



PROGRAMME

CIPSH Academy 2025

Waterscapes Management: Chinese and Global Humanities Perspectives

October 7 to 10, 2025



Event co-organised by Excelia Business School
CIPSH – International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences and
Apheleia – Humanities International Association for Cultural Integrated
Landscape Management



INTRODUCTION

The International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH) established, since 2020, the International Academy on Chinese and Asian Cultures, with the generous support of the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange. The Academy focuses every year in a relevant theme, exploring different intellectual approaches from various disciplinary and interdisciplinary angles, contributing for advances in the cross-breeding of such contributions. The Academy activities comprise networking research, in presence seminars and publications.

This year's Academy is co-supported and organised by Excelia Business School and Apheleia – Humanities International Association for Cultural Integrated Landscape Management, a member of CIPSH.

Scholars from both Asian and Western traditions meet in Paris-Cachan, for four days of intensive exchanges and thematic visits related to the chosen topic of Waterscapes management: Chinese and Global Humanities perspectives. Common to all the intellectual contributions is the sense that water is an existential resource shaping material and immaterial aspects of communities gathered around lakes, rivers, or oceans. Uses and appropriation of water sources evolved through time, exploring ever newer technologies, combining academic and traditional knowledge to slowly carve shore or coastal territories into cultural waterscapes, and provide meanings to each community's social organisation, power structures and sets of values and beliefs.

In this context, a humanities interpretation of waterscapes, as we have in this years' Academy, emerges as a reflexive tool directed both at the past – taking stock of the cumulative effects of the relationship between humans and water – and at the future – depicting imagined futures in a context of scarcity and sustainability – thus contributing to furthering our understanding of waterscapes as a product of cultural agency that needs to be properly managed.

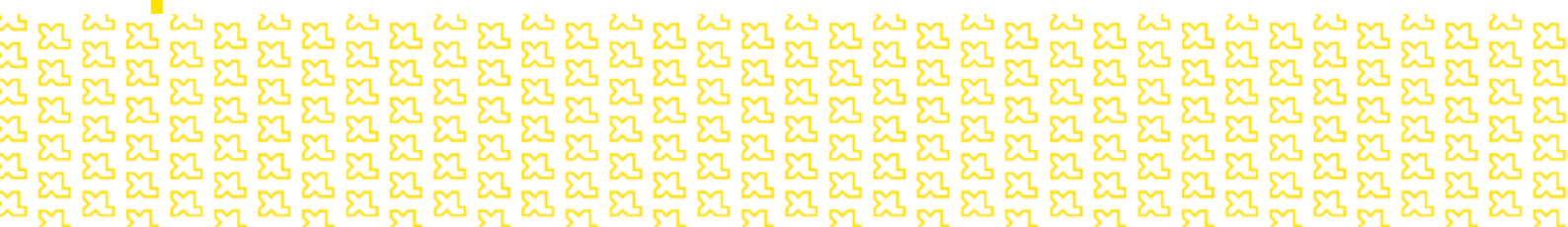
Debating Chinese and Global perspectives brings to the fore fruitful ideas and novel contributions to the culturally informed theories and practices of waterscapes management. The dialogues emerging from the 2025 CIPSH Academy explore the role of culture in shaping human's relationship with water and in conceiving, or not, waterscapes, delving into the philosophical traditions of China and elsewhere in Eurasia and beyond. Past and present are brought together to describe different approaches to water understanding and management, e.g. Daoist conceptualisations of water, river/ocean and water/land dichotomies, sacralization of water features, or pragmatic uses of contemporary management tools. The historical perspective of the tensions between anthropic and planetary systems – illustrated by different cases in China, elsewhere in the Pacific Rim, and in Europe – and how local communities and institutions choose to address them, sits at the centre of the discussions.

The arts, utopia, justice... are but some of the languages used in this particular liminal space of discussion and sharing that is created to diminish the impact of the different interpretative systems on the efforts to pursue viable and sustainable solutions to waterscapes management.

Next, you can find the profiles of the different contributors to these discussions, as well as the abstracts of the presentations that sustain the discussions. The 2025 CIPSH International Academy on Chinese Cultures and Global Humanities should be seen as both the continuation, from a different angle, of previous transdisciplinary discussions (on ethics, the arts and education) and the starting point of new ones.

We hope you will enjoy it.

Luiz OOSTERBEEK & Nuno GUIMARAES DA COSTA
Organising Committee



PROGRAMME

TUESDAY OCTOBER 7, 2025

- 11.30 am: Welcome

📍 **Excelia Paris Cachan**

12.00 pm–1.30 pm: Lunch

📍 **Crous**

- 1.30–4.00 pm: Inaugural session

📍 **Room Arena**

Introduction and welcome: Nuno GUIMARAES DA COSTA – Associate Dean Research and Impact, Excelia Business School ; Secretary-General of Apheleia

Welcome speech: Tamym ABDESSEMED – Dean, Excelia Business School
Luiz OOSTERBEEK, President of CIPSH – International Council for Philosophy and the Human Sciences

Opening address (video): Lidia BRITTO, Assistant Director-General UNESCO

Keynote address: John CROWLEY, CEO PHGD Group

Keynote address: Marianne BASTID-BRUGUIÈRE, member of the Académie des inscriptions et des belles-lettres

4.00–5.00 pm: Cocktail

📍 **Library**

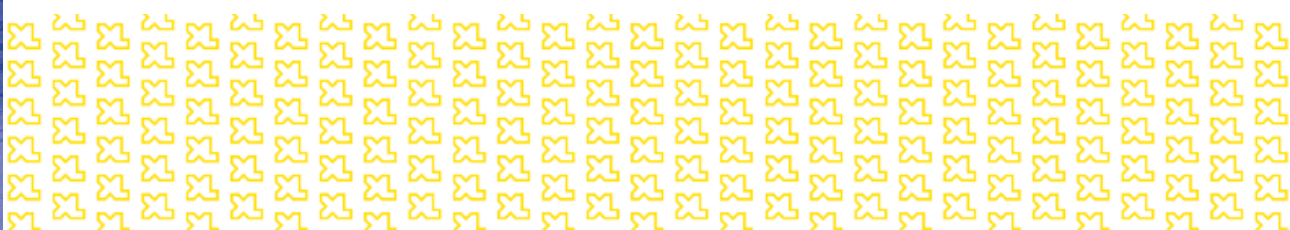
- 5.00 pm: Transfer to Paris
- 6.30 pm: Tour on the Seine river
Port de la Bourdonnais, 75007 Paris (dock n°3)

📍 **Excelia Paris Cachan**

7.30–9.30 pm: Dinner

📍 **Les Noces de Jeannette**
14, rue Favart, 75002 Paris

- 9.30 pm: Return to Hotel Massena
16, rue Tronchet, 75008 Paris



PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 8, 2025

- 09.30 am–10.50 am: Working session 1  Room Arena

 Cécile EZVAN: *"Waterscape, a philosophical perspective"*

 Pierre BARET: *"Making Sense of Water Conservation: The Performative Nature of Management Tools"*

10.50–11.10 am: Coffee Break

- 11.10 am–12.30 am: Working session 2  Room Arena

 Chen XIA: (video-conference) *"The Flowing Wisdom: Daoist Philosophy and Ancient Chinese Water Management"*

 Gilbert FONG: *"Ex Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir in Hong Kong"*

12.30–2.00 pm: Lunch

 Crous

- 3.00 pm: Transfer to Paris

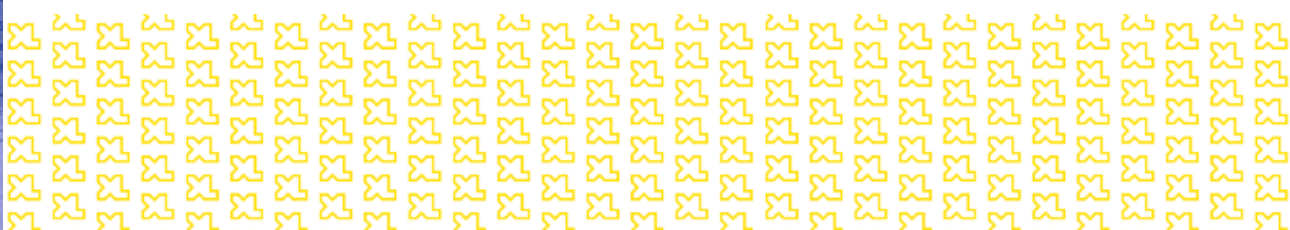
 Excelia Paris Cachan

- 4.00 pm–5.30 pm: Visit to "Musée Guimet"
6 place d'Iéna, 75016 Paris

7.00–9.00 pm: Dinner

 Les Noces de Jeannette
14, rue Favart, 75002 Paris

- 9.00 pm: Return to Hotel Massena
16, rue Tronchet, 75008 Paris



PROGRAMME

THURSDAY OCTOBER 9, 2025

- 09.30 am–10.50 am: Working session 1  Room Arena

 Marc-Williams DEBONO: *"Plant-environment relationships as a model for studying the mesological plasticity of interactive ecosystems."*

 Michael MEADOWS: *"Managing waterscapes in the Anthropocene: the case of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China"*

