity would be seen as an appropriate forum in which CCP members might learn from Lei Feng underscores the efforts of Ren'ai to harmonize its goals and methods with norms of public service promoted by the party-state. These efforts make political sense, but they also assist Ren'ai in rendering its activities meaningful and comprehensible to a broader Chinese public, an objective furthered by its own appropriation of Lei Feng. Yet many aspects of Buddhist charity resist easy "harmonization" with party-state ideals and objectives. Whether the Buddhist faithful can learn from Lei Feng while traveling the Bodhi path depends on how tradition, merit, and compassion are understood and practiced.

## PANEL II

**HUANG Weishan** 黃維珊 (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

### *Buddhist Gentrification in Urban China*

This research examines how religion and economics intertwine in urban re-structuring with both national and global capital flows, through a study of Buddhist networks in China. Established Buddhist temples are pressed to find new niches when they encounter changed patterns of religious and urban identity brought on by gentrification. Religious organizations are challenged to find new ways of cooperating in neighborhoods and the wider city, and take on new roles as they engage in commercial activities. What does large-scale accelerated urbanization mean for moral reform and Buddhist revival in urban China? What are the roles of Buddhist communities in the process of this social change? This research is designed to understand the reconfiguration of these two significant social phenomena.

**Brian J. NICHOLS** (Mount Royal University)

### *Tourist Temples and Places of Practice: Charting Multiple Paths in the Revival of Monastic Buddhism in Contemporary China*

Buddhist monasteries in China have long served as the home of clergy, fields of merit accessed by the laity, and sites of beauty and cultural heritage enjoyed by visitors. During the Cultural Revolution, all places of worship were closed, many were destroyed, and all outward forms of religious practice were forbidden. After the death of Mao and the end of the Cultural Revolution, temples began to be reconstructed, monasteries began to be repopulated with clergy and, eventually, visitors began to burn incense and prostrate to Buddhas throughout China. While Buddhist seminaries have resumed operations and several monasteries have returned to the training of monastics, casual visitors to China may be left with the impression that Buddhist monasticism in China has yet to recover, that China's old monasteries now function as tourist sites where clergy, if they exist at all, serve as caretakers rather than spiritual virtuosos. Such an impression presents part of the story, but only part. This paper examines the current state of monastic Buddhism in China and proposes a threefold typology to capture the different types of monastic Buddhism in China today.

Based on fieldwork carried out from 2006 to 2012, this paper identifies and examines the factors contributing to the revival of temples both as tourist sites and as places of religious practice. I will describe how and why many monasteries become predominantly tourist sites due to a process which I refer to as museumification. I will also introduce sites where the training of monastics takes precedence over the accommodation of tourists and examine the factors conditioning their success.

At the heart of this story are two distinct groups representing two different visions of what temples should be. One group, the core of which is formed by clergy and laypersons, seeks the restoration of Buddhist ritual and practice. The other group contains business people, local administrators and government agencies which exercise various degrees of oversight over temples such as bureaus of culture, bureaus of tourism and units known as temple administrative commissions (*siyuan guanli weiyuanhui*). This latter group actively promotes temples as sites of historic and cultural value rather than places of living religious practice. A third group represents various degrees of commitment to these different goals. This paper will examine how these three groups compete as well as cooperate in fashioning the current revival of monastic Buddhism in China.

**ASHIWA Yoshiko** (Hitotsubashi University) and **David L. WANK** (Sophia University)

***1. Transformation of Buddhism within Contemporary Revival in China: Backgrounds, Resources, and Strategies of Abbots in Nanputuo Monastery***

Nanputuo Monastery was the first Han Chinese temple to be fully revived after the Cultural Revolution. This revival had several phases that are delineated by the attributes and strategies of its abbots in the 1980s and 1990s. This will describe the backgrounds, resources, and strategies of the two abbots of Nanputuo Monastery since the 1980s. We argue that the revival is not simply the reemergence of Buddhism “as it was” but rather the process of transformation of Buddhism to fit to new authority of the contemporary Chinese state.

***2. Buddhist Devotees and State Control in Contemporary China's Buddhism: A Comparatively-Informed Analysis as seen in Xiamen City***

This paper examines the situations and activities of Buddhist devotees in the context of China's state's control of religions. Whereas state policy limits collective activities to temples, devotees' seek to self-organize their activities outside of temples. This paper will examine various issues that devotees are facing by focusing on three kinds of groups in Xiamen—laynuns 齋姑/菜姑 who live communally, members of the Xiamen Devotee Association 廈門市佛教協會, and intellectuals who are interested meditation and study. Analysis is informed by comparison with the situations of devotees in other Asian countries.

