

Presenter: Sohrob Aslamy, Syracuse University

Email: staslamy@syr.edu

Title: **Redefining the “border between two worlds” waterscapes of dependency, development, and devotion along the Panj River in the Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan**

Abstract: In 1954, Soviet travel writer, Pavel Luknitsky claimed that the Panj River dividing the Pamir Mountains of Tajikistan and Afghanistan was a “border between two worlds” (1954, 251). Luknitsky remarked that the villages of Soviet Tajikistan, alit with electricity and replete with farms and public infrastructure, stood in contrast to the “wretched, scattered houses” along the opposite river bank in Afghanistan (1954, 252). Luknitsky’s depiction not only exemplifies Soviet identity narratives in Central Asia, but also demonstrates their integral relationship to nature. Water, in this case, facilitated hydroelectric energy and collectivized agriculture, while also reifying bounded territories. Today, this narrative is no longer relevant Tajikistan. Since the Soviet Union’s collapse, communities along both sides of the Panj have transformed their relationship with water resources. Based on qualitative research conducted in Tajikistan in 2017, this paper argues that changing socioecological relationships with water, or waterscapes, in the Pamir Mountains can be evaluated in three ways: 1) material dependency between communities in Tajikistan and Afghanistan; 2) international development; and 3) Ismaili devotion and sacred regional histories of water. Drawing from critical literatures on borders in political geography and waterscapes in political ecology, this paper seeks to expand theoretical frameworks on the relation between nature’s materiality in mountain environments and boundary (re-)making. Better understanding changing waterscapes along the Panj offers insight into how mountain communities in Tajikistan have redefined political identities in the context of unpredictable climates, considerable foreign aid, and renewed cross-border relations at the historical crossroads of empires in Central Asia.

Presenter: Veit Bachmann, Goethe-University Frankfurt and Sami Moisio, University of Helsinki

Title: **Towards a Constructive Critical Geopolitics**

Email: bachmann@em.uni-frankfurt.de, sami.moisio@helsinki.fi,

Abstract: Over the past three decades critical geopolitics has evolved as an important sub-discipline of human geography. Whilst it has had a significant academic impact, its reach beyond academia has remained limited. This contribution traces some of the reasons for this lack of policy relevance and offers an approach for a wider reach of critical geopolitical thought beyond the confines of human geography. Informed by readings of the Frankfurt School of critical theory and related debates in feminist and radical geography, we suggest that, in addition to its established strength in deconstructing hegemonic narratives, critical geopolitics has the analytical and explanatory potential to be applied to the construction of geopolitical alternatives. We use our previous work on processes of European integration and the Brexit vote in the UK as examples to emphasise the need for developing a more constructive and politically engaged critical geopolitical analysis.

Presenter: Mia M. Bennett, The University of Hong Kong

Title: **Jumping Scale in the Arctic Council: Indigenous Permanent Participants and Asian Observer States**

Abstract: Since its establishment in 1996, the Arctic Council has been recognized for its unique and progressive political structure. The Arctic region's leading multilateral organization includes eight Member States, all of which possess territory north of the Arctic Circle, six Permanent Participants (PPs), each representing an Arctic indigenous peoples' organization and which have full consultation rights, and Observers, including both state and non-state entities. In 2013, the number of Observers expanded to include the Asian countries of China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and India. As Member States have occasionally greeted the overtures of Observers, particularly the recently admitted Asian countries, with suspicion, countries like South Korea and Singapore have increasingly looked towards the PPs for partnership in order to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council. Receptive PPs like the Aleut International Association have cooperated in projects such as examining the possible construction of an Arctic port and mapping indigenous marine usage. This "scale-jumping" in Arctic governance demonstrates how emerging relationships between the Observers and PPs are rescaling the politics of the Arctic Council and leading towards a more post-sovereign form of governance. This phenomenon does not replace the primary mode of cooperation under the body's auspices, which still occurs within and between nation-states possessing Arctic territory. Yet it importantly demonstrates how the Arctic Council's organization, which is meant to keep Observers on the sidelines, is inadvertently fostering alliances between stakeholders lacking territorial sovereignty in the region. At the same time, domestic issues in Japan, China, and India regarding their governments' recognition of indigenous peoples within their own borders may impede expanded cooperation between the Asian Observers and PPs.

Presenter: Emily Billo, Goucher College

Email:emily.billo@goucher.edu

Title: **Landscape transformation and state effect: Everyday social relationships of mining, resource access, and nature's materiality in Intag, Ecuador**

Abstract: This paper examines the construction of state-society boundaries via a state-run extractive project: a proposed, open-pit copper mine in the region of Intag, Ecuador. Political ecologists demonstrate that large-scale transformations of the landscape through extractive industries produce a state effect, negotiated through everyday relationships at the local level. In Intag, I argue that a powerful state effect is rooted in the landscape via mining infrastructure, access to resources, and nature's materiality. Drawing on scholarship that calls for deepening ethnographic analysis of 'post-neoliberal' Latin American states to challenge the myth of autonomous state power, this paper employs a feminist political geography approach to analyze everyday state narrations at the point of resource extraction. Several ethnographic moments from five months of research in Intag between 2014-2017 reveal tensions invoked by state-society boundaries in the region. First, meetings with state mining officials take place in community buildings, without community permission, and state officials either dominate the meeting or passively ignore community dissent. Second, embodiment and rescaling of the state through community employment with the mining company reveals a strategic effort on the part of the state to expand its presence. Finally, the materiality of resources, which underpins disputes over access to copper deposits and impacts on water in the region, is also generative of social relationships that narrate state-society boundaries. An ethnographic analysis of everyday state formations in Intag through a political ecological lens works to reveal the contradictions associated with constructing state- society boundaries, opening space for resistance to the state-led mining project.