10.50–11.10 am: Coffee Break

- 11.10 am–12.30 pm: Working session 2  Room Arena

 Yolaine ESCANDE: *"Do "waterscapes" exist in the Chinese cultural tradition? Reflections on Chinese traditional painting and garden design"*

 Desmond HUI: *"Dujiangyan as Living Heritage of Chinese Waterscape Management"*

12.30–2.00 pm: Lunch

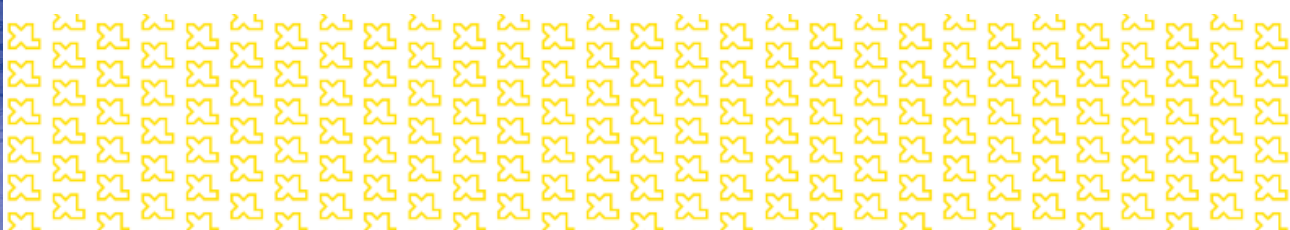
 Crous

- 2.30 pm: Transfer to Paris  Excelia Paris Cachan
- 3.30 pm–4.30 pm: Visit to "Musée des égouts"
93, Quai d'Orsay, 75007 Paris

7.30–9.30 pm: Dinner

 L'Empreinte
5, rue Mouton Duvernet, 75014 Paris

- 9.30 pm: Return to Hotel Massena
16, rue Tronchet, 75008 Paris



PROGRAMME

FRIDAY OCTOBER 10, 2025

- 09.30 am–10.50 am: Working session 1  Room Arena

 Liao HSIEN – HAO SEBASTIAN: *“The Urgency of Re-enchantment: The Taoist conceptualization of Water and the Anthropocene”*

 Hsinya HUANG: *“From River to Reef: Indigenous Pacific Water Cosmologies and the Ethics of Care”*

10.50–11.10 am: COFFEE BREAK

- 11.10 am–12.30 pm: Working session 2  Room Arena

 Jacob DAHL RENDTORFF: *“Water and future interspecies justice”*

 Pascual FERNÁNDEZ: *“Urban water management and the circular economy”*

12.30–2.00 pm: LUNCH

 Crous

- 2.00 pm–3.20 pm: Working session 3  Room Arena

 Valentina KIROVA: *“Caring for the commons: A model for sustainable water consumption”*

 Sun XIAO– CHUN: *“Fengshui Waterscapes in Ancient China: Philosophy and Practice”*

3.20–3.40 am: COFFEE BREAK

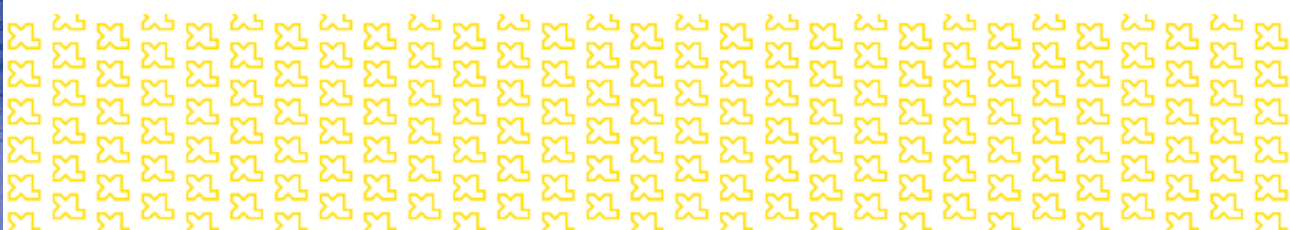
- 3.40 pm–5.00 pm: Working session 4  Room Arena

 Luiz OOSTERBEEK: *“Tribulations and hope: revisiting the role of water management in the organization of past societies and in the design of transformative utopia”*

 Li CHIH–HUNG: *“Fengshui Waterscapes in Ancient China: Philosophy and Practice”*

- 5.00 pm–6.00 pm: Closing session

- 6.00 pm: Transfer to Paris



ORGANISING COMMITTEE



Luiz OOSTERBEEK

President of CIPSH

Luis Oosterbeek is Professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Tomar. President of the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences. UNESCO-IPT chair holder "Humanities and Cultural Integrated Landscape management". Vice-Director of the Geosciences Centre of Coimbra University. Member of the Portuguese Academy of History, the Lisbon Academy of Sciences and Academia Europaea. Coordinator of research projects in archaeology, heritage and landscape management in Portugal, Africa and Southern America. Prizes and awards: European Commission, Brazilian Lawyers Bar, Portuguese Ministry of Culture, Gulbenkian Foundation, Foundation for Science and Technology among others. Author of over 350 papers and 90 books. Invited Professor in several Universities in Europe, Africa, Brazil and China.



Nuno GUIMARAES DA COSTA

Associate-Dean for Research and Impact, Excelia Business School, Secretary General of Apheleia

Nuno Guimaraes da Costa is Associate Dean of Research and Impact at Excelia Business School and full professor in the Strategy Department. He is Secretary-General of Apheleia – Humanities Association for Cultural Integrated Landscape Management, a global research network affiliated with CIPSH-UNESCO. Nuno holds an HDR from IAE Paris 1 – Panthéon Sorbonne University, a PhD in organizational psychology, a research master's degree, and an MBA from Nova School of Business and Economics in Portugal.

Today, he is particularly interested in transdisciplinary research that addresses concrete and complex societal problems. He is deputy editor-in-chief of Business and Society Review and sits on the editorial board of the International Journal of Education in Ethics. He has been a guest editor for several academic journals, including the Journal of Cleaner Production and Business & Society. He has published articles in the Journal of Business Ethics, Business & Society, Technological Forecasting and Social Change, Organisational Dynamics, European Management Review, Revue de l'Organisation Responsable, and Culture and Organisation, among others. He has also published several chapters in management books.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Marianne BASTID-BRUGUIERE

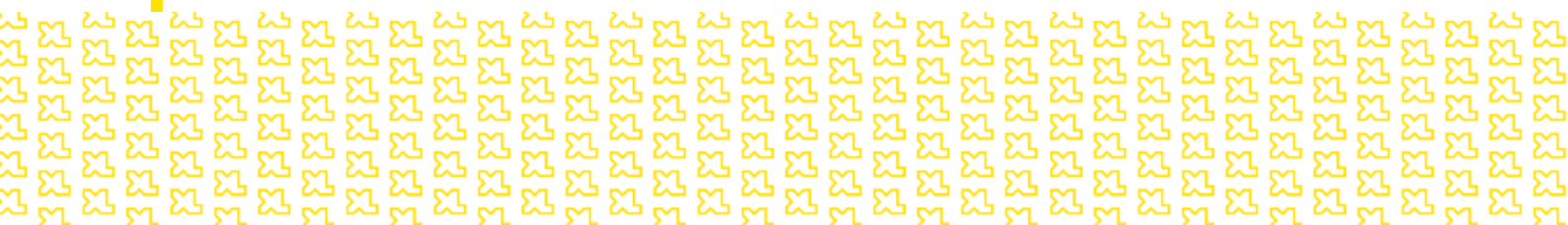
Member of the “Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres” (Institut de France)

Marianne Bastid-Bruguière; born 13 November 1940 is a French sinologist. She is a graduate of the Ecole Nationale des Langues et Civilisations Orientales and Peking University. From 1969, she worked for the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. She has also taught at the Institut d'études politiques de Strasbourg, the École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris Diderot University, Harvard University, Seikei University, the University of London, and the University of Kyoto. She is a reader for The China Quarterly.

She is a member of the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, the Society for Asian Studies, the Academia Europaea. From 1992 to 1996, she was President of the Association Européenne d'Etudes Chinoises. She has received honorary PhDs from the Russian Academy of Sciences and the University of Aberdeen. In April 2010, she was named Grand Officer of the Légion d'honneur.

It is sweet, when on the vast sea

In the Roman world of the first-century BC, the Epicurian philosopher and poet Lucretius would write about the relation of man and nature. He was impressed by the infinity of the universe, by the powerful operation of natural forces, and the beauty of waters, though denying any deity behind that world. In ancient China, we find in a similar way a most detailed observation of every aspect of natural life on earth and in heavens, and of man's relations to it. Across centuries the knowledge and styles of management of the human relations to nature have changed all the time, but always combined attempts at full domestication and some kind of careful adaptation. It is probably in the line of this ancestral search for thoughtful adaptation that today humanities and social sciences could help us to keep the waterscape needed by human life on earth.





KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



John CROWLEY

CEO PHGD Group, former UNESCO official

John Crowley is Chairman & CEO of the PHGD Group, which brings together a cluster of companies addressing the various dimensions of ideas and consultancy on social transformations as well as renewable energy solutions. Before founding the Group, he spent 18 years at UNESCO, leading the Section for Research, Policy and Foresight from 2014 to 2021. He was previously responsible for ethics of science and technology and for global environmental change. Before joining UNESCO, he worked as an economist in the oil industry (1988–95) and as a research fellow at the French National Political Science Foundation (1995–2002). From 2002 to 2015, he was editor of the UNESCO–published International Social Science Journal. He is the author of *Sans épines, la rose. Tony Blair: un modèle pour l'Europe ?* (Paris: La Découverte, 1999) and editor of *Tony Blair, le nouveau travaillisme et la troisième voie* (Paris: La Documentation française, 1999), *Pacifications, réconciliations* (special issue of the journal *Cultures & Conflits*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), and *Rethinking Human Security* (Paris/Oxford: UNESCO / Wiley–Blackwell, 2008, with Moufida Goucha). He has published a further 100 academic articles and book chapters, mainly on political theory and comparative politics.

Rivers of constant change and ever-shifting seas: the fluid dynamics of culture

Water, in its multiple forms, is the bearer of rich and diverse cultural meanings. And water that flows and shifts is especially ripe with significance, explored in poetry, literature, philosophy, music for as long as we have traces, and constantly reinvented in more recent media such as photography and film. The diversity of meanings within each culture, and across cultures, defies any attempt to categorize or systematize, not least because flowing water, and the cycles that connect its various forms, are essentially ambivalent. Water brings life to the desert, but it also drowns the sailor and the desperate lost soul. The river provides fish and facilitates transport, but equally may destructively overflow its banks. The ocean may seem gentle and serene, or angrily rear up in crashing waves. And while liquid water is perhaps of special cultural importance, its other phases – steam and vapour and, especially, snow and ice – have their own significance. In this presentation, what I want to explore is how the physical and cultural experiences of water intertwine. Fluid dynamics is, very literally, the subdiscipline within physics that analyses how water flows. It is governed by equations that have no general solution, and which encapsulate the physical tensions between the smooth, steady, laminar, and the turbulent, chaotic, unpredictable. And at the same time, fluid dynamics, taken metaphorically, is precisely the framing on which cultural meanings attach their tendrils. Water matters, and is interpreted poetically, mythologically, visually in terms of the interplay of the fluid and the dynamic, at the ever-shifting frontier between the material and the symbolic. At the same time, and inseparably, water is subject to technological control, tamed for transport, aquaculture, energy production, tourism and multiple other human objectives, all of which involve reducing and mastering the inherent dynamics of the fluid – at the risk of erasing its cultural fascination, just as other kinds of cultural landscapes are hollowed out by subjection to the extraction of value.



PARTICIPANTS



Pierre BARET

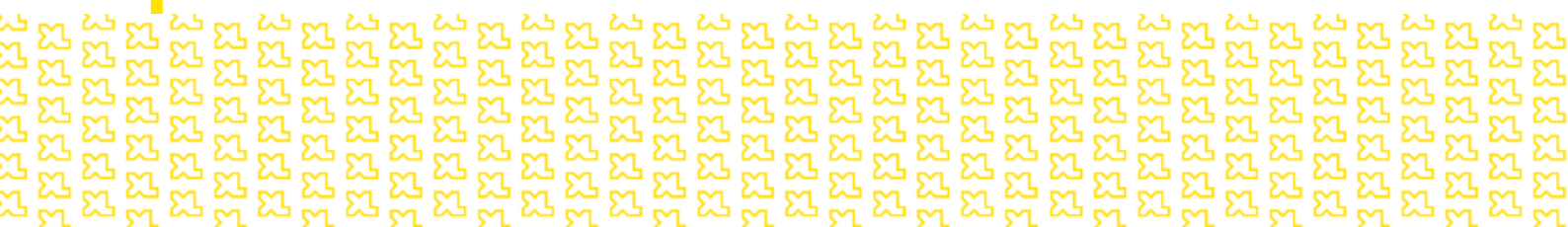
Professor and head of research track, Excelia Business School

(Ph.D., HDR – Habilitation to Direct Research) is Full Professor at EXCELIA Business School. He leads the research axis "Sustainability and Organization Management" within the CERIIM and is a member of the CEREGE laboratory. He directs the corporate chair "Assessing and Reporting on Global Performance" at the IRSI (Institute for Social Responsibility through Innovation). He holds leadership positions in various national and international scientific associations related to CSR and sustainable development. Author of numerous academic books and peer-reviewed articles, he is also frequently invited to serve as an expert advisor to various institutions. His work primarily focuses on the implementation of responsible practices within organizations, non-financial reporting, ecological management control and comprehensive accounting.

Making Sense of Water Conservation: The Performative Nature of Management Tools

Management tools have a performative dimension in that their implementation actively shapes how companies are managed. Establishing a truly responsible approach requires the adoption of accounting standards, management control tools, and reporting systems that reflect a double materiality perspective—particularly impact materiality—and ideally align with a strong sustainability logic, in which environmental or human harm cannot be reduced to mere financial compensation.

The purpose of this communication is to propose a Water Management Accounting (WMA) tool aimed at enabling companies—particularly in the industrial sector—to effectively implement sustainable management of this natural resource. Drawing on the logic of the CARE model –Comprehensive Accounting in Respect of Ecology– (Rambaud & Richard, 2015), water is considered as a vital capital to be preserved in its own right. Using the Trilemma model (Baret & Helfrich, 2019), we demonstrate that this WMA tool makes it possible to: (1) apprehend the complexity of the resource and its various uses; (2) report to stakeholders in a reliable and comprehensive manner; and (3) most importantly, foster internal engagement by enabling employees to understand and take ownership of water management issues—thus giving meaning to its preservation.





PARTICIPANTS



Xia CHEN

Research Fellow, Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (Beijing)

Xia Chen is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Philosophy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing. She serves on the Executive Committee of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences (CIPSH) and is the Co-Chair of the Scientific Panel for the UNESCO Silk Roads Youth Research Grant. Additionally, she was a 2022–2023 Berggruen Fellow at the Berggruen Institute China Center (BICC).

Xia has held visiting scholar positions at Harvard University, served as a Fulbright Scholar at Brown University, and has been affiliated with Calvin College, SOAS, the University of Missouri–St. Louis, and Sciences Po Bordeaux. Her research specializes in Chinese philosophy and religions, with a particular focus on Daoism.

She is the author of several influential works, including *Daoist Ethics: Traditional Expressions and Contemporary Interpretations* (2023), *Body in Daoism: An Ecological Perspective* (2019), *Introduction to the Philosophy of Daoism* (2017), and *Studies of Daoist Moral Tracts* (1999). Xia is also the co-chief editor and contributor to *Principles in the Study of Religions* (2003) and the chief editor of *Studies of Daoist Ecological Thoughts* (2010).

Moreover, Xia has contributed to various notable translations, including *Comprehensive Summary Collection of the Classics of Chinese Philosophy* (2018), *An Outline of Traditional Chinese Philosophy* (2015), *Daoism and Ecology* (2008), *Man's Religions* (2005), and *Martin Luther's Theological Thoughts* (2002). Xia has published hundreds of articles in both Chinese and English journals.

The Flowing Wisdom: Daoist Philosophy and Ancient Chinese Water Management

In the *Dao De Jing*, Laozi states: "The Dao that can be spoken is not the eternal Dao." This means that the true "Dao" cannot be fully captured in words. So how can it be understood? Laozi found the closest analogy to the Dao—water—to explain it. The silk manuscript version of *Dao De Jing*, Chapter 8, says: "The highest goodness manages water." Water, seemingly soft and yielding, contains boundless energy and is endowed with qualities such as nourishing all things, flowing endlessly, balancing strength and gentleness, embracing resilience, adapting to circumstances, filling low places while emptying the full, yet never striving for recognition. It is precisely these characteristics that make water the closest representation of the Dao.

Daoist philosophy's contemplation of water influenced ancient Chinese water management practices. For example, Yu the Great, in taming the floods, took water as his teacher, following its natural movement and adopting a strategy centered on diversion, combining channeling and blocking to guide the waters step by step to the sea. The Dujiangyan Irrigation System is a marvel of ancient hydraulic engineering. Its design and construction harmonized with nature, and through ingenious designing and meticulous layout, it successfully achieved comprehensive functions of flood control, irrigation, and sediment discharge. Built in 256 BCE, it remains in use today, bringing over two millennia of prosperity and abundance to the region. It stands as a model project for creating harmony among "humans, water, and nature" and was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000. The Daoist philosophy of harnessing water by following its natural tendencies remains profoundly instructive even today.