**PANEL III**

**Wu Jiang 吴疆** (University of Arizona)

***Spatial Analysis of Buddhist Monasteries in Contemporary China***

This paper approaches the data of contemporary Chinese Buddhist monasteries in mainland by using quantitative methods in geographical studies. Based on recent data from the BGIS project at the University of Arizona, the Atlas of Chinese Religion project at ECAI of University of California, Berkeley, the database of religious sites published by China Data Center at the University of Michigan, we apply geographical methods such as Exploratory Spatial Data Analysis (ESDA) and Regression Analysis to study these data by identifying various social, cultural, economic variables and their relationships to temple-building activities. We find that in contemporary mainland China, the size of the population and the level of transportation conditions are no longer the determining factors in temple distribution. However, regional economic growth does stimulate the development of Buddhist institutions. The distribution of museums shows similar patterns as that of Buddhist monasteries does, indicating their similar roles in local society. We also discuss the role of higher education and the size of internet users in the development of Buddhist institutions. Through this study, we hope to develop a new paradigm for studying Chinese Buddhism and monasteries.

**Daniela CAMPO** (Université Paris Diderot)

***Bridging the Gap: The Religious (and Political) Offspring of Republican Buddhist Leaders in Post-Mao China***

More than twenty years separate the last ordinations ceremonies of the Maoist period in the late 1950s from the resumption of monastic ordinations in the early 1980s: how was this gap bridged? After the end of the Cultural Revolution, many formerly young representatives of the

Buddhist clergy reemerged to lead the Buddhist reconstruction. They engaged in the renovation of Buddhist sites and in the reestablishment of Buddhist training centers, while at the same time holding political positions within the Buddhist Association of China at the local or national level. Only a handful of these monks and nuns are still alive and active today; it is in a very different China that their disciples are carrying on the task by now.

Little is known about this bridging generation: who were these men and women? Where did they draw their religious authority, expertise and legitimacy?

This paper documents the actual connections that existed between the Buddhist leadership of the first half of the twentieth century and the generation of monks and nuns who first engaged in the religious reconstruction in post-Mao China. A few charts will help to illustrate the different kinds of formal transmissions and informal relationships through which this religious legacy was handed down. Charts are also used to show the propagation of some Buddhist lineages to Hong Kong, Taiwan and the United States, as I analyze the ways in which these lineages have contributed from abroad to the economic and ritual reassessment of Buddhism on the continent. Finally, a selection of biographical portraits exemplifies different careers and aspirations of this generation of Buddhist representatives. This study sheds light on the ways the Buddhist legacy of the Republican era made the transition beyond the Maoist period and to contemporary times.

**Ester BIANCHI** (Università degli Studi di Perugia)

***Restoration, Adaptation and Standardization of "Correct" Ordination Procedures in Contemporary Chinese Buddhism: A Tentative Evaluation***

Beginning with the early 1980s and following the reopening of many temples and monasteries, China witnessed an immediate increase of monastic ordinations, after a ban that had lasted for nearly three decades. The scope of the phenomenon is quite impressive, judging from the fact that during the 1990s and 2000s the number of newly ordained monastics regularly exceeded the limits imposed by the Chinese Buddhist Association. Ordinations were not simply resumed in response to an increasing demand (quantitative factor), they were also restored according to what were believed to be 'correct' standards and 'proper' models (qualitative factor). More precisely, the "triple platform ordination" (*santan dajie* 三壇大戒), which dates back to the early seventeenth century and was already a widespread ordination criterion during the Republic of China, was soon selected as the normative procedure to be followed in PRC. On the other hand, nuns' ordinations began to be conferred according to the *erbuseng jie* 二部僧戒 ("ordination conferred by the two *samgha*-orders"), a model which was first introduced in China during the 5th century but that had long been disregarded and had never become the standard frame of reference before.

The primary purpose of this paper is to give an overall overview of the described phenomenon seen from different perspectives: those of the monastic establishment, of individual monks and nuns, but also of the laity and of the external society as a whole. My starting point is the idea that a process of *vinaya* revival is taking place in PRC and is deemed necessary as a guarantee of 'purity' and 'orthodoxy' of the monastic community; this not only would elevate virtues and qualities of the *samgha*, but should also enable its members to act as adequate spiritual guides for the increasingly demanding laity and as authoritative interlocutors for political institutions. In this light, it sounds reasonable for Buddhist authorities to consider the restoration of 'orthodox' rules for the entrance in the monastic orders as a priority. Nevertheless, this only gives an emic explanation of the phenomenon and does not clarify the reasons for the choice of certain systems and regulations instead of others. Therefore, an attempt will also be made to evaluate our theme taking into account other external factors, such as the role of PRC's leadership and that of Taiwanese and/or international interlocutors. As a matter of fact, the affirmation of a unique ordination criterion can be regarded as an attempt



of the political authorities to standardize, unify and control Buddhist diversities. On the other hand, it is my conviction that the 'ordination issue' can also be regarded as an example of the impact of the developments of Buddhism in Taiwan and in the trans-national arena on the developments of Chinese Buddhism, even if relations are not immediately evident and seldom declared.

**Ji Zhe** 汲喆 (INALCO) and **Jieyu** 戒毓 (The Buddhist Academy of China)

***Schooling Dharma Teachers: The Buddhist Academy System and Elite Monk Training***

The "Buddhist academies" (佛学院) is an institutional innovation that appeared in early 20th-century China and has become the main pattern for the reproduction of the elites in the Chinese Buddhist field since 1980. This paper offers a panorama of the development of Buddhist academies at the national level during the last thirty years, presents a case study about the students, teachers, curriculum, and pedagogy of the Buddhist Academy of China (中国佛学院) in Beijing, and analyzes the different positions in the ongoing debates on Buddhist education. The authors argue that, in comparison with the traditional monastic education, the Buddhist academy system provides a new official knowledge, a new master-disciple relationship, and a new legitimacy for religious authority. The formality and validity of such an empowerment through education is deeply linked to the political model of power distribution and the marketization process of cultural capital in contemporary China.