Presenter: Anna Casaglia, University of Eastern Finland

Email: [anna.casaglia@uef.fi](mailto:anna.casaglia@uef.fi)

Title: **Bodies, borders and violence. How pornography narrates the US/Mexico boundary.**

Abstract: Pornography set on the border between Mexico and the United States has become a sub-genre of porn, referred to as “Border-Patrol Sex”. The typical characterization of this kind of productions – promoted in search engines dedicated to pornography – includes the presence of male border-patrol guards and Latino migrant women. In this paper, using theoretical and conceptual tools from popular geopolitics, cultural studies and intersectional approaches, my aim is to analyze and understand border-patrol sex set on the US/Mexico border as a form of pornography depicting the border and representing uneven power relations taking shape at and through the border. Besides analyzing the geopolitical representation of the border, I am looking at the role of Latino migrant women in these videos, and the way the border is embedded in their bodies, since policing borders also means policing bodies. As suggested by Butler, it is essential to critically focus on representation as one of the main fields where practices of humanization and dehumanization are continually produced. At the same time, the representation of power relations can be seen as an act simultaneously oppressive and transgressive, by reproducing stereotypes while interrogating them. My question is, then, how the representation of borders and Latino migrant women crossing it in porn videos, can offer a way to reason on and reimagine the nexus between borders movement, bodies, and violence.

Presenter: Magali Chatelain, Lyon 2 and Grenoble Alpes Universities (France)

Email: [m.chatelain@univ-lyon2.fr](mailto:m.chatelain@univ-lyon2.fr)

Title: **The political stakes of becoming a “capital city of dance”: the case of Lyon (France)**

Abstract: Since the early 1980s, the city of Lyon (France) has provided fertile ground for dance. The gathering of a group of professional dancers that led to the creation of the first ever French theater only dedicated to dance, as well as the settlement of national-range institutions, contributed to shaping Lyon’s reputation as a “capital city of dance”. Yet, even if this motto still lingers in the official discourses and in some professional dancers’ minds, it is not as obvious as it may seem. The purpose of this presentation is to analyze the political stakes of this notion, especially through the city’s cultural and metropolitan strategy. To begin with, the analysis will be based on some elements of definition of what makes a capital city, showing that the only way Lyon might actually be a capital city of dance would be intermittently. This is why the stakes of the Biennial Dance Festival will be then further explored. Founded in 1984, it has become a key element of the city’s metropolitan ambitions. But in spite of this event’s reputation on a national scale and notwithstanding its contribution to the vitality of Lyon’s artistic scene, a category of dance workers might not benefit as much from the festival as the others lately. Indeed, the professional dancers and dance companies that are settled in the very metropolis of Lyon tend to be facing some issues. Does it mean that a cultural capital city could exist at the expense of its own citizens?

Presenter: Meredith J. DeBoom, University of Colorado-Boulder

Email: meredith.deboom@gmail.com

Title: **Materiality, Sustainability, and the Politics of Namibia's Marine Extractive Frontier**

Abstract: This paper investigates how place-making intersects with state-making, mining, and development in debates over marine extractive frontiers in Namibia. Rising demand for fertilizer to facilitate agricultural intensification is fueling international interest in Namibia's marine phosphate resources. With the expiration of a moratorium in March 2015, Namibians and foreign investors are lobbying the Namibian government as to whether Namibia should become the world's first country to allow marine phosphate mining. Unlike marine diamond mining, which is a source of local and national pride, phosphate mining is locally, nationally, and internationally- contested. Investors, many national politicians, and some local residents praise it as an opportunity to increase food security, garner international prestige, and revitalize struggling coastal communities. Fishing industry stakeholders and some local residents, however, question its implications for local and national economic and environmental sustainability. Drawing on ethnographic research in Lüderitz, Namibia's nascent phosphate mining hub, this paper analyzes the intertwining of the social and the material in the contested, multi-scalar politics of Namibia's marine extractive frontier.

Presenter: Alexander C. Diener, University of Kansas

Email: diener@ku.edu

Title: **Civic Nationalism in Kazakhstan: Results from 2017 Fieldwork**

Abstract: Nation building within the states of Central Asia is an ongoing process affected by an array of contingencies. These range from regional geopolitics, to economic fluctuations, to internal demographics, to the aging and passing of heads of state. Kazakhstan maintains ongoing efforts to enable a collective concept of homeland through an intricate balancing of ethnic-, civic-, multi-, and trans-nationalisms. Over the course of the last two-plus decades, negotiations of homeland between titular and various non-titular components of society have taken both material and discursive forms. This paper builds on prior work pertaining to the determinants and predictors of civic nationalism, bringing to bear the first wave of a nationally representative survey conducted in spring 2017. The survey is coupled with interview data and media review to assess public opinion toward the state and individual feelings of belonging to the Kazakhstani nation. The author presents preliminary results and compare them to findings from earlier analyses to trace how civic nationalist sentiment in Kazakhstan has evolved over time, over place, and in response to changes in public policy.

Presenter: Emine Ö. Evered, PhD, Associate Professor, History, Michigan State University

Kyle T. Evered, PhD, Associate Professor, Geography, Michigan State University

Email: [ktevered@msu.edu](mailto:ktevered@msu.edu)

Title: **Wild Turkey: The Tavern as Regulatory Target in Late Ottoman and Republican Cities**

Abstract: In histories of the Middle East, coffee and tea houses long constituted focal points in artistic representation, scholarly research, and regulatory schemes. The tavern was not the only a space of congregation and interaction, however, just as caffeinated beverages were not the only drinks on tap. Often located in the more cosmopolitan quarters of port cities, the tavern was a vital site in urban landscapes and social life. Featuring not only alcohol, many also provided patrons with food and access to entertainment, recreation, and opportunities for fraternization with fellow citizens. Throughout its varied histories, the tavern was also a target for levying taxes—and rent seeking, policing the empire’s subjects and visitors, and enforcing regulation and/or prohibition. In this regard, it existed as a critical site that facilitated official and unofficial state-society encounters, and it thus functioned as a place of contact, collaboration, confrontation, and contestation. In this study, we draw on a broad range of primary sources and our continuing research and publications on the topic to interrogate the place, purpose, and pertinence of the tavern in Ottoman and Turkish cities. We do so in order to explore the tavern both as a locale of consequence unto itself and as a conceptual vantage for observing and assessing dynamic social, political, and material fluidities through time. Amid modernization, both regulatory and identity politics were conspicuous; answers to the questions of “what” and “where”—and “if”—people drank were vital markers of identity, politics, and class, meriting inclusion and exclusion. Amid ongoing social and political debates that center on the place and legal status of alcohol and its consumption in contemporary Turkey, research on the Turkish tavern also informs and serves as a corrective to ongoing narrative manipulations of the country’s diverse histories and traditions.