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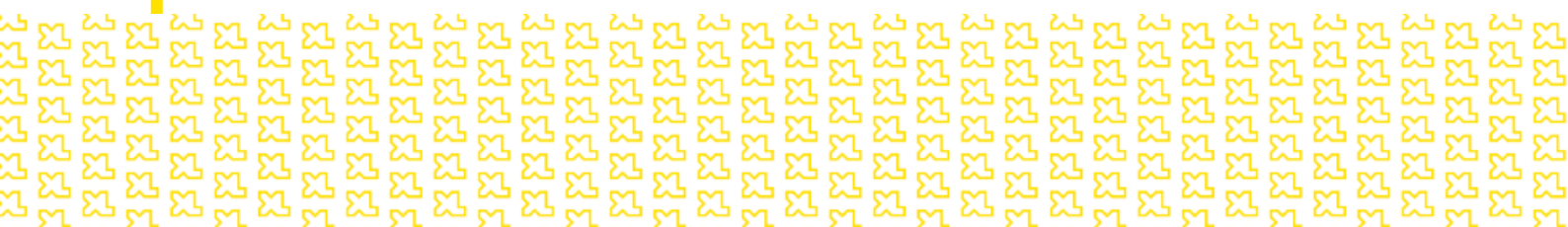
LI CHIH-HUNG

Postdoctoral Fellow, College of Social Sciences, National Taiwan University

Chih-Hung Li is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the College of Social Sciences, National Taiwan University. He previously served as Assistant Professor at Hong Kong Shue Yan University and has held research appointments as a Postdoctoral Fellow at National Taiwan University, a Japan Foundation Fellow, a Guest Research Associate at Kyoto University, and a Visiting Fellow at the University of Tokyo. His research focuses on kingship and Buddhism in East Asia, with particular emphasis on manuscripts, commemorative monuments, and material culture, as well as on the role of religion in urban history from a global perspective.

Waterscapes of Hangzhou: The Wuyue Kingdom and the Asian Maritime World in Global Perspective

This paper examines tenth-century Hangzhou, the capital of the Wuyue Kingdom, with a focus on its large-scale Buddhist temples, commemorative monuments, and ritual practices that articulated a vision of the ideal maritime state. It explores how the Wuyue court sought to construct a model of Buddhist kingship and to shape Hangzhou as a distinctive landscape of a maritime Buddhist realm within the Asian maritime world. In the aftermath of the Tang Empire's collapse, the Wuyue Kingdom rose to prominence in southeast China, with the monarchy actively patronizing Buddhism to legitimize and consolidate royal authority. Central to this project was the court's deliberate reshaping of the city's hydrological environment: through water management works, the building of major Buddhist temples around West Lake, the erection of monumental steles, and ritual practices dedicated to water deities, Hangzhou was envisioned as an ideal water metropolis. At the same time, the city emerged as a cosmopolitan hub defined by vibrant cultural exchange, where hydrological settings and Buddhist symbolism became deeply intertwined, profoundly influencing later cultural imaginaries in China and East Asia. The waterscapes of tenth-century Hangzhou thus illuminate the city's distinctive role as a global maritime metropolis and reveal how the sea informed contemporary ideals of both the oceanic and the worldly.





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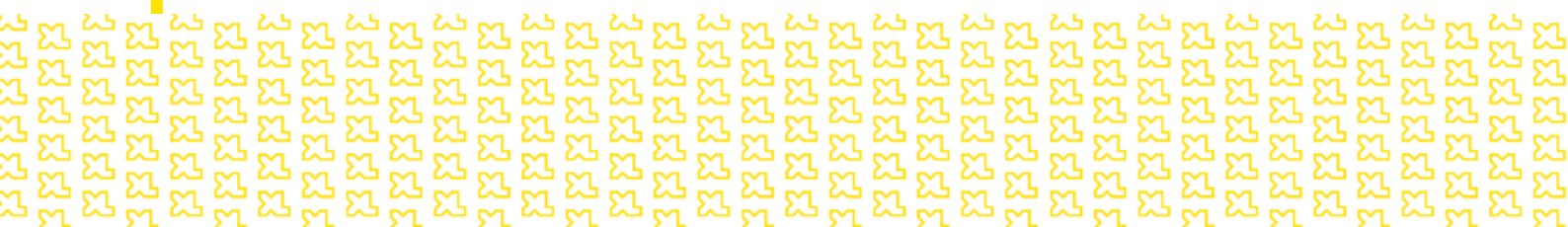
Jacob DAHL RENDTORFF

Professor of philosophy and ethics, Roskilde University (Denmark)

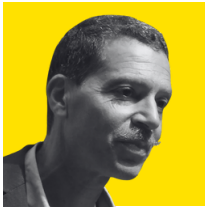
Jacob Dahl Rendtorff, PhD and Dr. Scient. Adm. is professor of philosophy and ethics at the Department of Business and Social Sciences, Roskilde University, Denmark. Rendtorff is educated in philosophy and political sciences in Copenhagen, Paris and Berlin, and he has been visiting professor in many universities. Rendtorff has written and edited books on issues of existentialism and hermeneutics, French philosophy (Sartre, Ricoeur, Derrida), ethics, bioethics, business ethics and philosophy of management as well as philosophy of law. Rendtorff's recent publications include *Philosophy of Management and Sustainability*, Emerald 2019, *Cosmopolitan Business Ethics. Towards a Global Ethos of Management*, Routledge 2017. Rendtorff is former president of the European Business Ethics Network (2021–2025) (EBEN) and Secretary General of FISP (International Federation of Philosophical Societies) (2008–2024). Rendtorff is editor the *International Journal of Ethics and Systems* (Emerald).

Water and future interspecies justice

The artist group SUPERFLEX finished in 2022 an artwork at Roskilde University, Denmark. The title is 'Interspecies Campus' and it addresses global climate changes with focus on water. The artwork consists of sculptures build of homemade "superbricks" in pink, curved and made of sand and clay. These sculptures are symbols of the rising sea levels, becoming more attractive for fish and attractive to algae, which is indicated by the pink color that also is important for the well-being of corals. Thus, the artwork imagines a new infrastructure for water and the sea being attractive for a diversity of species. With this the artwork raises the question of future interspecies justice of water for people in the future. The future of water and humanity's relation to water has become key issue of environmental and social sustainability. However, the situation at Roskilde University with more water at the campus accommodating other species may be seen as a luxury situation compared with other parts of the world. In the desert in Africa, for example, scarcity of water has become a major challenge. Nevertheless, in both cases, we need to deal with the environmental, social and economic sustainability of water. We need to develop an ethics and political philosophy of eco-social approaches to water management, enabling a democratic focus on water allocation and interspecies life with water. Topics of procedural justice, fairness, distributive justice, social sustainability of water, social identity and values of water, community engagement, democracy, and social capital are theoretical concepts that can help to understand the challenges of water in wet and dry regions of the world. On this basis the presentation will discuss the different elements of water justice in the area of climate change with focus on justice of water allocation in the world.



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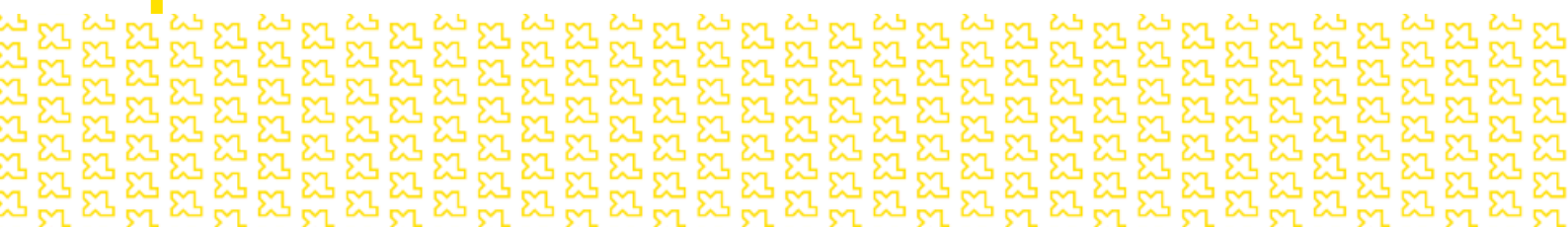
Marc-Williams DEBONO

**Neuroscientist, Head of an Art and Science Center
President Founder of PSA Plasticités Sciences Arts**

Marc-Williams DEBONO, transdisciplinary researcher, poet and neuroscientist, is currently focusing his work on the plasticity of living ecosystems in relation to the electrome and the cognitive abilities of plants (Academia.edu). President of the Plasticités Sciences Arts association (PSA Research Group) and of the CC91 which produces the biennial La Science de l'art, he is currently in charge of a departmental Art & Science cluster within the Paris Saclay perimeter where he works in networks on the art-science-society axis with numerous IdF and national/European structures such as the Transversale des Réseaux Arts Sciences (TRAS). Member of the International Center for Transdisciplinary Research and Studies (CIRET), since 2005 he has directed the Transdisciplinary Review of Human Plasticity PLASTIR within PSA, which covers the links between art, science and the humanities. Among his most recent books for the general public: *L'épissure des mots*, L'Harmattan, 2008, *Écriture et Plasticité de Pensée* (Preface by M. Cazenave) Anima Viva Pub. House, 2015, *La mémoire de la vie*; Edgar Morin-Patrick Curmi; Edgar Morin-Patrick Curmi, Éditions de L'Attribut, 2017. *Mémoires singulières, mémoires plurielles*, L'Harmattan, 2018, *L'intelligence des plantes en question*, Hermann, 2020. More complete biography, excluding scientific articles in neurosciences or plant communication, but including several book chapters or conferences on the official PSA website: <http://www.plasticites-sciences-arts.org>

Plant-environment relationships as a model for studying the mesological plasticity of interactive ecosystems

The plasticity of living systems highlights the specificity of the irreversible link between beings and their singular milieu, as distinct from their relations with the raw data of the environment. Plants, rooted in the earth and in relationship with all the elements, are medial structures that establish mesological relationships with their local ecosystems. We'll show how their great sensitivity to the environment, and their ability to perceive, experiment, communicate and explore the territories that surround us, are tackling our assumptions about established evolutionary or cognitive patterns. Without going as far as the Symbiocene, but with a view to overcoming the Anthropocene, we propose here, in the continuity of Berque's work, a new form of plasticity of a mesological nature that takes into account the dynamic coupling plant-milieu or the Umwelt of plants, and more generally the links between living beings and their singular milieu. This involves rethinking sensitive nature, sensitive reason, sensitive intelligence and, by extension, the interactions between planetary resources and the future of humanity.





