

China's economic growth: what should we celebrate?

February 2011

[Alan Hudson](#) will focus on state led planning for the Shanghai Expo in 2010, whilst [Professor Berthold Schoene](#)

on how British authors are leaving the national scene to imagine a global community.



As a trailer for his introduction,



Alan Hudson said 'the exhilarating technical innovation, speed of development and unashamed ambition of Chinese urban centres should be welcomed as a direct challenge to the painful negativity of western planning. But a Maglev train and a Five-Year Plan represent only a partial, and one-sided, re-engagement with China's century long struggle to embrace and reconstitute the modern.

China's fractured experience of modernity combined with the peculiar social and economic development of the post-1980s reforms present a vivid example of what happens when detailed planning meets the aspirations and intelligence of city dwellers. The city is a place of strangers in a world of difference. In a city, the opportunities are defined, not by a fixed relationship to nature and tradition, or by regulation and behavioural codes but by social possibilities. As anywhere, technically the movement is easy but there are social constraints. The heterogeneity of the cosmopolitan city is asymmetrical. In Shanghai there are 'citizens of the world' who commute between there and London and New York. Others are bound in a particular space but

their imagination is not.'

Berthold Schoene will look at the visions British authors express in their novels of an increasingly cosmopolitan society and one less focussed on the national scene. He will explore the extent to which their interest in cosmopolitanism may well be to provide an ethically informed response to globalisation, and perhaps as a way of rationalising the relative decline of previously ascendant economies and societies such as Britain.

Inspired by Ulrich Beck's *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Berthold likes to think of cosmopolitanism as responding to globalisation, requiring the unlearning of a whole range of western ethno-centric habits and assumptions that have become part of who we think we are, and how it shapes political agency.

Through looking at some examples of economic growth in China, and the literary responses by British authors to Britain's relative stagnation or decline, this discussion will try and highlight how globalisation, described by Zygmunt Bauman as 'the intractable fate of the world', can be shaped and thus turn it to humanity's advantage.

Some background readings

[Taking the 'Ism' Out of Cosmopolitanism: An Essay in Reconstruction](#) by Robert Fine, *European Journal of Social Theory* 2003

[Vulnerability, violence and \(cosmopolitan\) ethics: Butler's *Precarious Life*](#) by Angela McRobbie, The British Journal of Sociology 2006 Volume 57 Issue 1

[Visuality, mobility and the cosmopolitan: inhabiting the world from afar](#) by Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry, The British Journal of Sociology 2006 Volume 57 Issue 1

[Before, during and after: making the most of the London 2012 Games](#), department for culture, media and sport (DCMS) June 2008

[In pursuit of modernity in China](#) Alan Hudson speaking at the [Birmingham Salon](#), April 2010


[A 'cycling revolution'? On your bike, Boris](#), Brendan O'Neill, spiked online 22 July 2010

[Tour du Monde : David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten* and the Cosmopolitan Imagination](#) by Berthold Schoene, published in College Literature 37:4 (2010)




[15 storey hotel built in 2 days](#), YouTube video of construction of Ark Hotel in China, July 2010

Listen again (not miked so variable quality)...

Speakers' introductions - click on the  Play button: {mp3}china-speaker-intros{/mp3}

Initial discussion - click on the  Play button: [{mp3}china-first-questions{/mp3}](#)

Middle discussion - click on the  Play button: [{mp3}china-second-questions{/mp3}](#)

Final  discussion and summation  - click on the  Play button:
[{mp3}china-final-questions-summation{/mp3}](#)