Presenter: Ashley Fent, UCLA

Email: [ashleyfent@ucla.edu](mailto:ashleyfent@ucla.edu)

Title: **Governing Alongside: Lateral State Spatiality and Unmet Expectations in Senegalese Mining Negotiations**

Abstract: Since 2014, local state officials in Senegal have negotiated a controversial zircon mining venture in Casamance villages. Their rhetoric and interactions with residents, observed over fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork, highlight a lateral spatiality of state performance, in which state actors position themselves “alongside” the population. Dialogue, fictive kinship, and accompaniment are accentuated amid multiple frameworks of expectation surrounding the state, including decentralized governance, transparency, and resolution of regional conflict in Casamance. However, laterality is undone by appeals to vertical hierarchy in ordering the messiness of public engagement, and it disappoints residents’ expectations of distributive governance. The concept of laterality contributes to understandings of affect in statecraft and everyday production of vertical state power over localities, highlighting the multiple, conflicting spatialities of state practice.

Presenter: Jens Kaae Fisker, University of Southern Denmark

Email: jens.k.fisker@gmail.com

Title: **The Spatial Turn in Social Movement Studies: Mapping the Multiple Spatialities of Contentious Politics**

Abstract: Around the turn of the 21st century an increasing number of scholars began to question and challenge what they perceived as a lack of spatial sensitivity in studies of contentious politics in general and social movements in particular (e.g. Tilly, 2000; Stillerman, 2002; Miller & Martin, 2000). The critique was most forcibly asserted by Martin & Miller (2003: 143) who observed that whereas "the 'spatial turn'; has transformed many areas of social and economic scholarship, research on social movements and contentious politics has generally downplayed the spatial constitution of its central concepts" leading them to conclude that "this body of scholarship remains by and large aspatial." Since then the call for a thorough spatialisation of social movement studies has been taken up by a large number of authors, developing new conceptual frameworks endowed with spatial awareness; experimenting with methods capable of capturing the spatial dimensions of contentious politics; and producing explicitly spatialised empirical accounts. A spatial turn has clearly occurred in social movements studies, but since Nicholls (2007) no one has conducted anything even resembling a systematic review of it. This paper seeks to remedy the situation by asking (1) how the turn has unfolded; (2) which key conceptual innovations it has brought with it; and (3) which critical questions it compels us to ask in future work.

Presenter: Zoltán Ginelli, Eötvös Loránd University

Email: zginelli@gmail.com

Title: **The Ghana job: Opening Hungary to the "developing world"**

Abstract: Based on interviews, archival materials and media sources, this paper looks at how post-WWII socialist Hungary developed foreign economic relations with decolonized countries, by focusing on the emergence of Hungarian development and area studies and development advocacy expertise towards developing countries. The paper's case study is the Centre for Afro-Asian Research (CAAR) founded at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1963 – from 1973 the Institute for World Economy (IWE) – in parallel with similar institutions founded in the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc states. CAAR was established as a government think tank by József Bognár, a close friend to Prime Minister János Kádár and perhaps one of the most important figures in socialist era Hungarian reform economics and foreign policy-making. The institute arose from the "Ghana job": Hungarian economists led by Bognár were invited to develop the First Seven-Year Plan of Ghana in 1962. Later on, the associates of CAAR and IWE promoted export-oriented growth against import-substitution industrialization and summoned geographical development concepts such as "poorly developed countries", "dependency", "semiperiphery", "open economies", or "small countries" as alternatives to the Cold War dichotomy of "capitalist" and "socialist" world systems. This shift in geographical knowledge production is connected to the geopolitical contexts of the Sino-Soviet split, the Khrushchevian "opening up" of foreign relations, the emergence of the "Third World", and also the 1956 revolution in the case of Hungary. The role of Ghana and the Eastern Bloc is connected to the 1960s wave of transnational development consultancy and strategies of "socialist globalization".

Presenter: David Glovsky, Michigan State University

Email: [glovskyd@msu.edu](mailto:glovskyd@msu.edu)

Title: **Religion Beyond Borders: The Transnational Sufi Community of Medina Gounass**

Abstract: The Islamic community of Medina Gounass in southern Senegal, West Africa, is within 50 miles of three other countries: Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Guinea. Since the community's founding in 1936, it has cultivated followers in these neighboring countries. Rather than being hindered by colonial and post-colonial borders, Medina Gounass' connections have thrived in part because of these borders, and the incentives they create for movement and interaction. In many ways, the community of Medina Gounass exists alongside the sovereign states of Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea, as customs officers and political officials fear taking any action that would upset the community's religious leaders. This paper argues that Medina Gounass and its transnational connections show the persistence and expansion of local conceptions of religious geography in the face of colonial and post-colonial claims of political sovereignty. The borders of Medina Gounass' community have never aligned with those of colonial or post-colonial states, and its leaders have created a community unhindered by modern territorial borders. While other religious communities in Senegal have carved out autonomy within the boundaries of the state, only Medina Gounass has managed to create a transnational community based on religious and ethnic ties. Marginal in northern Senegal, Medina Gounass serves as an important linkage between residents of Gambia, southern Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, and Guinea. More than just a religious community, Medina Gounass has created economic and social links across borders in a period where states have sought to more forcefully control and monitor these linkages.

Presenter: Andrew Grant, Colorado University, Boulder

Email: [andrewgrantphd@gmail.com](mailto:andrewgrantphd@gmail.com)

Title: **Ethnic Politics of Place amidst China's Drive for a Civilized City**

Abstract: China is increasingly urbanizing under its Urbanization Plan for 2020. The urbanization of China's ethnic minority western regions is occurring under the sign of the "civilized city." The state is using urban development discourse and practice so that the city will transform its increasing numbers of inhabitants into modern, civilized, and de-ethnicized citizens. The constant transformation of urban landscapes acts as a "civilizing machine" that constantly remakes and revalues the city and ethnic minorities' position within it. This paper argues that these transformations are resulting in new understandings and associations of certain urban areas with being civilized or uncivilized, advanced or backwards. These associations draw from and rework the ethnic politics of Xining City in eastern Qinghai Province, recasting various groups as either carriers of progress or as backwards and low-quality remnants that need to catch up. Furthermore, Tibetans' fears about being associated with being backwards contribute both to efforts to be associated with the most recently redeveloped parts of the city and a rejection of the state civilizing discourse as superficial and less important than religious cultivation. This research contributes to interdisciplinary conversations on the politics of place in Asia and elsewhere by arguing for the importance of localizations of seemingly hegemonic discourses and development practices to understand rural-urban and interethnic politics of place. This paper is based on seventeen months of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews in Chinese and Amdo Tibetan with residents in Xining City.