PARTICIPANTS



Yolaine ESCANDE

Research Director at the CNRS, member of the Centre for Research on the Arts and Language (CRAL, EHESS, Paris, UMR 8566)

Yolaine Escande 幽蘭 is Research Professor at French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS); her research field is on Chinese aesthetics, graphic arts, and theory of arts (calligraphy and painting), and comparative aesthetics. She has translated from Chinese to French Chinese calligraphy and painting fundamental treatises and has presented Chinese aesthetics principles (latest book: <https://www.lesbelleslettres.com/livre/9782251456911/trois-traites-sur-le-portrait>). Her research concerns their artistic, philosophical, aesthetical, cultural interactions with Western art. She is member of Universitas Monthly review on Philosophy and Culture 《哲學與文化》 editorial board (referred A&HCI journal), which she has co-edited with Johanna Liu in English and in Chinese 13 special issues (2006/10; 2007/11; 2009/10; 2010/03; 2010/09; 2011/10; 2012/11; 2014/11; 2015/11; 2018/11; 2020/03; 2022/03; 2025/03) (latest issue: <https://www.ehess.fr/fr/revue/plants-migration-multiculturality-arts-and-aesthetics>).

She has been full member of the UNESCO's Advisory Committee for Works of Art (ACWA), 2018–2022, and is currently Deputy Director of her research centre, the CRAL.

She has received fellowships and grants from Ministry of Education (France, Taiwan), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (France, China), CNRS, ANR (French National Research Agency). She was invited Professor in several countries (Switzerland EPFL, Taiwan Soochow University, Fu-Jen Catholic University, Cheng-Chi Univ. Depts. of Philosophy, Sichuan Normal University, Spain Granada University...). She was International Society for Chinese Philosophy's (ISCP) elected Vice-President (2007–2009) and President (2009–2011), and is currently member of ISCP's Executive Committee. She has organised tens of int' workshops, lectures & conferences.

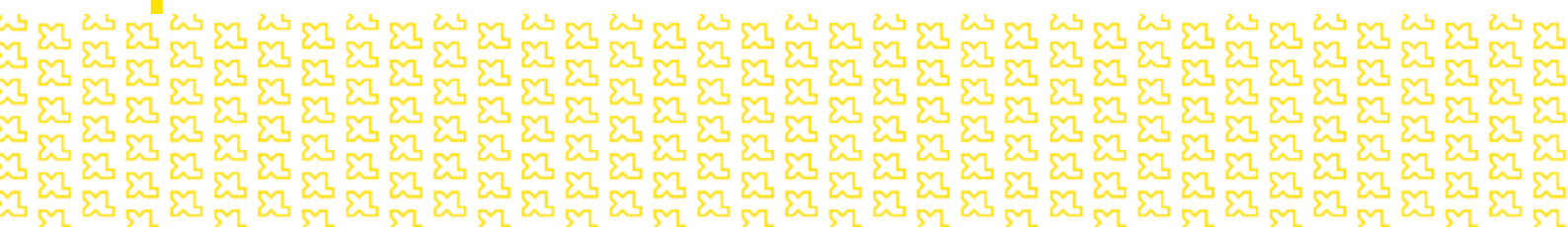
Do “waterscapes” exist in the Chinese cultural tradition? Reflections on Chinese traditional painting and garden design.

The Chinese translation of “Waterscape” is shuijing 水景, literally, “water scenery”. Though, this term is a recent translation of the English noun. The expression does not exist in traditional Chinese.

Nevertheless, many Chinese paintings depict landscapes that we would today call “waterscapes”, even though the concept does not exist. China also has a rich tradition of gardens. Although these gardens (yuanlin) leave a lot of space for water, there is no equivalent term for “waterscape” in Chinese garden design theory.

However, if we start our reflections from the perspective of Chinese landscape, we can see that “water” plays an important role in the Chinese conception of landscape. The concept of the literary and pictorial landscape has existed in China since the third and fourth centuries. This literary and pictorial landscape has a specific Chinese term: “mountains and waters”, shanshui. In this expression, water is fundamental.

Water also plays a prominent role in traditional Chinese philosophy.





PARTICIPANTS



Cécile EZVAN

Professor & head of IRSI (Institute for Sustainability through Innovation), Excelia Business School

Expert in ethical and responsible practices within organizations, Cécile Ezvan is an associate professor at Excelia Business School, where she teaches ethics, CSR and environmental innovation. She also heads the Institute for Responsibility through Innovation (IRSI), which coordinates partnership-based research with economic and institutional players in the regions where Excelia's campuses are located.

With a PhD in Philosophy (University of Lyon) and a degree from ESCP (Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris), her work focuses on assessing the social contribution of companies and transforming economic models to serve the public interest (circular models, impact models, mission-driven companies). For several years, Cécile has been working on alternative organizations focused on social and ecological transition (carbon cooperatives, ecovillages, third places) and involving local residents.

An elected administrator at EBEN (European Business Ethics Network) and RIODD (International Research Network on Organizations and Sustainable Development), she is also a member of the academic council of the Campus de la Transition.

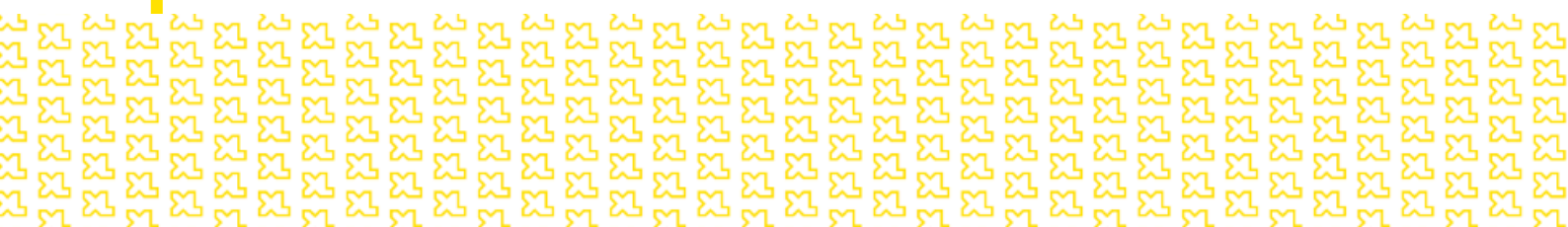
Before joining the academic world, Cécile worked in strategy consulting and publishing, assisting various types of organizations (large groups, SMEs, investment funds, ministries, local authorities) in defining, implementing, and evaluating their strategies in France and abroad.

Waterscape, a philosophical perspective

The sea and the seascape are recurring themes in contemporary philosophical essays, highlighting them as marvel (Devillairs 2022) or promoting a new "liquid ontology" (Pelluchon 2024) enriched by ecological issues. Focusing on the terrestrial landscape, Augustin Berque (2008) insists on the contrast between, on the one hand, the countless generations that preceded us, who did not think about the landscape but left us so many admirable landscapes, and, on the other hand, our contemporary generations, who think about the landscape but at the same time contribute to its large-scale destruction. Our coastal landscapes have been shaped by centuries of trade and industrial programs, as evidenced today by the culture and history of these coastal areas, which are both rich in resources and highly fragile.

How can philosophy help us to think about this coastal landscape and make it not only a living ally with which we are in relationship today, but also a point of departure from which we can imagine and build a desirable future?

To address this question, Cecile will draw on resources from philosophy and the humanities, but also from empirical fieldwork on a peninsula in Brittany, where she has been conducting research this year. This peninsula is a laboratory for social and ecological transition, having undergone major transformations over the last century and now preparing to play with the ocean in a near future.





PARTICIPANTS



Pascual FERNANDEZ

Professor, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos
UNESCO chairholder

Doctor in Economics and Business Studies, he has spent part of his professional career teaching and researching (at the Autonomous University and Rey Juan Carlos University, in Madrid) and in public administration, in the Regions of Castile and León and Madrid (Director General of Taxation), Ministry of Economy and Finance (Director General of Budget Analysis and Programming) and in the Ministry of the Environment (Secretary of State for Water and Coasts).

