



Nordic Centre Newsletter *Autumn 2019*

*Startled by the awe of autumn that reigns over the earth,
Dare I instill the warmth of spring into the tip of my pen?*

So wrote the Chinese poet Lu Xun in 1935. Autumn 2019 has indeed been awe-some here at Nordic Centre, Fudan University, albeit in the modern English sense of the word. One highlight being the adoption of a new, ambitious strategy for our centre and network. Among its key aims are focusing thematically on key interdisciplinary research areas that will profile the centre through larger-scale research projects; organizing new courses that involve active collaboration between Chinese and Nordic students; and increasing collaboration with external institutions.

We are also honoured to welcome the new Director of Fudan’s Office of Global Partnerships and of Nordic Centre, Professor Lu Li’an.

As in past seasons, we have recently organized a wide range of activities within research, education, culture, and business outreach. These include a research workshop on entrepreneurship, one on ancient history, one on complex science management, an education fair for our member universities, two concerts , and two semester-long courses for students, in addition to our active participation in various external events with companies, government, and scholars.

Inside this issue, you can also read about the dissertation of one of our visiting scholars, Niki Sopanen; about our upcoming conference on ageing, and much more.

Thank you for reading, and never hesitate to contact us if you have ideas for activities within the wide field of Sino-Nordic collaborations Nordic Centre engages in.

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About

- Nordic Centre at Fudan University is a platform for academic collaboration between the five Nordic countries and China
- If you wish to subscribe to the Nordic Centre newsletter, which is published 3-4 times yearly, please sign up for free at nordiccentre.net

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New Nordic Centre strategy

The main agenda item on this fall's council meeting was adopting a new strategy for the the years 2020-2023. The strategy was discussed, slightly amended, and then approved with support from the full council.

The strategy rests on three pillars:

- 1) Offering priority to new collaborative educational partnerships with a focus on innovation and group-work between Chinese and Nordic students.
- 2) Developing Nordic Centre as a facilitator for new research- and innovation-based partnerships between Nordic members and Chinese institutions, focusing on specific thematic areas to be selected by a working group of researchers from the network. The research themes should have particular relevance to Sino-Nordic academic collaboration
- 3) Reaching out to businesses and other societal stakeholders for interaction with researchers and students.

The new strategy will soon be available online when a variety of draft amendments decided upon by the council have been made.



Vice President of International Affairs of Fudan University Chen Zhimin addresses the Nordic Centre council members ahead of dinner on the day of the Council Meeting, October 23, 2019. In his remarks, VP Chen gave a detailed and informative presentation of research at Fudan University.



Planning meeting for the conference in October, 2019.

Nordic Centre Biannual Conference: Ageing and Global Healthcare Challenges

28-29 May 2020, Fudan University, Shanghai, China

Organizers:

Evandro F. Fang (University of Oslo), W.Y. Chan (Chinese University of Hong Kong), and Na HE (Fudan University)

The Call

Ageing is the greatest risk factor for many diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and neurodegeneration, especially Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease, among others. The global average age is increasing dramatically because of improved healthcare system and changes in lifestyle. Accordingly, the ageing society brings formidable socio-economic challenges. In the past decades, our understanding of the mechanisms of ageing at molecular, cellular, individual, and societal levels has greatly expanded. This enables scientists to develop novel strategies to improve healthy ageing and to prevent or treat age-related diseases through lifestyle modifications, pharmacological interventions, and novel therapeutics. This conference will bring together leading ageing researchers working on molecular, cellular, individual, and societal levels of ageing, from around the world, including The University of Oslo, Copenhagen University, Uppsala University, Karolinska Institute, Fudan University, Peking University, Duke Kunshan University, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The University of Hong Kong, National University of Singapore, among others.

Deadline for abstracts December 6.

Read more here: <https://noage100.com/2019/07/28/2020-meetings-global-ageing-and-related-healthcare-challenges/>

Nordic-China Entrepreneurship Research Seminar

On September 27, Nordic Centre hosted a research seminar on entrepreneurship that was funded by the Nordic Centre activity foundation and Umeå School of Business, Economics and Statistics (USBE) in Sweden.