Presenter: Julian Hollstegge, University of Bayreuth

Email: Julian.hollstegge@uni-bayreuth.de

Title: **International border management in South Sudan: a subaltern geopolitics perspective**

Abstract: Questions related to the management of borders – struggles around the ‘right’ ways of dealing with cross-border movements and flows – have been at the heart of much contemporary public, political and academic concern. Conceptual debate in this regard has so far predominantly taken place against the background of a EuroAmerican frame of reference in several variants of (critical) border research. This paper makes a case for bringing these strands into closer dialogue with postcolonial thought and border research carried out in Africa. Employing a ‘subaltern geopolitics’ perspective (Sharp 2011; 2013), this paper thus offers a situated analyses of the interplay of global bordering technologies, state bordering practices und everyday forms of border crossing in South Sudan after independence. It traces how international border management interventions – the circulation of norms, standards, best practices and technical infrastructure with a global reach – translate and materialize in this specific local context.

Drawing on sketches of empirical research carried out among international organisations, state agents and institutions and along the South Sudan/Uganda borderland, it interrogates the politics of this process and reflects on the consequences this endeavour might entail for border research – whether ‘here’ or elsewhere – more generally.

Presenter: Sarah Klosterkamp, University of Muenster

Email: s.klosterkamp@wwu.de

Title: **German Support for the Caliphate - Political Geographies of Syrian Rebel Groups’ Networks, Logistics and Supply Chains**

Abstract: Terrorist organizations such as Ahrar ash Sham, the so-called Islamic State or Junud ash Sham consist of globally linked networks and logistics to exchange personnel, goods and information and to open up financial resources - far beyond oil and ransom.

A first wave of criminal proceedings is negotiated by German State Security Chambers at Higher Regional Courts (Oberlandesgerichte), which deal with combat missions and procurement of German Citizens in the Syrian civil war. The paper presented evaluates empirical material obtained during an ethnographic observation of court proceedings from October 2015 to April 2017 at Higher Regional Courts in Düsseldorf, Celle, Hamburg and Stuttgart-Stammheim. To analyze the materials collected, different theoretical approaches from Political Geography (e.g. Reuber 2012; Brenner, 2008; Massey, 1991) have been incorporated to identify transnational Islamist terror networks and their “Deadly Logistics” (Cowen, 2014). The talk examines exemplarily empirical results on movement patterns and terrorist practices of Islamist group members, their locally-globally organized support and financing structures.

Presenter: Natalie Koch, Syracuse University

Email: [nkoch@maxwell.syr.edu](mailto:nkoch@maxwell.syr.edu)

Title: **Greening the Gulf? Conspicuous sustainability and the technopolitics of ‘post-oil’ futures in the Arabian Peninsula**

Abstract: The Arabian Peninsula has a troubled reputation regarding environmental conservation and sustainability, largely due to its central place in global oil and gas markets. That situation is rapidly changing, however, as the region is increasingly home to various conspicuous sustainability initiatives. Ostensibly to aimed at facilitating Gulf states’ much-touted transition to a ‘post-oil’ knowledge economy, sustainability is now enshrined in long-term development agendas across the region, representing a core pillar of the Qatar National Vision 2030, the Vision 2021 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the most recent Saudi Vision 2030. State and urban leaders are also promoting green building practices, the green economy more broadly, and they now host a wide range of renewable energy technology and research centers, such as the new International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) headquartered in Abu Dhabi. Interrogating the conjuncture of conspicuous sustainability initiatives and massive higher education investments in the Gulf, this paper examines the technopolitics of sustainability at three of the region’s most prominent projects: NYU-Abu Dhabi in the Emirates, Qatar Foundation’s Education City, and Saudi Arabia’s King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST). Based on textual analysis and informed by fieldwork in these countries since 2012, this paper joins interdisciplinary research in political geography, sustainability experimentation, and laboratory studies to understand their iconic campuses not as enclaves, but as ‘exemplars’ of sustainability and renewable energy futures defined by a green economy in the Gulf. While more substantial shifts toward sustainable development in the region are in fact underway, I show how these have largely stemmed from market forces, rather than a new environmental consciousness promoted by the region’s new conspicuous sustainability initiatives.

Presenter: Joshua Hagen, Northern State University

Email: [Joshua.Hagen@northern.edu](mailto:Joshua.Hagen@northern.edu)

Title: **Understanding Pre-Modern Political Geographies through Contemporary Theory: The Case of the First ‘Border’ War and the Bordering of the Ancient World**

Abstract: Political geographers and cognate scholars have been at the leading edge of efforts to explore alternative modes of conceiving and visualizing the world political map. Traditional assumptions of viewing the world as a collection of territorially discrete states, i.e. states as containers, have been complicated by scholarship emphasizing how contemporary political space takes place and shape through more fluid and overlapping networks and movements that cross state borders, i.e. spaces of flows. These efforts to reconceptualization of the modern political map were accompanied by comparable efforts to reconceive and reimagine the political geographies of the pre-modern world. This presentation examines the parallels between these concurrent shifts and questions the extent to which successive contemporary understandings of the present color assumptions of the past. Using the conflict between the Sumerian city-states of Umma and Lagash, this presentation argues for a more flexible approach that recognizes the importance of contingency and variability in understanding pre-modern political geographies.

Presenter: Sara Hughes, Mount Holyoke College

Email: [saranicholehughes@gmail.com](mailto:saranicholehughes@gmail.com)

Title: **“Greenwashing” the Occupation: The role of environmental governance and the discourse of sustainability in sustaining the Israeli occupation of Palestine**

Abstract: Debate about the Israeli occupation of Palestine tends to focus on settlement growth in the occupied West Bank at the expense of Israeli ecological activity, despite the far-reaching territorial implications, humanitarian repercussions, and risks posed to Palestinian state-building and civil society. In this paper I analyze the use of agricultural innovation, nature reserves, and “green” technology—ostensibly aimed at sustainable resource management—as tools of land appropriation and dispossession. Through the lens of geopolitical ecology, I examine how Israel is managing the environment in the occupied territories to strategic effect (maintaining the occupation while promoting a “green” image and positioning itself as a global leader in sustainable technology, afforestation, and natural resource management), thus reproducing state interests as much as, if not more than, advancing sustainability and climate change mitigation. Nature plays a seminal role in the production of any political space, but land is particularly significant in settler colonial contexts which are premised on the replacement of an indigenous population on the land and are justified through appeals to “proper use,” what constitutes “ownership,” and Indigenous “wastelands” versus productive capacity (Locke, 1993; Tully, 1994; Veracini, 2010). This paper is situated at the intersection of political geography, political ecology, and comparative settler colonial studies, asking how modern discourses around climate change mitigation and sustainable ecological management offer new opportunities for settler colonial state-making and consolidation of state power in contested territories.