Former Dean-President of the Madrid Association of Economists; Member of the Global High Level Panel on Water and Peace, sponsored by UN (2015–2022); Director at the URJC of the National Parks Chair-UPM-URJC-UAH (2018–2020); UNESCO-URJC-UNED Co-Chairholder on Water and Peace (2020–present).

Researcher on various national and international projects: Project Link (UN 1985–1995); director of the Center for Studies “Economy of Madrid” at URJC (2005–2020); Advisor to the European Parliament on Financial Perspectives (2005–2006). He has published dozens of articles in academic journals and several books.

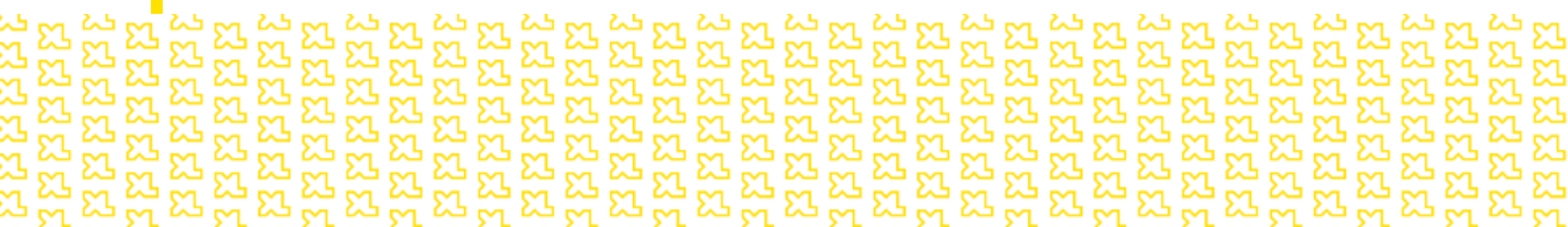
He has extensive experience in corporate governance as member of the boards of directors of several companies in the renewable energy and urban water sectors. Former CEO of Canal de Isabel II (water management company in the Madrid Region, 2020–2023) and former President of the National Association of Water Management Companies of Spain (2023–2024).

Urban water management and the circular economy

In the context of climate change, with the significant commitments made by European Union member states, the management of urban water services is becoming an increasingly complex challenge.

In addition to being a right, It is an essential economic resource whose management requires the joint operation of supply and demand, provision and use. Measures must be taken to increase the supply of available water, such as storage, desalination and reuse. However, it is also essential to improve efficiency in its use to prevent wasting this natural resource.

On the other hand, it is a little-known sector around which the circular economy is developing in a special way. In particular, the new directive approved by the European Union for urban wastewater treatment is an important challenge that will effectively improve the environmental quality of our rivers.





PARTICIPANTS



Gilbert FONG

Dean and Professor, Asian New Humanities Network, School of Translation and Foreign Languages of the Hang Seng University of Hong-Kong

BA (CUHK), MA (York), MA (Toronto), PhD (Toronto)

Professor Fong is the Dean Emeritus and Professor of School of Translation and Foreign Languages of The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. He was the University's former Acting President and Provost. Before that, he also taught at the University of Toronto and York University in Canada. He has written more than 100 articles translation, Hong Kong theatre and modern and contemporary Chinese literature. An acclaimed translator, he translated many famous plays by Dr Gao Xingjian, Nobel Winner for Literature 2000. Besides, Professor Fong was also editor and author of several books, including *Dubbing and Subtitling in a World Context*, *On Drama*, *History of Hong Kong Drama*, *Studies on Hong Kong Drama*, *Plays from Hong Kong* and *Hong Kong Drama Review*.

Professor Fong is enthusiastic about community services. He was awarded the Medal of Honour by Hong Kong SAR Government in October 2018 for his valuable contributions to the development of theatrical arts and arts education in Hong Kong.

The Ex Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir in Hong Kong

The Ex-Sham Shui Po Service Reservoir, built in 1904 on Mission Hill, is a landmark in Hong Kong's early modernization of water supply. As part of the Kowloon Waterworks Gravitation Scheme, it addressed the insufficiency of underground water sources amid rapid population growth in the early 20th century. This circular underground reservoir, with a storage capacity of approximately 9,900 cubic meters, was notable for its Romanesque architectural features, including red brick arches and granite piers, reflecting colonial engineering influences.

Our paper examines the reservoir's architectural characters, its history, especially its importance to Hong Kong's water supply system, and highlights the tension between heritage conservation and urbanisation demands. As a rare example of early water infrastructure, the reservoir enriches Hong Kong's waterscape by linking past engineering achievements with contemporary cultural identity and environmental stewardship.



PARTICIPANTS



Sebastian HSIEN-HAO LIAO

Dean and Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, at National Taiwan University

Dr. Sebastian Hsien-hao Liao is Dean of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, and Distinguished Professor of English and comparative literature at National Taiwan University. He is also President of the Taipei Chinese Center of International PEN. He received his Ph.D. from Stanford University and was post-doctoral fellow at Harvard University. He also served as President of the Comparative Literature Association of Taiwan and Commissioner of Culture at Taipei City Government. His research interests include: contemporary literary and cultural theories (with a focus on Lacan, Deleuze, New Materialism, Posthumanism, cosmopolitanism, and decolonial theory), comparative poetics, techno-humanities, Red-ology, the Chinese diaspora, modern Anglo-American literature, Taoist aesthetics, creativity studies, and cultural policy. He has published *Who Is Afraid of Meaninglessness: from the Avant-garde to Postmodernism*, *The Brave New Century: Pre-modern, Modern and Postmodern*, *The Sorrows of Mending Heaven: National Allegory and Remnant Subjects*. He is currently finishing up four book projects--“*Illusions of Identity: Contemporary Taiwan Film after the New Cinema*” (NTUP) (forthcoming 2025). “*Deleuze and Taoism*” (U of North Carolina P and NTUP) (forthcoming 2026), *The Postwestern Now: Overcoming Western-centrism* (forthcoming 2026), and *Artificial Intelligence and Posthumanism* (forthcoming 2026).

The Urgency of Re-enchantment: The Taoist conceptualization of Water and the Anthropocene

Chinese landscape poetry came into being during the Six Dynasties when the intellectuals began to revive interest in the Taoist classics, which base their conceptualization of the Tao on the concept of “zi-ran”. Often translated as “nature” in English, it in fact refers to the entire world that is alive with the Tao and moves on non-purposively. Following the principle of letting go (zi-ran), the Taoist will be able to become at one with the Tao. While interest in natural landscape usually does not distinguish between land and waters, water is often considered to be “soul” of the landscape. And this idea most likely is derived from the role of water as a central metaphor in Taoist classics. It is employed in two mutually complementary ways: as that which is fluid and adaptive and that which is still and crystal clear. These two characteristics--becoming and selfless-ness--best describe the core values of the Tao. Water thus is construed as one of the best (if not the best) manifestation of the Tao, which instills life, which is both becoming and selfless, into all things under heaven. As Heidegger observes that the most pernicious “danger” that faces us is the fact that modernity has “disenchanted the world”, revisiting the Taoist way of understanding water’s aliveness may help ameliorate the Anthropocene by contributing to the badly needed re-enchantment of the world.



PARTICIPANTS



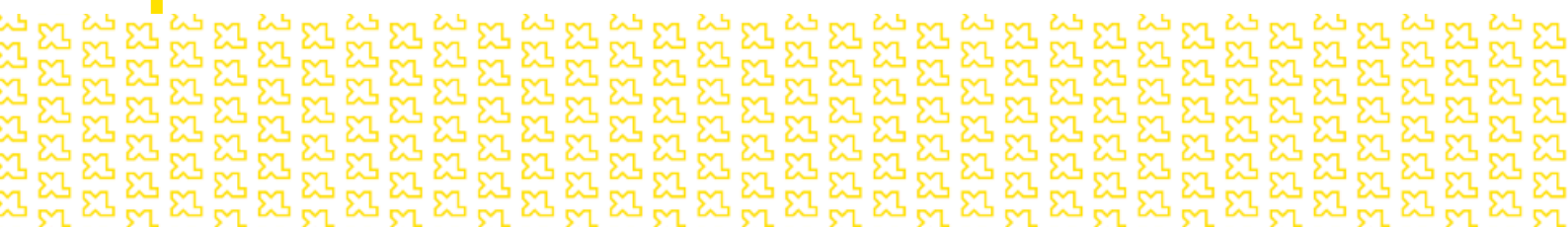
Hsinya HUANG

**Distinguished Professor of American and Comparative Literature,
National Sun Yat-Sen University (NSYSU)**

Hsinya Huang is Distinguished Professor of American and Comparative Literature, National Sun Yat-Sen University (NSYSU), Taiwan. She is former Dean of Arts and Humanities and Provost of Academic Affairs and Faculty Advancement, National Sun Yat-sen University, and served as Director General of International Cooperation and Science Education, Ministry of Science and Technology, Taiwan, 2018-19. She is the author or editor of books and articles on transnational and transpacific studies, Native American and Pacific Islander literatures, Indigenous and Sinophone studies, and humanities for the environment, including (De)Colonizing the Body: Disease, Empire, and (Alter)Native Medicine in Contemporary Native American Women's Writings (2004) and Native North American Literatures: Reflections on Multiculturalism (2009), Aspects of Transnational and Indigenous Cultures (2014), Ecological Literature : Ecology, Subjectivity, and Technology (2015), Chinese Railroad Workers: Recovery and Representation (2017), Diaspora, Memory and Resurgence: Trans-Pacific Indigenous Writing and Practice (2021), and Pacific Literature as World Literature: Ocean and Ecology in the Trans-Pacific Context (2023) and After Hiroshima: Radiation Ecologies in Trans-Pacific Indigenous Literature (forthcoming). She serves on the Advisory Board of The Journal of Transnational American Studies, Verge: Studies in Global Asias, Bloomsbury World Literature Series, Oxford Intersections: Environmental Change and Human Experience, and Routledge Series on Transnational Indigenous Perspectives and on the Editorial Board of Transmotion: A Journal of Vizenorian Indigenous Studies. Her current research project investigates first foods in the trans-Pacific Indigenous literatures