Scholars and entrepreneurs from China and the Nordics visited the seminar, which intended to create a platform for discussing research on entrepreneurship in the two regions and exploring opportunities for doing more cross-country data collections and comparative studies. During the seminar, Professor Tomas Blomquist, Associate professor Vladimir Vanyushyn and PhD-fellow Angelos Kostis from USBE presented their current work on entrepreneurship in the context of the Nordics, while Assistant professor Xiaotian Hu from Shanghai Customs College, PhD fellow Naja Morell Hjortshøj from Aarhus University, and Johan Lidström, PhD fellow from USBE, presented their research projects on entrepreneurship in China.

The various insights into the broad field of entrepreneurship were followed by discussions with the audience, thereby leading to new perspectives on how to understand the topic, when taking different social and cultural factors into consideration.

The seminar was organized by Johan Lidström, representing USBE and Nordic-China Start-up Forum, and Naja Morell Hjortshøj, representing Aarhus University, Denmark.



Conspiratorial discourses in IR

Visiting scholar Niki Sopanen on his dissertation, which concerns the role of conspiracy theories in international relations



My dissertation in progress deals with conspiratorial discourses in China-U.S. relations from the end of the Cold War to end of the presidential term of U.S. president Donald Trump (2021). The idea of my dissertation is to look into what exactly is conspiratorial discourse as a discourse genre as such, what kinds of political implications it might have in great power politics, and whether after President Donald Trump took office in 2017 there has been a paradigmatic change ("conspiratorial turn") in foreign policy-related discourses between Beijing and Washington.

But what are conspiracy theories exactly, and why do I prefer talking about "conspiratorial discourses" ? My doctoral thesis argues that conspiracies and theories of them first and foremost belong to the field of discursivity, and as argued by conspiracy-theory-studies scholars, conspiracy theories should be seen as (discursive) "explanations of power and politics" (Barkun 2003), rhetorical tools for narrating in-group identity and cohesion, and argumentation for alarmist sentiments and interaction vis-à-vis the out-groups or the Other (Fenster 2012). In addition, conspiracy theories ought to be understood as "in-group-specific beliefs" that draw upon historical experiences and interpretations of the individual and the "(tribal) community" he/she "imagines" to belong to (Anderson 2017).

However, the concept "conspiracy" has a very loaded history as conceptualizations of a variety of political crimes and federal crimes in the Anglophonic context, whereas the concept "conspiracy theory" has often been framed as "pathologies" or "(post)modern alienation, anxieties and disbelief among political losers and extremists". As for the Chinese conceptual historical background, my research so far has provided somewhat similar examples of their conceptualizations. Generally speaking, in (foreign) political discursive context, "conspiracies" are almost categorically schemes of one's antagonist others, whereas "conspiracy theories" are regarded as unreasonable and fear-mongering accusations leveled by the other.

Problems of veracity

However, from the point of view of a researcher interested in discourses, the only meaningful difference between concepts of "conspiracy" and "conspiracy theory" in (foreign) political context are related to above-mentioned differences in their usage, not in the veracity of their actual contents. This has to do with the epistemic premise that there is no way to confirm or deny any conspiracy allegations in a universally satisfying way, since one concept has a history of "crime against the political establishment/s" and the other as a "lie", and choosing one label would lead to confirming certain conceptual and political vantage points. Therefore, my dissertation refers to "conspiratorial discourses", which suggests acknowledging the different possibilities of conceiving their claims on "veracity" and normativity.

So, if the first section of my dissertation points out what is the "conceptually visible" background that justifies choosing the concept of "conspiratorial discourse", the second section of the dissertation discusses "the unseen yet present" features of conspiratorial discourses. In other words, the idea is to justify my claim of that certain discourses in China-U.S. relations can be understood as "conspiratorial" because of their general discursive features, even if they have been framed as something else in political and academic discourse. Or to put it more bluntly, it wishes to point out which features should conspiratorial discourse contain even if there is no one shouting the word "conspiracy" or "conspiracy theory" .

The third section sheds light on the context of the case study of the dissertation, i.e., what kind of a history of mutual mistrust there has been between Beijing and Washington, from within four already-mentioned conspiratorial narratives on one another have emerged.