Presenter: Dina Krichker, National University of Singapore

Email: [dina.krichker@u.nus.edu](mailto:dina.krichker@u.nus.edu)

Title: **Border violence in the urban space of Melilla**

Abstract: This paper explores the intrinsic link between violence and border production in the urban space of Melilla, a Spanish Enclave in North Africa. It offers a multilayer study of exclusion practises in the enclave. The empirical basis of this paper draws on fieldwork in Melilla conducted in July, 2016, and August-December, 2017. This includes participant observation, ethnography, and semi-structured interviews. Politics, media, and bureaucratic violence, as well as social stigmatisation, are the key social dynamics in Melilla yielding the reproduction of international division line within the enclave society. Violence reinforces the borders, and borders trigger violence. In conclusion, I seek to negotiate this borders/violence nexus through the prism of personal experiences of excluding and being excluded.

Presenter: Jussi P. Laine, Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland

Email: [jussi.laine@uef.fi](mailto:jussi.laine@uef.fi)

Title: **Exploring Links between Borders and Ethics**

Abstract: Although borders have long been one of a central topic in political geography, the understanding of the concept in itself has changed significantly. An important characteristic of contemporary border studies is its increasingly prevalent ethical nature. While the field has been engaged with questions of justifiable state borders and the ethical concerns related to their definition already for long, the contemporary discussion assumes a broader perspective in questioning also the securitization of everyday life, discriminatory exploitations of borders, and the official regimes, regulations, policies that maintain them. The impacts of identity bordering pose dilemmas where collective values, liberal ideas and ethics are put to a test. Being unevenly transparent, borders are related with discrimination and social injustice. As such, they carry considerable more weight – in terms of national border and state sovereignty, but at the same time in determining the ethical responsibilities towards migrants. The question is not only whether states should have the right to control their borders, but also if they do on what basis the cross-border flows should be filtered and admission granted; i.e. what are the actual grounds and justification for the state's alleged right to exclude? This paper examines the current border politics by focusing the attention on the various practices of border-making, the politics of difference, and the everyday construction of borders. To better understand what motivates the actions of both states and individuals, it looks into the underlying criteria based on which bordering is made.

Presenter: Shaun Lin, James D Sidaway, and Chih Yuan Woon

Email: [geolzs@nus.edu.sg](mailto:geolzs@nus.edu.sg)

Title: **Reordering China, respacing the world: belt and road as geopolitical culture**

Abstract: In the few years since it was set out in two speeches by China's President Xi Jinping in September and October 2013, discussion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has proliferated in China and the wider world. We argue that the scale and density of this discussion may usefully be conceptualised as an emergent geopolitical culture that builds on geopolitical narratives established in China in the second half of the twentieth century. In charting this emergence, we examine the ways that BRI links the reordering of China's economic geography with articulations of China and the world. We draw on two examples. The first considers narratives of familiarity, partnership and location vis-a-vis China and Singapore. The second draws on Chinese civil society narratives outside the official culture of the Chinese Communist Party, in which Chinese Christian Groups appropriate Belt and Road to their narrative about China's destiny.

Poster: Kenneth Madsen, The Ohio State University at Newark

Email: madsen.34@osu.edu

**Title: Department of Homeland Security Waivers, 2005-Present**

In an effort to expedite the construction of border barriers, 48 sets of laws have been waived in the U.S. since 2005 when authority for such actions was first delegated by Congress to the Secretary of Homeland Security. Ranging from environmental protections to historic preservation and even religious freedoms, waived laws facilitated extensive construction of barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border. To date eight waiver proclamations have been issued, three under Secretary Chertoff during the Bush Administration and one each under Secretary Kelly, Acting Secretary Duke, and Secretary Nielsen under the Trump Administration. This poster outlines where the waivers are in effect, contributing to the extra-legal environment of U.S.-Mexico border security. It also compares statues that that have been set aside to provide a better understanding of waiver authority over the last thirteen years.

Presenter: Virginie Mamadouh, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Email: v.d.mamadouh@uva.nl

**Title: The changing role of cities in supranational and global governance: A political geography of the Urban Agenda for the European Union**

Abstract: The Urban Agenda for the European Union has been adopted in June 2016, a few months before the New Urban Agenda of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) . The twelve partnerships it entails – bringing together member states, cities, Directorate Generals of the European Commission and stakeholders – arguably introduce a new working method in European Union politics. Moreover they potentially impact the relations between cities and (member) states and contribute to the general trend toward a more influential role for cities in global politics (as epitomized in Benjamin Barber's last books *If Mayors Rule the World* (Barber 2013) and *Cool cities* (2017)). The paper uses the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees (coordinated by the municipality of Amsterdam and DG Home of the European Commission) as an entry point to analyze the changing political geography of city-states relations in the European context.

Presenter: Mary Mostafanezhad, University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Email: mostafan@hawaii.edu

**Title: Tourism and the Geopolitical Imaginary: Territory, Temporality and the Socio-Ecological Fix in the People's Republic of China and Myanmar**

Abstract: This paper develops the analytic of the geopolitical imaginary in tourism to describe how practices of territorialization and temporalization are brought to bear on tourism in the People's Republic of China and Myanmar. Drawing on emerging conceptualizations of the socio- ecological fix which accounts for new forms of social regulation of the production of space and nature as well as the enrolment of previously non-capitalist social arenas in tourism development, I argue that geopolitical imaginaries in tourism become sites of contestation over state-centric geopolitical visions of territoriality and temporality. Based on ethnographic research as well as popular and social media, I illustrate how geopolitical ambitions are increasingly reinforced and contested through a range of tourism centered institutions, discourses and practices (e.g. territorial claims, photographic surveillance, social media representations). In doing so, I address the ways in which geopolitical imaginaries in tourism become powerful mechanisms through which everyday practices of territorialization and temporalization are enrolled as socio-ecological fixes in the advancement of capital accumulation.

