



RUB



China Europe Research Network (CHERN), COST Action

Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence for EU-Asia Connectivity (CEAC)

Workshop: “EU Responses to Chinese Investments in European Strategic Sectors”

April 11-12, 2024

Faculty of East Asian Studies, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany

List of Chairs and Speakers

Sebastian Bersick

Prof. Bersick is the Executive Director of the Centre for EU-Asia Connectivity (CEAC) at Ruhr University Bochum (RUB), Germany, a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence. Prof. Bersick heads the Department of 'International Political Economy of East Asia' and is the Vice-Dean at the Faculty of East Asian Studies at RUB.

In addition, he is a visiting Professor at the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI), University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, as well as an Adjunct Professor at the School of International Relations and Public Affairs (SIRPA), Fudan University, Shanghai, where he functioned as Executive Director of the "Centre for China-EU Relations" and, for example, obtained funding from the Jean Monnet Lifelong Learning Programme on EU-China security cooperation.

His research areas cover the international political economy of Asia-Europe relations (e.g., EU-China, EU-ASEAN, ASEM, BRI), East Asian integration, China as a regional and global actor, and international relations in Asia.



Niall Duggan

Dr. Niall Duggan is a Senior Lecturer in international relations at University College Cork, Ireland, where he has taught in the Department of Government and Politics since 2015. His research interests include emerging economies in global governance, international relations of the Global South, and China's foreign and security policies, mainly focusing on Sino-African and Sino-EU relations. Niall is Co-leader of WG 1: Strategic sectors and infrastructure development: Cost Action CHERN the China in Europe Research Network.



Jörn-Carsten Gottwald

Prof. Jörn-Carsten Gottwald is Professor at the Faculty of East Asian Studies, Chair in East Asian Politics, and has been working on EU-China-related issues for more than 15 years. Following completion of his PhD dissertation at Free University Berlin on "Regional Politics in the Chinese Special Administrative Region of Hainan" (2000), he completed a peer-reviewed post-doc (German habilitation) in Political Sciences at the University of Trier on "The Politics of Regulation of Financial Services in the European Union" (2006). He is a member of the advisory Board of the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS), Berlin and was founding co-director of the Alliance for Research on East Asia (AREA) Ruhr.

Prof. Gottwald has published internationally on European China policies, financial regulation in China and in the EU, on political and economic relations between China and the European Union, and the Belt and Road Initiative. His current research centers on issues of financial regulation and innovation in China and Europe and on changing the underlying expectations in bilateral relations from a role theoretical perspective. Prof. Gottwald is a regular visiting professor at various business schools in China and Europe, he is actively involved in connecting Europe and East Asia in research and education.



List of Chairs and Speakers

Nana de Graaff

Dr. de Graaff is an Associate Professor in International Relations at the Department of Political Science and Public Administration. Since 2019 she has also been Director of Studies for the BSc and MSc Political Science of her department. Dr. de Graaf is the Chair of the EU COST Action 18215 China in Europe Research Network (CHERN), a pan-European knowledge network on Chinese engagements in Europe of >250 researchers. She also serves as an Executive Council Member of SASE (Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics), editorial board member of the Routledge RIPE series in Global Political Economy, an International Advisory Board member of International Affairs (Oxford University Press/Chatham House) and of the journal The International Spectator (Taylor & Francis). Dr. de Graaf is also board member of the Dutch Political Science Association (NKWP, Nederlandse Kring voor de Wetenschap der Politiek) since 2015 responsible for the journal Acta Politica. Previously, she was an Honorary Fellow (2016-2017), at the Department of International Politics, City University of London and she has served as Programme director of the Graduate School of Social Sciences at the VU Amsterdam for five years (2017-2020).



Stanislav Gubenko

Mr. Gubenko is a doctoral researcher in law at the University of Luxembourg. His research combines international law and game theory approaches to study human rights and corporate social responsibility in Chinese energy projects in the Western Balkans.

Mr. Gubenko is passionate about human rights and international development. Fluent in seven languages and educated in International law and China studies, he facilitates collaboration and teamwork with exceptional communication skills.

He is also a member of the China in Europe Research Network, the "China, Law and Development" project (CLD) at the University of Oxford and European China Law Studies Association (ECLS). Open for cooperation in any fields related to Chinese studies, international law and game theory.



Yuqiao Li

Mr. Yuqiao Li is a Ph.D. candidate at Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB), supervised by Prof. Sebastian Bersick in the Department of International Political Economy of East Asia, Faculty of East Asian Studies. He was awarded a scholarship by the China Scholarship Council.

Holding a Master of Arts degree from RUB in East Asian Politics, Mr. Li's master's thesis explored the nuances of China's foreign policy and its shaping process during the Iran nuclear negotiations. Currently, his doctoral research focuses on China's foreign policy vis-à-vis the EU. In the framework of national role conception, his will analyse China's technology standardisation strategy in railway industries and EU's external impact.