Mutual anxieties

The fourth section, the case study proper, consists of an analysis of foreign policy/national security-related speeches, white papers and documents by U.S. and Chinese governments from 1989 to 2021. What I expect is that four different (discursive) conspiracy narratives on one another to emerge on both sides, as part of more ideologies of more nationalist, authoritarian and populist leaderships of Trump and Xi. These "isms" correlate strongly with foreign policy-related conspiratoriness since they emphasize antagonist relationship/distinction with the "Other". They are also expected to play into the already existing tradition of mutual anxieties in Sino-U.S. relations, known by scholars as "strategic distrust". Indeed, from a political realist point of view, political actors like (great) powers have always had to deal with informational asymmetry in regard to the actual motives and strategies of other entities. This claim seems to have even more relevance in the current era of "competing geopolitical strategies", as China has been framed as the rising challenger of U.S. hegemony in this decade, especially in Asia (BRI, South China Sea, etc.).

Anyways, there is nothing new about Beijing being "conspiratorial" about the motives of its Other, i.e. Washington, since after 1989, when sort of a honeymoon period ended between the great powers, Chinese party-state media, pro-establishment ideologists and grassroots nationalist have been blaming "U.S. hostile forces" for all kinds of schemes and plots. This was actually the theme of my master's thesis which scrutinized Chinese nationalist conspiracy narratives on U.S. in the 1990s.

The post-truth era

What is new, then, is what has happened on the U.S. side. Traditionally, even if China has often been framed as a strategic rival, the "more centrist-leaning" U.S. administrations, whether Republican or Democratic, have not been known for promoting conspiratorial discourse on China. Explicit China-related conspiracy narratives were back then "stigmatized knowledge". This does not mean of course that there were no American politicians with implicit "conspiratorial beliefs" on China, or alarmist politicians whose China criticism could not be seen as a conspiracy theory from a Chinese perspective - these views were/are called "China threat theories", alleged attempts at bashing China - but only that explicitly conspiratorial discourses on China were not part of mainstream U.S. foreign policy discourse on China. Discursive mainstream, however, changed after Donald Trump, who is claimed to embody the era of post-truth/post-factual politics, took office. With him came a rise of mainstream-defying populist movements on the fora of political institutions and social media. Blamed for spreading misleading claims, lies, rumors and conspiracy theories, also on China, Trump has surrounded himself with his hardcore China hawks and taken a tough stance on trade and national security in relation with China, on a level unlike his predecessors.

Lastly, in order to make sense of conspiratorial discourses in the actual case study, I resort to "post-foundational discourse analysis" (PDA), a recent methodology that draws upon the intellectual heritage of European post-structuralist thinking. According to the tenets of this methodological approach, the social world, along with its meanings and identities, are built upon a void, thus lacking any inherent, transcendental justifications. This means that meanings are created, maintained and challenged in the form of discourses, and are thus very contingent, which means that "things could always be different". Different ideologies, however, make things look as if "things could not be different". Therefore the goal of PDA is to question the premises of these "things-could-not-be-different" ideologies, of which conspiratorial discourses constitute a part.

Niki Sopanen is a doctoral student in international relations at the University of Helsinki. He has been working on his dissertation since the beginning of 2017. Currently, he is a visiting researcher at the Nordic Centre at Fudan University, Shanghai, China. His four-month visiting period is sponsored by the Finnish Kone Foundation. During this period, he works on his dissertation, studies Chinese, seek out new research literature in Chinese, and engages with scholars to discuss his work.

Referenced works: Fenster, Mark (2012): Foreword in Conspiracy theory in Latin Literature. Barkun, Michael (2003): A Culture of Conspiracy. Anderson, Benedict (1983): Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.

Recent outreach to external stakeholders

World Young Scientist Summit, Wenzhou

At the end of October, Nordic Centre and several of our Danish member universities took part in the conference World Young Scientists Summit in the city of Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province.

The conference was supported by the Chinese government, and opened with the reading of a letter from President Xi Jinping expressing this. The conference's purpose was to bring leading scientists, early-career researchers and government officials from Europe, China, the US, and other places together for research presentations and dialogue across disciplines.

PhD fellow at the University of Copenhagen Cecilie Ida Cetti Hansen gave a talk about her research on plant biochemistry, while Aarhus University Hospital's Internet of Things Director Steffen Ørnemark described new IT systems improving the operations of the hospital.

Danish Consul General Jakob Linul delivered some opening remarks, commending the international collaboration within multiple disciplines that the conference facilitated. There was also a keynote speech by the 2016 Nobel Prize in Physics Laureate, Princeton Professor Duncan Haldane. The session was MC'ed by Nordic Centre Programme Manager Magnus Jorem.