Presenter: Alexander B. Murphy, University of Oregon

Email: abmurphy@uoregon.edu

Title: **Does Critical Geopolitics Need to Become More Multi-Perspectival? Lessons from Central Asia**

Abstract: Dominant Anglo-American understandings of Central Asia's place in global politics reflect a geopolitical scripting of the region that casts it as a marginal, unstable space with the potential to destabilize surrounding realms. This "danger-influence" trope is notably different from what might be termed the "opportunity-influence" view of the region emanating from China or the "security-influence" perspective coming from Russia's political elite. Understanding the interplay of signifiers emanating from different places, and considering how these generalizations intersect with on-the-ground developments, is arguably critical to understanding Central Asia's contemporary geopolitical positioning and to broadening the critical geopolitics project.

Presenter: Galen Murton, James Madison University

Email: murtongb@jmu.edu

Title: **Expulsion, Eviction, and Getting Kicked Out of Places:**

Methods, Strategies, and Sensibilities for Conducting Fieldwork in Authoritarian Spaces

Abstract: Conducting research in authoritarian spaces has never been easy. However, recent democratic backsliding on a global scale presents new fieldwork challenges and ethical dilemmas. While scholars have long navigated and circumvented the bureaucracies of access to research sites – particularly in longstanding authoritarian states such as China, Russia, Cuba, and elsewhere – other countries previously perceived as relatively 'open' and accessible – such as Nepal, Philippines, Cambodia, and Thailand, to name but a few – are increasingly 'closing' domestic space to academic research. So, what are we to do, and how? What techniques and strategies do political geographers employ to get work done when permits are denied, visas are revoked, and persons are deported? Soliciting the perspectives, experiences, and outcomes from colleagues who work in spaces of strict control, this presentation reflects on the politics and practices of conducting political geographic research in sites governed by authoritarian rule. By sharing stories, strategies, and solutions to the challenges of fieldwork in such places, I hope to illuminate and translate some safe, sound, and viable methods and approaches by which geographers can gain access to and generate data from increasingly confined areas of research.

Presenter: Nathaniel Ray Pickett, University of Kansas

Title: **Opening spaces of dissent: The politics of information control in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster on Ukraine**

Abstract: The material, political, and scientific production contexts of the 1986 Chornobyl disaster and the unprecedented severity and scope of the radiation released produced an environment where “facts” fluctuated wildly among instruments, bodies, sites, occupations, hospitals, departments, and institutions. Despite the knowledge gaps and dissonances, Soviet state officials had to respond to the disaster, its effects, and the people it affected, which was no trivial task. Central to this operation was controlling the narrative: what, to whom, when, and how information was released. Officials had to use the limited knowledge at hand, gleaned from instruments not powerful enough or in such a state of disrepair to handle the severity of the radioactive exposure, minimize panic, and assert control. At the same time, the lack of exact figures, the methods and timing of the government’s response, and the discovered attempts to conceal or falsify information emboldened a number of non-state actors who were able to wrest the narrative away from the sole purview of the state. The failure of the Soviet state to retain control of both the information and the discourse of the disaster, especially in the new, untested political milieu of glasnost created space and opportunity for opposition groups, NGOs, other states, and international organizations to affect a host of political and social processes in Soviet Ukraine. I argue that the legacy of the state’s inability to control the politics of information continues into the present as expressed in the erosion of the Ukrainian public’s trust in their elected officials and the government.

Presenter: Mark Alan Rhodes II

Email: [mrhode21@kent.edu](mailto:mrhode21@kent.edu)

Title: **The Paul Robeson Party: Political Affiliation and Memorialization in Wales**

Abstract: Historically, Wales’ memorial landscapes were created and influenced by its union with England, its position within the British Empire, and internal political power struggles. Post-devolution, Welsh memorialization continues to see political strife. This paper analyzes and contributes toward the underdeveloped critical colonial discussion of the memorial landscapes in Wales, especially those influenced by the Labour, Communist, and Plaid Cymru parties. With memorial landscape meaning the various ways spatial memory is represented and constructed in place, I look specifically at the memorial landscapes that can be found in museums, archives, public spaces, artistic venues, political offices, and government buildings throughout Wales. Each political party utilizes the memory of the Spanish Civil War, Paul Robeson, and their connections to Robeson’s philosophies to perpetuate different national ideologies. I utilize Paul Robeson and the Spanish Civil War as case studies to analyze how these memorial landscapes represent ideas of socialism, communism, and nationalism and how these politicized landscapes effect ideas of the Welsh nation. This paper reveals how each of these parties attempt to construct memory in Wales and the various intricate discourses embedded in the Welsh memorial landscape of the Spanish Civil War and Paul Robeson.

Presenter: Ian Rowen, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Email: [ian.rowen@colorado.edu](mailto:ian.rowen@colorado.edu)

Title: **Tourism scholarship as a geopolitical instrument: A case study of Australian-Chinese collaboration**

Abstract: This paper examines the instrumentality of tourism scholars and scholarship for international geopolitical projects. Based on an ethnography of an international academic conference, it explores the rationales and ways in which tourism scholars choose to tactically align with the geopolitical agendas of not only domestic but foreign and possibly hostile state administrations. As a case study, I examine a recent tourism studies conference held in an Australian university in collaboration with Chinese researchers and funding institutions. This conference was the third in a series of “East-West Dialogues” about tourism and the “Chinese Dream,” a signature rhetorical device of China’s President Xi Jinping, who has used it as a mission statement and manifesto to secure the Chinese Communist Party’s role as the sole vessel for national development via “socialism with Chinese characteristics”. By actively positioning the international collaboration within the rhetorical bounds of the Chinese party-state, I argue that the Australian tourism academy’s participation explicitly subjects it to China’s geopolitical designs. Building on past research that demonstrates that tourist practice should be viewed as a technology of state territorialization—i.e., is, as a mode of social and spatial ordering that produces tourists and state territory as effects of power, this paper will take a further meta- discursive step to argue that the transnational knowledge production conducted by tourism scholars plays a key part in such practices and can therefore implicitly and explicitly advance the multifarious territorial projects of state actors. Renewed attention to researcher ethics and reflexivity, especially in a time of economic transformation and turmoil in the global academy, is suggested as a possible response.