Mr. Li gained practical experience as an intern at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China between 2019 and 2020. His internship work concentrated on the Belt and Road Initiative and the intricate dynamics between the EU, Central and Eastern Europe, and China.



List of Chairs and Speakers

Giles Mohan

Prof. Giles Mohan is a human geographer who gained his Ph.D. from Liverpool University in 1993. His work concerns the politics of development, particularly the intermingling of territorial scales and transnational networks. Prof. Mohan has taught at Liverpool University, the University of Central Lancashire, Portsmouth University and the Open University. He also was a handling editor of the *Review of African Political Economy* and a member of the editorial boards of *Political Geography*, *Antipode*, *Geography Compass*, and the *International Development Planning Review*. Prof. Mohan has had a number of research projects on China's internationalisation and the implications for global development. The latest is a European Research Council Advanced Grant entitled *Re-orienting development: the dynamics and effects of Chinese infrastructure investment in Europe (REDEFINE)*, which builds on previous work on China-Africa relations.



Mireia Paulo

Mrs. Mireia Paulo is Head of Management of the Centre for EU-Asia Connectivity (CEAC), Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at Ruhr-Universität of Bochum in Germany. She is also a Lecturer and Research Associate at the Dept. of International Political Economy of East Asia at the Faculty of East Asian Studies at RUB. In addition to her work in academia, Mrs. Paulo is a listed Arbitrator/Mediator at the Shanghai International Arbitration Center (SHIAC) and member member of the OECD's "Expert Community on Data Free Flow with Trust" supporting the OECD's Digital Policy Committee. With more than 15 years of international work experience (7 countries) in trade and investment, legal industry, research, and government relations between Asia-Europe, she worked across a variety of industries including private sector, university, NGOs, and international organisations (European Commission and UNHCR).

Her research focuses on Sino-EU relations, particularly their political and legal systems, digital strategies, and data governance. Her Ph.D. research deals with the role of China and the EU in data governance. She holds an M.A. in Political and Administration of the European Union at the College of Europe, three Bachelor's degrees, and postgraduate studies conducted at the School of Economics, Fudan University, and Chinese Mandarin language at Peking University.



Samuel Rogers

Dr. Samuel Rogers has a Ph.D. in political economy from the University of Bristol (2019) and is currently Post-doctoral Research Associate at The Open University (UK) on the ERC-funded project *Re-orienting development: The dynamics and effects of Chinese infrastructure investment in Europe (REDEFINE)*. He is also Visiting Scholar at the Osteuropa-Institut, Freie Universität, Berlin (2022-2024). Principally, his work focuses on (post-socialist) European capitalist development, with special attention to illiberal capitalist development, and the political economy of infrastructure projects. His research interests include Chinese capital investment, the capitalist development of illiberalism, cultural approaches to the political economy, Russian foreign policy, and qualitative methodology. Dr. Rogers is the author of *The Political Economy of Hungarian Authoritarian Populism: Capitalists without the Right Kind of Capital* (Routledge, 2024) and has published in leading peer-reviewed journals including *Contemporary Politics*, *East European Politics*, *New Political Economy*, and *Post-Communist Economies* amongst others.



List of Chairs and Speakers

Johanna Rust

Ms. Johanna G.B. Rust is a Research Associate in the Department of International Political Economy of East Asia at RUB and holds the position of the principal investigator for energy security at Centre for EU-Asia Connectivity (CEAC), Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at Ruhr University Bochum, Germany. Her current research focuses on energy and security policies of the EU and China in third countries, with a particular emphasis on the Central Asian region.

Ms. Rust is also a Ph.D. candidate and recipient of the Foundation of German Economy scholarship (Stiftung der Deutschen Wirtschaft). In 2021, she conducted three months of field research in Uzbekistan. Participations in international conferences followed such as the Central Asian Law Forum (May 2022), 7th Energy Symposium by the Italian Affiliate of the International Association for Energy Economics (IAEE), the EUIA23 Europe's Pathways to (Dis)Engagement with the World in Brussels (May 2023).



Francesca Spigarelli

Full professor of Applied Economics, she teaches Industrial economics, innovation economics and economics. Her main research fields concern the impact of foreign direct investments at the macro and meso economic level, the analysis of industry dynamics (with particular reference to the environmental and health industries), the third mission of universities, sustainability and circular economy, industrial policies and the development of the Chinese economy.

Prof. Spigarelli has is Italian representative, nominated by the Ministry of University, at the Strategic Program Committee of the European Commission - sub group Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area, Horizon Europe (since 2020). She participates and has participated, as Coordinator or Principal Investigator, in numerous EU and national projects. She is an expert evaluator of the European Commission, under the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe program.



David Styan

Dr. David Styan teaches international relations in the Politics Department, Birkbeck College, University of London. He has published extensively on UK and French foreign policy, as well as the political economy of East Africa. In recent years, Dr. Styan has researched Chinese investment in both Africa and Europe, focusing in particular on Ports and infrastructure.