**PANEL IV**

**Gareth FISHER** (Syracuse University)

***From Top to Bottom and Back Again: Exploring the Popularization of Buddhism in Twenty-First Century China***

Studies published on Buddhism in post-Mao China so far reveal two faces of Buddhist re-invention: one is centered at officially-recognized Buddhist sites and features the collusion of influential monastics, local and central governments, and wealthy donors in the rebuilding of prominent temples; another is centered at unofficial and sometimes unsanctioned temples such as those built by followers of the Ven. Jingkong, and is driven by grassroots efforts to spread popularized versions of Buddhist morality. This paper will reconsider the relationship between the official and the popular in Buddhist revival today by comparing the growth of Buddhism at three temple sites: The Temple of Universal Rescue (*Guangji Si*) in Beijing, a temple largely undamaged during the Maoist era that was reopened by the central state in the 1970s; the Bailin Buddhist Temple near Shijiazhuang, a temple rebuilt and expanded through the efforts of well-connected monastics and with strong support from wealthy donors beginning from the late 1980s; and the Mingfa Buddha Hall in the northeast province of Jilin, a popular temple led by a charismatic lay teacher who constructed the site in 2006 with support from her local followers and later used her connections to secure minimal tolerance on the part of the local state. Through a detailed exploration of ethnographic findings at these three temple sites, this paper will argue that, while the rebuilding of the first two temples was largely directed through the agendas of the state and powerful monastics and the third largely through grassroots efforts, in practice, the first two sites enable far more diverse expressions of popular Buddhism than the third.

**Stefania TRAVAGNIN** (University of Groningen)

***Buddhist Cyber-Activities in Contemporary China: Assessing Contexts and Modalities of Online Buddhist Ritual Practices***

Since the Chinese Communist Party altered its religion policies in the 1980s, bottom-up initiatives have renovated old Buddhist temples, reinstated traditional community rituals, and reaffirmed the social role of Buddhist communities. At the same time, the regime aims to channel Buddhism's resuscitation through ideology of state-led nationalism, characterized by the patriotic slogan 'love your country and love your religion' (*aiguo aijiao* 爱国爱教). But shaping popular activism has become increasingly challenging in the twenty-first century, as Buddhist authorities and organizations have expanded their media presence through an outpouring of blogs, websites, TV stations, and TV programs.

Online Buddha Halls (*zaixian fotang* 在线佛堂) and Online Worship (*wangshang jisi* 网上祭祀) appear in many Buddhist websites and in the webpage of major temples. In this Buddhist cyberspace, believers perform different forms of traditional ritual practices in a not traditional and virtual space.

This study contextualizes these popular online Buddhist ritual practices within the ritual discourse in China, and assesses to what extent online Buddhist practices overturn the traditional features of Chinese Buddhist rituals. Secondly, this research analyzes the coexistence of these online rituals with the political ideas in force, and questions the degree to which it serves the aims of the CCP.

**幸福来 Xin Fulai**

***堕胎婴灵超度法会：当代中国佛教的一种新仪式***

从古至今，因重大事件、灾祸、战争而为逝者所做专题超度法会屡见不鲜。但是，为因堕胎而死亡的婴儿灵魂所做专题超度法会，则是新近在中国佛教中出现的现象。这一新兴仪式的出现与推广，得益于净空法师及其弟子的努力。本文考察了净空法师 1990 年代以来对堕胎罪业的论述，介绍了启建堕胎婴灵超度法会的关键人物，并描述了近年来在不同地方由不同佛教团体组织的相关法会的基本形式。

**Esther-Maria GUGGENMOS** (University Erlangen-Nuremberg)

***The Buddhists' Fascination with Divination: Tracing the Tentative Formation Process of a Believers' Community***

This paper attempts to shed light on the various forces at play in the formative phase of a group of practitioners and monastics who share a fascination with divinatory practices, especially the practice of the *Sutra on the Requital of Good and Bad Actions* (*Zhancha Shan'e Yebao Jing* 占察善恶业报经). The doubted legitimacy and the political ambiguity of divinatory practices leads the group of religious practitioners into a constant process of testing their willingness to explore their frame of politically-tolerated action against traditionally-established belief patterns, their socio-economic capacities and their competing ideological, economical and social aspirations. The paper will analyse the agents and forces that shape the situation and delineate the emergence of a loose cloud of believers and their parameters of action. By doing so, it is hoped to contribute to a deeper understanding of the current modes of Chinese religious production between the longing for an idealised past, restorative hopes, traditional established patterns of authority and monastic guidance under the typical premises of a society that is experiencing the rapidly-shrinking limits of spacial mobility, communicational timeframes and the stratification of society at large.