Presenter: James W. Scott, University of Eastern Finland

Email: [james.scott@uef.fi](mailto:james.scott@uef.fi)

Title: **Politicising East-West Difference in the European Union: Patterns of Identitary Bordering**

Abstract: East-West “difference” in Europe is frequently narrated in the media as a phenomenon of nonconformity with what might be called a western liberal consensus. Recent headlines in the German and British press highlight such difference with regard to migration, the refugee “crisis” and energy cooperation with Russia. Hungary and other Central and Eastern European (CEE) states are thus “falling out of step” with Europe and diverging from accepted European norms. So-called East-West divides within the EU have been conceptualised as a reflection of asymmetry, historical and cultural difference and core-periphery relations (Ágh 2010, Agnew 2001, Kuus 2007, Müller 2014). However, Tomasz Zarycki (2014) has suggested that “Eastness” is rather a quasi post-colonial ideology that exaggerates cultural difference and avoids addressing economic dimensions of Western hegemony, resulting in reductionist political framings of Central Europe’s problems. In this presentation I argue that East-West difference is being recast as a result of national-conservative activism within CEE. It is being suggested, for example by Hungary’s present government, that the “new Europe” is being constructed eastwards from the traditional western core. The assertion is that liberal Europe has failed, having lost its legitimacy, reneged on its commitment to community values and opted for a cosmopolitan model that denigrates national identity. A complex process of identitary bordering will be discussed that involves ethnic, cultural, ideological and socio-economic components and that exemplifies Hungarian political agendas of socio-political classification based on singular notions of national belonging.



Presenter: Vera Smirnova, Virginia Tech

Email: veras@vt.edu

Title: **Territory, Exception, and State Territorial Mode of Production in the Russian Imperial Urban Periphery**

Abstract: Since the imperial land consolidation acts of 1906, the Russian land commune became a center of territorial struggle where complex alliances of actors, strategies, and representations of territory beyond the exclusive control of the state allied together to carry out or resist land enclosure. This paper draws on archival analysis of the Russian imperial land reforms, to explore how urban periphery and the Russian imperial state were dialectically co-produced through institutional manipulations, educational programs, resettlement plans, and, in another vein, political and public discourses. I examine the coalitions of landed nobility, land surveyors, landless serfs, and peasant proprietors that used enclosure as a conduit for coercive governance, accumulation of capital, or in contrary, as a means of autogestion. I argue that land enclosure exploited practices of customary territorialization in the commune, instigated decentralization of state functions through erosion of peasant land law, and furthered growing agrarian and economic crises in the countryside. Relying on the theoretical cues offered by Lefebvre and Agamben on state, territory, and extralegal production of space in times of capitalist crisis, this work identifies blind spots in the Anglophone contribution to the territory debate—usually associated with static representations of territory as a state ‘spatial container’—to provide for a more nuanced understanding of social agency in the production of territory from a decolonized and decentralized perspective.

Presenter: Kevin Surprise, Mount Holyoke College

Email: ksurpris@mtholyoke.edu

Title: **Fossil capital, anti-fragility, and grand strategy: The geopolitics of solar geoengineering**

Abstract: Solar geoengineering via stratospheric aerosol injection (SAI) is rapidly moving from fringe to fore in a range of climate policy institutions. Yet, the capacity to intentionally modify albedo and thereby cool the planet is fraught with considerable geopolitical implications. Thus far, SAI is primarily understood as a dangerous threat (e.g. unintended consequences, unilateral deployment, termination leading to rapid warming, etc.). While these concerns have structured the discourse around the governance of research, experimentation, and deployment, the liberal and realist imaginaries couching SAI as a threat in need of “governance” miss the broader structures in which it is being developed. As scenarios for deployment shape the immediate, material realities of research funding and field-experimentation, clearer understandings of the ways in which SAI can be mobilized to bolster hegemonic structures of power are necessary. To this end, I utilize Giovanni Arrighi’s conception of hegemonic transitions to examine three interwoven phenomena: the militarization of climate change; China’s challenge to the U.S. in the realm of energy; and the Trump Administration’s push for “energy dominance.” Recent strategic planning shifts the military’s focus toward managing “great power” conflicts, and – in broad terms – the maintenance of U.S. hegemony hinges upon bolstering fossil capitalism (and vice versa). Yet, the military views climate change as a fundamental threat to its strategic mission. Hence, SAI may prove tactically useful in that it can slow the rate of climatic change, potentially blunting the climate threat and enabling U.S.-led fossil capital to remain hegemonic (for the foreseeable future).

Presenter: Jesse Swann-Quinn, Syracuse University

Email: [jquinn@syr.edu](mailto:jquinn@syr.edu)

Title: **Securing the Tiger: The Tbilisi Zoo tragedy and the post-Soviet bio-social**

Abstract: On 17 June 2015, a 43-year-old Tbilisi man was mauled and killed by a white tiger named Maximus. The tiger had escaped from the Tbilisi zoo several nights earlier when, following a series of unprecedented rain events, a wall of water tore through an affluent urban neighborhood and destroyed the Soviet-era institution. The flood also damaged 700 homes, displaced 67 families, killed 19 people, and left 3 more unaccounted for. Authorities ordered people in Tbilisi at the time – including myself – to stay indoors while authorities secured the international headline-grabbing animals roaming the city streets – crocodiles, bears, penguins, wolves, and Beggi, the infamous hippopotamus. Thousands of Tbilisi citizens ignored the warnings and took to the streets, volunteering their labor to help with the disaster recovery effort. Once state security officials found the ‘man-eating’ tiger, Maximus was shot dead, adding to the nearly 300 animals either drowned or killed during this tragic event.

In this paper, I argue that the narratives and effects of this tragedy reflect deeper political currents in Georgia’s post-Soviet social ordering. I follow the work of Stephen Collier and other scholars of post-Soviet biopolitics to assess how animals, cages, water conduits, landslides, bullets, and mud “emerge as privileged sites where the relationship between neoliberalism and social modernity can be reexamined” (Collier 2011, 2–3). Through this historical assemblage of infrastructure, politics, and unexpected ‘natural’ events, emerging governmental technologies produce new patterns of in/security for a diversity of lifeforms – man and tiger alike.