Norway-Asia Business Summit 2019: OCEANTECH

In November, the biggest business event for Norway-Asian business relations ever was held in Shanghai, Norway-Asia Business Summit 2019, focused on maritime technologies and ocean-based industries.



Nordic Centre Programme Manager Magnus Jorem MCed the opening ceremony which featured Norway's Minister of Trade and Industry, Torbjørn Røe Isaksen, giving an opening speech, and two topical sessions, one on intellectual property rights with law firm Wikborg Rein, the other on sustainable production of seafood featuring Vidar Helgesen, Norway's Special Envoy for the Ocean.

[Read more about NABS here.](#)

European Education Fair "European Dream"

On October 25th, Nordic Center hosted a European Education Fair, "European Dream", in collaboration with Fudan's Austrian Center and Innovation Center Denmark. 33 different universities and education institutions participated in the fair, which took place in the Student Plaza in the Guanghai Towers at Fudan University. Simultaneously, a seminar session with informative talks from different university and institution representatives were hosted in the Austrian Center. On top of it all, Innovation Center Denmark organized a biking competition in which the students who biked the farthest in one minute could win great prizes, the main one being a new bicycle. The European Dream Education Fair was a great success and a large number of students showed up to talk to the universities and discover more about the possibilities for studying in Europe.



New staff



Lu Li'an, Director

Professor Lu Li'an is the new director of Nordic Centre, and of Fudan's Office of Global Partnerships (previously known as the Foreign Affairs Office).

In her previous research, Lu has been interested in identity politics and the formation of subjectivity. Her research areas include Anglo-American Literary Modernism, Feminist Literary Criticism and Women's Writing, Gender Studies, H.C. Andersen and the rise of China's Modern Children's Literature.



Nancy Lai, Demola Coordinator

Nancy graduated from Erasmus Mundus+ joint master program, Research and Innovation in Higher Education Management (MARIHE) with EU full scholarship.

She used to be an Event & Marketing Executive at Swiss Chamber of Commerce and a Programme Officer at Nordic Centre. Nancy joined Demola Global since September 2019 and works at Nordic Centre as facilitator of Demola's Shanghai Projects.



Susanne Boelt Kristiansen, Intern

Susanne is Nordic Centre's Fall Intern. She is currently studying International Business in Asia at Copenhagen Business School.

Previously she, studied Chinese Studies at Freie Universitaet in Berlin, Germany and has also previously spent a year living in Nanjing, China studying Chinese.

Nordic Centre is extremely lucky to have all three as part of our team, and offer them our warmest welcome.

Recent outreach to external stakeholders



SLUSH: In September, Nordic Centre took an active part in SLUSH Shanghai, a large-scale event for entrepreneurs, students, and investors originating in Finland. Demola Coordinator Nancy Lai led a group of students to interact with companies, and Programme Manager Magnus Jorem interviewed two business leaders from Finland in “fireside chats”, representing the companies Stora Enso (forest product manufacturer) and venture capital fund Maki.vc.



Shanghai Pride: In June, Nordic Centre took part in Shanghai Pride in an event organized by the Nordic Consulates in Shanghai. Programme Manager Magnus Jorem was part of a panel discussing the differences in circumstances for LGBTQ people in China and the Nordic countries.

Norway in China:

Event with ANSA, Norwegian Seafood Council, and Kongsberg Maritime



On November 14, the Association of Norwegian Students Abroad (ANSA) and Nordic Centre hosted a maritime-themed evening, "An Ocean of Opportunities". Adrian Olsen, Technical Manager of Kongsberg Maritime China, gave an interesting talk about digitalization of the maritime industry, offering insights into the current and future developments within maritime supply chains, both in relation to China and the Nordic Countries. Furthermore, he elaborated on the challenges the industry is facing in terms of sustainable development and initiatives to support this. Paul Tsai, China Market Advisor, from the Norwegian Seafood Council gave an enthusiastic talk on Norwegian Seafood, and its steadily increasing popularity in China. He focused on the importance of traceability, sustainability and most importantly, exquisite quality. We not only learned about Norwegian salmon and mackerel, but also got a peek into the future of Norwegian seafood exports.



Fudan International Summer Session 2020

Next year's Fudan University International Summer Session 2020 will be organized by Fudan School of Economics and held in Shanghai from July 4-August 1, 2020.