From River to Reef: Indigenous Pacific Water Cosmologies and the Ethics of Care

Rooted in Austronesian and Pacific Islander cosmologies, water is not merely a resource but a living ancestor and a conduit of memory that binds oceanic communities across generations and geographies. Drawing on literary texts, oral histories, and community-based environmental initiatives in Taiwan, Guam, Hawai'i, and Aotearoa New Zealand, this talk examines how Indigenous Pacific concepts of relationality and reciprocity can re-frame contemporary debates on watershed governance, coastal restoration, and climate adaptation. By juxtaposing Chinese classical notions of "watercourse management" (理水) with Pacific epistemologies of ocean stewardship, I argue for a trans-cultural "ethics of care" that bridges technocratic water management with place-based knowledge systems. The presentation concludes with case studies of grassroots "river-to-reef" collaborations that highlight practical .





PARTICIPANTS



Desmond HUI

Professor and Head of Department of Art and Design
CIPSH Chairholder in Cultural Heritage and Creative Humanities

Professor Desmond Hui is the Founding Head of the Department of Art and Design, Director of the BA in Cultural and Creative Industries, BA in Art and Design, and MA in Cultural Heritage Management programmes, CIPSH (International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences) Chair in Cultural Heritage and Creative Humanities at the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. He is at present Chairman of the Antiquities Advisory Board, Chairman of the Art Subcommittee of the Museum Advisory Committee, Member of the Country and Marine Parks Board, Buildings Ordinance Appeal Tribunal, and Museum Expert Advisor for the Hong Kong Government. He was Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Built Heritage Conservation (2023–25). Since 2015, he has been invited to be Expert Advisor by UNESCO to support the “2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” and the “Culture/2030 Indicators for Sustainable Development Initiative”.

He was Chief Author and Editor of several government/ public studies related to arts and cultural policy in Hong Kong including the Baseline Study on HK’s Creative Industries (2003), A Study on Creativity Index (2005), Study on the Relationship between the Pearl River Delta and Hong Kong’s Creative Industries (2006) and Mapping Study of Creative Clusters in Hong Kong (2010 & 2014). He was selected as Lead Curator for the 11th International Architecture Exhibition of Venice Biennale Hong Kong Pavilion in 2008 and Co-Curator in 2012.

Water and future interspecies justice

This paper will use the case of Dujiangyan in Sichuan – an irrigation and waterscape management system constructed since the 3rd Century BC in China which is still in use today and was inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage in 2000 – to illustrate its transcendence through time from the Chinese humanities perspective. As an example of diversion and dredging of the natural power of water flow since the mythological figure of Yu the Great (later Emperor Yu) who set the example of waterscape management of the Yellow River in ancient China, Li Bing (c.256 BC of Qin Dynasty) became the hero in his solution of diverting the Min River through his ingenious engineering of Fish Mouth, Flying Sand Weir and the Bottle Neck (Fig. 1) as three major features in the irrigation and management system of the river flow, creating since then the fertile plains of Chengdu, and to be succeeded by later sagacious managers including Zhuge Liang (181–234 AD), Hu Guang (15–16th Century) and Ding Baozhen (1821–1886). To quote UNESCO’s citation of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the project – It “is an ecological engineering feat originally constructed around 256 BC. Modified and enlarged during the Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties, it uses natural topographic and hydrological features to solve problems of diverting water for irrigation, draining sediment, flood control, and flow control without the use of dams,”¹ fulfilling the Inscription Criteria (ii) and (iv) of World Heritage List as follows: “Criterion (ii): The Dujiangyan Irrigation System, begun in the 2nd century BCE, is a major landmark in the development of water management and technology, and is still discharging its functions perfectly. Criterion (iv): The immense advances in science and technology achieved in ancient China are graphically illustrated by the Dujiangyan Irrigation System.”



PARTICIPANTS



Valentina KIROVA

Professor & Deputy director of research, Excelia Business School

Valentina Kirova is Associate Professor of Marketing at Excelia Business School, France. She currently serves as Deputy Director of Research within CERIIM, the research center of Excelia Business School. Her research broadly focuses on strategic marketing, innovation, and digitalization. She investigates how digital technologies are reshaping organizational strategies, stakeholder interactions, and consumer experiences, particularly in the tourism and services sectors. Her recent work has been published in leading journals such as Journal of Business Research, Museum Management and Curatorship, Information & Management, Current Issues in Tourism, and Information Technology & People.

Valentina Kirova is one of the initiators and an active member of GESTE ("Gestion de l'Eau dans une Société en Transition Écologique"), a research group within Excelia's Agility Innovation Digitalisation (AID) team. The group conducts extensive research on water perception, usage, and sobriety in both private settings and collective governance, contributing to academic knowledge and the development of practical tools for sustainable water consumption and management.

Caring for the commons: A model for sustainable water consumption

This presentation reexamines the concept of "care" by shifting the focus from traditional labor-oriented frameworks to its expression within individual consumption behaviors, particularly in relation to water as a shared resource. While earlier discussions of care have emphasized the labor and functional aspects of care activities, this study argues that "caring about" does not necessarily equate to "care-giving." Instead, individuals can embody concern and ethical responsibility through everyday consumption practices. Drawing on empirical insights, based on netnography, the research explores how people express care through their water use, revealing care as a multifaceted and dynamic construct embedded in awareness, decision-making, and behavioral choices.

In challenging the conventional attitude/behavior gap in ethical consumption, the study proposes that care should be understood as a fluid process shaped by contextual perceptions, personal responsibility, and the ethical significance ascribed to common goods. By analyzing the ways individuals relate to water, often seen as an abundant commodity in Western societies, the presentation highlights the underlying values, narratives, and social constructs that influence conservation behaviors and attitudes toward shared resources.

The presentation will bridge two streams of literature: the ethics of care in individual consumption behaviors and the literature on use and consumption of common goods. It will offer a nuanced theorization of care in consumption that goes beyond mere action and reveals emotional engagement, relationality, and ethical reflection. This reframing not only enriches understandings of consumer behavior but also contributes to broader conversations about sustainable resource use. By focusing on water as a common good, the aim is to provide insights into the ethical consumption discourse and contribute to the ongoing development of care theory in consumption.



PARTICIPANTS



Michael MEADOWS

Emeritus Professor of physical geography at the Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences, University of Cape Town

Immediate Past President of the International Geographical Union, is currently Professor in the School of Geography and Ocean Sciences at Nanjing University, China, but retains a research position in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science at the University of Cape Town, where he was Head of Department from 2001–2017. Meadows has authored or coauthored more than 300 peer-reviewed research articles, including in *Nature Communications*, *Nature Geoscience*, *Science Advances*, *PNAS*, *Geology*, and *Science Bulletin*. He recently co-edited two major review volumes: *Research Directions, Challenges and Achievements of Modern Geography* (Springer, 2023) and *Geography of the Anthropocene* (Istanbul University Press, 2024). Meadows' research interests lie broadly in the field of physical geography and more specifically concern environmental change, sustainability, and the geomorphological and ecological impacts of recent natural and human-induced changes. Meadows is an elected Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, the Society of South African Geographers, the Royal Society of South Africa, the African Academy of Science, Academia Europaea and of the University of Cape Town. He is also a Fellow of the Geographical Society of China and of the International Science Council. He is recipient of the 2024 Royal Society of South Africa's Marloth Medal for "highly distinguished, multidisciplinary contributions to the furtherance of science"

Managing waterscapes in the Anthropocene: the case of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China

Suzhou, long celebrated as a "watertown" in Chinese cultural history, is a city where human settlement and water have been intimately interwoven for over two millennia. Its intricate network of canals, lakes, and rivers not only structured urban form and economic life but also inspired generations of poets, artists, and philosophers. In the Anthropocene, however, this harmonious waterscape is being fundamentally reshaped by accelerated urbanisation, industrialisation, and infrastructural transformation. This paper examines how such changes are affecting both the ecological integrity and the cultural meaning of water in Suzhou.