Presenter: Kimberley Thomas, Penn State University

Email: [kimthomas@psu.edu](mailto:kimthomas@psu.edu)

Title: **River borders and securitizing infrastructures in South Asia**

Abstract: Rivers have long been effective yet troublesome borders. Inherently itinerant, rivers routinely defy cartographic depictions of borders as static, territorially-bounded formations. Such dynamism poses material and conceptual challenges to state regulatory activities, resulting in increasingly heterodox attempts to fix waterbodies through various securitizing mechanisms. Technologies like floating fences and laser walls are not lifted from the pages of science fiction novels but from national security playbooks. In this talk, I examine the dialectical relationship between rivers and borders through the concept of the river-border complex. I ask how the Ganges River informs the form and function of the Indo-Bangladeshi border and how, in turn, border security technologies in India regulate flows along the river, which comprises 129km of India’s border with Bangladesh. Drawing on archival records, in-person interviews, and hydrological data, I find that border security mediates many flows along the river, with the perverse effect of generating greater insecurity in both countries.

Presenter: Sarah Tynen, University of Colorado-Boulder

Email: sarah.tynen@colorado.edu

Title: **Scalar Citizenships and Belonging: Global Islam and Lived Experience in Northwest China**

Abstract: How are the global and local fundamentally intertwined, and yet materially and ideologically separated? This chapter presents empirical evidence from everyday lived experience to support the theory of the social construction of hierarchal territorial scales, and in doing so, shows the ways that local formations of identity disrupt the imaginary cohesiveness and boundedness of nation-state territory. While the broad patterns of ethno-cultural identity and majority-minority group relations are known, important details about belonging, citizenship, and the social construction of scale are not well-studied in the geographical literature on nationalism and identity. My specific research questions in this chapter ask: How do Uyghurs express cultural identity and practice social belonging with each other (or not)? How do Uyghurs perform and experience this belonging and in-group recognition? In investigating these questions, I find an anxiety over loss of traditional Uyghur values and a desire for cosmopolitanism in the midst of aversion to Han Chinese cultural and material values. The main argument of this paper is that performances of belonging in Uyghur society in tension between the traditional and cosmopolitan disrupt the imaginary of a unified and homogenous container of the Chinese Nation-state.

Presenter: Eve Vogel, UMass Amherst

Email: evev@umass.edu

Title: **Wider questions of sustainability: The impacts of New England electric conservation and renewables on hydropower, rivers and communities**

Abstract: To move toward a more sustainable future, many argue that we need a shift toward reliance on renewable electric generation and conservation, coupled with just-in-time flexibility and balancing, all provided by quick-response electric transmission and markets. Yet few have examined how changing markets and infrastructure, coupled with incentives for conservation and renewables, impact other biophysical resources and communities. One of the resources that is most valuable for a nimble and low-carbon electric system is hydropower. Because hydropower impacts river ecosystems, fisheries, and many human communities, tracing the effects of electric policies on hydropower provides a window into wider questions of sustainability. New England and Massachusetts have been leaders for over 30 years in promoting more sustainable electricity, starting with energy conservation and then adding renewables and carbon reduction. Unlike other early leaders such as California and the Pacific Northwest, New England has limited hydropower. Also, most hydropower is owned by investor-owned corporations, so data on hydropower operations, as well as the use of hydropower revenues, is largely proprietary. Yet limited evidence suggests that new competitive markets and increased solar have caused hydropower generation to become more variable on a daily and subdaily basis, with negative effects on river ecologies. Corporate consolidation and financialization that followed deregulation have reduced financial flows to at least some local communities. And Massachusetts has moved to import large volumes of hydropower from Canada, where pristine rivers are being dammed in indigenous people's territory that still have outstanding land claims.

Presenter: M. Kawēlauokealoha Wright, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Email: kawelau.wright@hawaii.edu

Title: **Hawai‘is Territorial Homesteads on Maui: An Attempt at an American Colony in 1911**

Abstract: Hawaii’s landscape underwent major transformations immediately following the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Among these were the changes to ethnic population demographics and land use. At the time of the overthrow, Anglo Saxons were greatly outnumbered by the population segments of other races, including Native Hawaiians. Within the space of forty years, there was an explosion of Americans that settled across Hawai‘i. This project examines Hawai‘i territorial government systems put into place to facilitate these changes and presents an in-depth look at Territorial Homesteads in Ha‘ikū, Maui that encompassed more than two thousand acres. This land was given to American Anglo Saxons exclusively, creating an American Colony. It will also examine the role that the Land Act, Organic Act, and Settlement Associations played in the homesteading initiative. These systems were created and utilized to grow the American Caucasian population in Hawai‘i, and did so effectively. Hawaii’s landscape changed dramatically in numerous ways due to these systems, which affected not just the ethnic makeup of the population, but also had major economic and social impacts. I will use territorial government documents and letters as well as numerous newspaper articles generated during Hawaii’s territorial period to present this history. I believe that it is important to examine Hawai‘i’s history as a US territory in an effort to better contextualize and educate about the dispossession of Native Hawaiians in their homeland. This is a piece of that understanding.

Presenter: Yang YANG , University of Colorado - Boulder

Email: Yang.yang@colorado.edu

Title: **Preparing Healthy Chinese Pilgrims for the Hajj:**

**The Hui, Local Medical Configurations, and Transnational Imaginations of the Global Ummah in Urban Muslim Communities in China**

Abstract: Since the early 1990s, as the result of the Islamic revival in the post-Mao era, Chinese Muslims have resumed performing the Hajj through a government-sponsored program to travel from China to the holy sites in Saudi Arabia. Official statistics show a significant increase in participants from 1,000 to 15,000 between the 1990s and 2016, which is primarily the result of diplomatic negotiations between China and Saudi Arabia on allocating a larger quota to Chinese pilgrims. In this paper, I examine local configurations in urban Muslim communities in China and their impact on shaping Chinese Muslim transnational mobility. I focus on the Hui Muslims in Xi’an and their interpretations of “being physically ready for the Hajj”, looking specifically at their concerns over health and nutrition. I ask how both grassroots and government-sponsored local medical configurations contribute to the Hui’s multiple imaginations of Mecca within the Muslim community in Xi’an and their ways of becoming connected to the global Ummah by displaying a cosmopolitan fashion of “Hui-ness.” I engage the concept of “Muslim cosmopolitanism” to show multiple modalities of seeking the universality of the global Islamic community while maintaining roots in local social and political particularities. By understanding the Hui’s engagement in the Hajj in Xi’an, this paper presents the religious pilgrimage as both a part of the state efforts in consolidating the China-Saudi strategic alliance and an alternative form of expressing Chinese Muslim connections to the global Ummah.