The International Summer Session recruits both foreign and Chinese students and the application has opened now. The 4-week summer session offers 30 content courses taught in English, 3 Chinese language courses at different levels and 3 PE courses. While every student is supposed to take 1-3 content courses, the language and PE courses are optional. In addition, we offer historical and cultural visits so that the students can get to know more about Shanghai and China.

For more information about the session please visit <http://iss.fudan.edu.cn>.

Nordic Studies update



The Nordic Studies course continues to be very popular, and is taught this semester by teachers from the University of Oslo, Oslo Metropolitan University, Umeå University, Södertörn University, the University of Southern Denmark, and Nordic Centre.

If you are interested in your university taking part next fall, please contact us by December 10.

Nordic Innovation Practice / Demola update

This semester, the Nordic Innovation Practice course was scaled up from its spring pilot run. Six teams of students and company representatives have worked together to come up with innovative solutions to a variety of challenges ranging from smart cities to healthy ageing to WeChat marketing. The companies involved include the elevator manufacturer KONE and the industrial machinery company Metso.

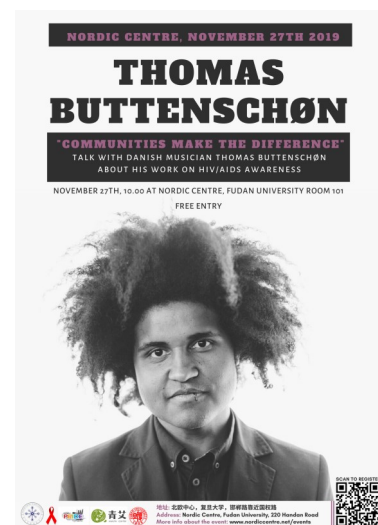
The course has been facilitated by our former programme officer Nancy Lai, who has rejoined our team, hired by Demola, the co-creation platform originating in Tampere, Finland.

Talk by Thomas Buttenschøn : "Communities make the Difference"

In connection with the World AIDS Day (December 1st), Nordic Centre will host a talk with Danish musician Thomas Buttenschøn on November 27th, who will describe his work on HIV/AIDS awareness.

Thomas was born in Zambia in 1985 to a Zambian mother and a Danish father, and shortly after his birth they were all diagnosed with HIV. Unfortunately, both his parents lost their battle to AIDS when Thomas was only 9 years old. Thomas was not expected to survive either, but has beat the odds. Today, the medical treatment for HIV is so effective that HIV-infected people live just as long as everyone else. Yet, many still fear HIV and become anxious when meeting people living with the disease. Their notion of a life with HIV and HIV-infected people is bound to old images and ideas, which lead to the discrimination and stigma of people living with the disease. People with HIV are now facing the fear of society's reaction to the sentence "I have HIV", and do not dare to talk openly with others about the disease.

Thomas Buttenschøn has taken a leading step in raising awareness about HIV through the power of music. His organisation, Muchimba Music Foundation is dedicated to creating positive change within society with his songs. Thomas' song writing has taken him around the world from his home country of Denmark to his motherlands of Zambia. It is within these journeys that Thomas has seen, first-hand, just how the power of music can change the hearts and minds of entire communities.



Nordic Centre classical concerts

Opening reception of "European Dream" Education Fair

The evening before the big European Education Fair, Nordic Center and Austrian Center hosted an opening reception in the lobby of our building, inviting exhibitors and local scholars to attend.

Renowned Hungarian cellist Gabor Gardian and the talented pianist Mei Yanling played four pieces, two European and two Chinese: Siciliano from Paradise, Schubert's Military March, 我和我的祖国 (Me and My Motherland) , and 山丹开花 (Red Lily).



NOVO String Quartet Concert from the Royal Danish Academy of Music

On November 6, the NOVO Quartet from the Royal Danish Academy of Music performed a beautiful concert at Fudan University, hosted by Nordic Centre, for an audience of 300. The Danish-Polish quartet — consisting of Kaya Kato Møller and Nikolai Vasili on Violin, Daniel Sledzinski on Viola and Signe Ebstrup Bitsch on cello— are students at the Royal Danish Academy of Music, studying as a chamber music group under Professor Tim Frederiksen - the teacher and mentor behind Danish String Quartet. The concert is the latest in a string of concerts we host in collaboration with the Royal Danish Academy of Music, to which we are extremely grateful for the opportunity.

This evening the quartet performed Carl Nielsen's String Quartet No.1, Op. 13 in g minor and Felix Mendelsohn's String Quartet No. 6, Op.80 in f minor.