As land conversion, canal infill, and increasing impervious surface cover fragment and constrain traditional water systems, water levels across the city have become more volatile, and hydrological connectivity has diminished. The historical equilibrium between seasonal flow, storage, and drainage has given way to heightened flood risk, reduced baseflows, and the marginalisation of smaller water bodies. At the same time, water quality has suffered from intensified pollutant loads—industrial effluent, agricultural runoff, and untreated domestic waste—threatening aquatic ecosystems and the aesthetic value of water in the urban landscape.

These transformations signal not only environmental degradation but also a rupture in the lived experience and symbolic centrality of water in Suzhou's identity. Once a medium of movement, livelihood, and contemplation, water is increasingly confined, polluted, or rendered invisible in the urban fabric. This decoupling of society from its waterscape is both a material and cultural loss.

Reimagining waterscape management in Suzhou thus requires more than technical remediation; it demands a reintegration of ecological function with cultural memory. By foregrounding water as both a physical and symbolic resource, this study calls for governance models that bridge engineering, heritage preservation, and participatory planning. In doing so, Suzhou can once again become a model of human–water coexistence—restored not only in flow, but in meaning.



PARTICIPANTS



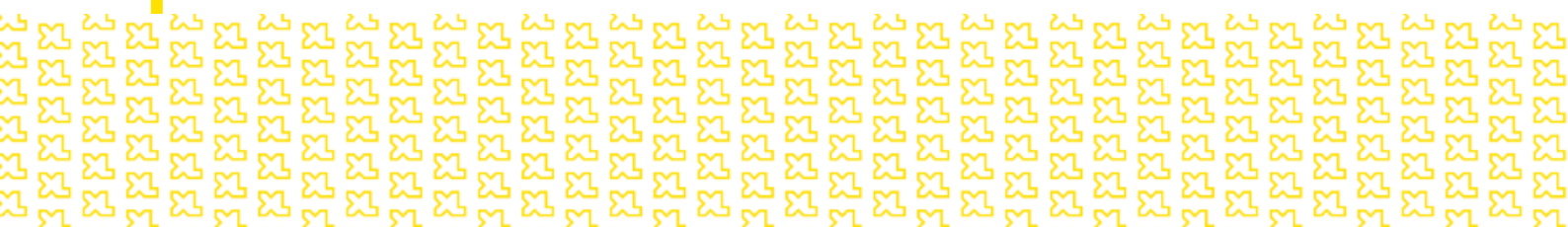
Luiz OOSTERBEEK

President of CIPSH

Luis Oosterbeek is Professor at the Polytechnic Institute of Tomar. President of the International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences. UNESCO-IPT chair holder "Humanities and Cultural Integrated Landscape management". Vice-Director of the Geosciences Centre of Coimbra University. Member of the Portuguese Academy of History, the Lisbon Academy of Sciences and Academia Europaea. Coordinator of research projects in archaeology, heritage and landscape management in Portugal, Africa and Southern America. Prizes and awards: European Commission, Brazilian Lawyers Bar, Portuguese Ministry of Culture, Gulbenkian Foundation, Foundation for Science and Technology among others. Author of over 350 papers and 90 books. Invited Professor in several Universities in Europe, Africa, Brazil and China.

Tribulations and hope: revisiting the role of water management in the organization of past societies and in the design of transformative utopia

The relevance of water for the survival of humans is closely related to their patterns of settlement and mobility throughout millennia. This is also the reason why water played a core role in various systems of beliefs, from ceremonial places in which fire and water organize the rituals to complex societies associated to major hydraulic works (e.g. dams) and seafaring. This paper builds from this long track of human/water relations and representations, to discuss why open-waterscapes have been less to not considered in the design of utopian landscapes. It will be argued that the functional role of landscapes is to pave the path for human transformative agency, within controllable environments. The open sea being a space of wilderness, it played a major but different role in the design of utopias. However, the contemporary approach to new uses of the sea (from energy generation to mining), besides its ecological implications, also tends to change the cosmovision of societies. How will utopia operate if the landscape scenarios absorb the oceans, hence destroying their so far complementary role in social transformations?





PARTICIPANTS



Sun XIAO-CHUN

Professor, School of Humanities of the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences

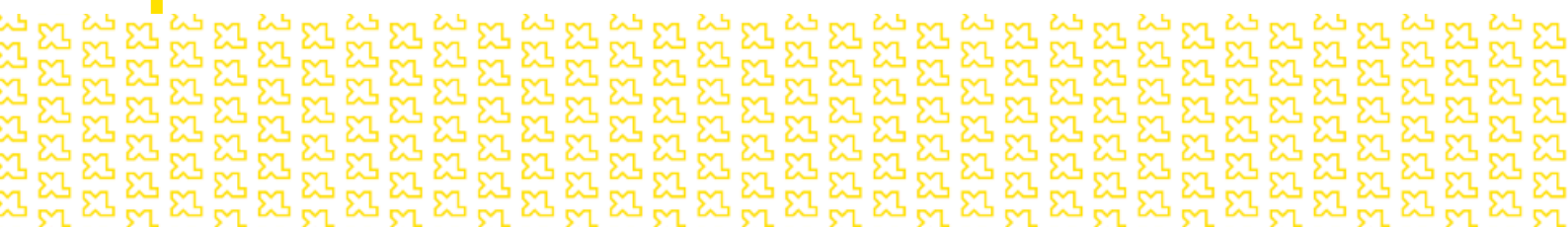
SUN Xiaochun is Professor of History of Science at the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences. He received his Ph.D. in History of Astronomy from the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 1993 and his second Ph.D. in History and Sociology of Science from the University of Pennsylvania in 2007. His co-authored book, *The Chinese Sky during the Han* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), presents a reconstruction of the Chinese constellations which are comparable in historical significance to that of Ptolemy of the Greek. He also authored *Legacy of Civilization: Science and Technology in Ancient China* (2024), and co-authored *The Story of the Chinese Gnomon* (2024).

Fengshui Waterscapes in Ancient China: Philosophy and Practice

This paper explores the role of waterscapes in Fengshui (Chinese geomancy), focusing on how rivers, lakes, canals, and ponds were conceptualized and arranged within cosmological frameworks. Far beyond their utilitarian functions, these water features were seen as vital carriers of qi (life energy), shaping environments for health, prosperity, and political legitimacy.

Drawing on principles of yin-yang and the Five Phases (wuxing), geomantic planners sought to harmonize water and land: flowing water (Yang) complemented still landforms (Yin), guiding qi through natural and built spaces. Ideal sites were “backed by mountains and fronted by water,” a configuration believed to concentrate auspicious energy. Urban layouts, imperial palaces, temples, and tombs were designed accordingly—capital cities aligned with cardinal directions, while canals and artificial lakes enhanced cosmological balance and fortune. Tombs, too, reflected these beliefs, ideally placed to align the soul with the rhythms of nature. In this view, waterscapes became instruments of cosmological order and imperial authority. By examining these traditions across dynasties, the paper highlights how water was not only managed but symbolically mobilized—linking the environment, architecture, and statecraft in the pursuit of harmony between heaven, earth, and human society.

This inquiry invites interdisciplinary discussion on how ancient Chinese approaches to water continue to shape cultural and ecological thinking today. I will use cases of urban planning in Liyang, Jiangsu Province, and Lingnan (South of Mountains) region in Guangdong Province to illustrate this.





PARTICIPANTS



Liu YANG

Post-Doctor, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences

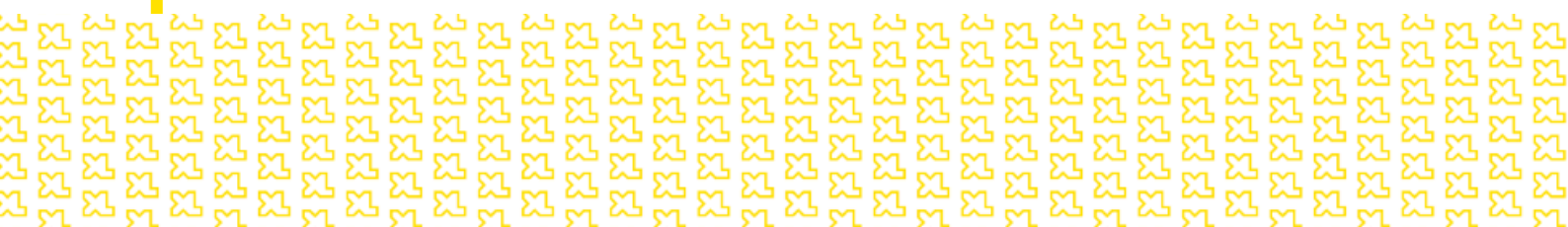
Dr. Liu Yang is a Post-doctor at the University of Chinese Academy of Science. She received Ph.D. from Inner Mongolian Normal University. She studies history of astronomy of the ethnic Yi people in Southwest China, and has published a book on The Twenty-Four Solar Terms and the Twenty-Eight Lunar Lodges in Yi Astronomy.

Fengshui Waterscapes in Ancient China: Philosophy and Practice

This paper explores the role of waterscapes in Fengshui (Chinese geomancy), focusing on how rivers, lakes, canals, and ponds were conceptualized and arranged within cosmological frameworks. Far beyond their utilitarian functions, these water features were seen as vital carriers of qi (life energy), shaping environments for health, prosperity, and political legitimacy.

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