



From the Editor

Dear colleagues and friends,

I am pleased to present to you the second issue of 2019, where we publish the works of scholars based in Singapore, China, Germany, and the U.S. The four papers published herein present research work carried out on Taiwan, China, Inner Mongolia, and the United States and which traverse such domains of research to include urban sociology, religion, gender and work, and mobilisation theories.

Fabian Graham, currently based at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore presents an essay on the politics of gift-giving, reciprocity, and exchange in the context of Chinese temples in Taiwan. Building his arguments upon 2 temples in Nantou County and Taipei County, Graham queries the complexities of what is actually exchanged between devotees and deities. He deploys Derridean analysis revolving around the gift and makes a case for how the gift becomes immaterial in the religious context, and where the identity of the recipient remains anonymous.

In the second paper on China, Fei Yan, Associate Professor of Sociology at Tsinghua University shares his views on the Red Guard Movement during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1968 and analyses insurgency by employing McAdam's political process model. The author engages with such research questions including: How was rapid mobilisation possible? How and why did the youths become organised? What were their underlying motives and how did these motives shape their political choices? In so doing, the paper contributes to social movement studies by arguing for how various components of political infrastructures facilitated organisational readiness.

Meisen Wong from TU Berlin/National University of Singapore reflects upon the issues and problematics of research access, and notions of the 'field' based on her doctoral work on ghost cities in Ordos, Inner Mongolia. She takes us through her fieldwork experiences and contends that the expectations of urban ethnography – where assumptions of the stability of material and social relations are associated – become disrupted when one studies ghost cities. Where interlocutors are mobile and flexible, this warrants a different approach towards undertaking urban ethnographic research in reinterpreting what constitutes a 'fieldsite' in broader terms.

The final paper is a co-authored piece by Frances Winddance Twine and Meeta Rani Jha, who are respectively based at UC Santa Barbara and UC Berkeley. They examine the variegated pathways that women of different backgrounds trudge in order to secure jobs in the engineering industries. Basing their research on interviews carried out with 80 women, Twine and Jha elucidate upon 5 core pathways that provide further analytical deliberations vis-à-vis gender disparities in hiring, job security, as well as other forms of structural obstacles including immigration policies.

As always, I extend a warm invitation to all who would like to submit their papers for upcoming issues and also welcome feedback on these articles. Please do email me if you have ideas, suggestions or queries about the eSymposium.

Thank you all very much for your committed support, interest in and endorsement of the ISA eSymposium.

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