List of Chairs and Speakers

Alexandr Svetlicinii

Dr. Alexandr Svetlicinii is Associate Professor of Global Legal Studies at the University of Macau, Faculty of Law, where he also serves as Programme Coordinator of the Master of International Business Law in English Language and Research Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences. His research interests concentrate in the fields of international economic law, competition law, and commercial dispute settlement. In addition to his academic work, Dr. Svetlicinii serves as Co-Director of the Academic Society for Competition Law, South-East Europe chapter, and the Non-Governmental Advisor to the International Competition Network (working group Mergers). He has recently published the monograph Chinese State Owned Enterprises and EU Merger Control (Routledge, 2021).



Ágnes Szunomár

Dr. Ágnes Szunomár, Ph.D. Habil. is the head of the Institute of Global Studies at Corvinus University of Budapest. As an associate professor she extensively looks at emerging market multinationals' activities, the development of East Asian countries and China's economic footprint in Europe. She is also a senior research fellow at the Institute of World Economics, Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungary, where her research focuses on China's foreign economic policy, including the relation between China and Central and Eastern Europe. Dr. Szunomár has more than 140 scientific publications, has led and participated in several international research projects. She is a member of the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) Action "China in Europe Research Network" (CHERN), where she is the head of Working Group on "Strategic sectors and infrastructure developments". She is also a member of China Observers in Central and Eastern Europe (CHOICE) network.



Bahri Yilmaz

Prof. Bahri Yilmaz received his Ph.D. from Bonn University, Germany in Economics. He is an EU Ad Personam Jean Monnet Professor and Emeritus Professor in Economics at Sabanci University's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

Prof. Yilmaz has also served as a lecturer at several academic institutions, including the Universities of Hacettepe, Ankara, Koc, Bilkent, Turkish-German Universities (TDU), Münster Westfalen, LMU München, CEU Madrid, and University of Bangkok.

Additionally, he worked as the Chief Advisor to the Ministry of State for European Union Affairs in Ankara between 1997 and 2002. Prof. Yilmaz was a visiting fellow at Wolfson and Pembroke College, Cambridge, St. Antony's College, Oxford, Korean Development Institute/Seoul, FU Berlin, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) Berlin, and at the Centre for European Studies (CES) Harvard University.



DAY 1 11 April, 2024

(Workshop venue: Seminar room La Réunion, 01/054.
Mensa building, first floor. In front of the restaurant/canteen "Rote Bete")

09:00-09:15	Registration & Coffee
09:15-09:30	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Prof. Sebastian Bersick (RUB University) Welcoming and briefing on the program, Presentation of CEAC➤ Dr. Nana de Graaff (VU Amsterdam) Welcoming and presentation of CHERN – Cost Action
09:30-11:00	Session 1: Chinese Investments in European Industrial Infrastructure Chair: Mireia Paulo (RUB University) Presenters: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Dr. Samuel Rogers (The Open University & FU Berlin) and Prof. Giles Mohan (The Open University), "Where East meets West: A process tracing account of Huawei's development trajectory in Hungary" (ONLINE Connection)➤ Dr. Ágnes Szunomár (Corvinus University of Budapest), "Chinese EV battery investment in the V4: Industrial infrastructure and (the fear of) environmental impacts"➤ Dr. Alexandr Svetlicinii (University of Macau), "The EU Responses to Chinese Investments in European Strategic Sectors: Merging Foreign Investment and Export Controls" (ONLINE Connection)
11:00-11:15	COFFEE BREAK
11:15-12:30	Session 2: Chinese Investments in European Strategic Infrastructure (I) Chair: Dr. Samuel Rogers (The Open University) Presenters: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Dr. David Styan (Birkbeck College, University of London), "Reversing Chinese investment in the UK's strategic infrastructure: a fractious and contradictory policy?"➤ Yuqiao Li, M.A. (RUB University), "Two-way selection: What factors contributed to Duisburg becoming an independent hub within the China Railway Express?"
12:30-13:45	LUNCH BREAK

DAY 1 11 April, 2024

(Workshop venue: Seminar room La Réunion, 01/054.
Mensa building, first floor. In front of the restaurant/canteen "Rote Bete")

13:45-15:00 Session 3: Chinese Investments in European Strategic Infrastructure (II)

Chair: Johanna Rust (RUB University)

Presenters:

- Prof. Francesca Spigarelli (University of Macerata), topic: Chinese investments in Italian sea ports
- Prof. Sebastian Bersick (RUB University), "Chinese Investments in European Seaports: The Case of Germany"

15:00-15:15 COFFEE BREAK

15:15-16:45 Session 4: EU-level and Member State-level Policy Reactions

Chair: Dr. Ágnes Szunomár (Corvinus University of Budapest)

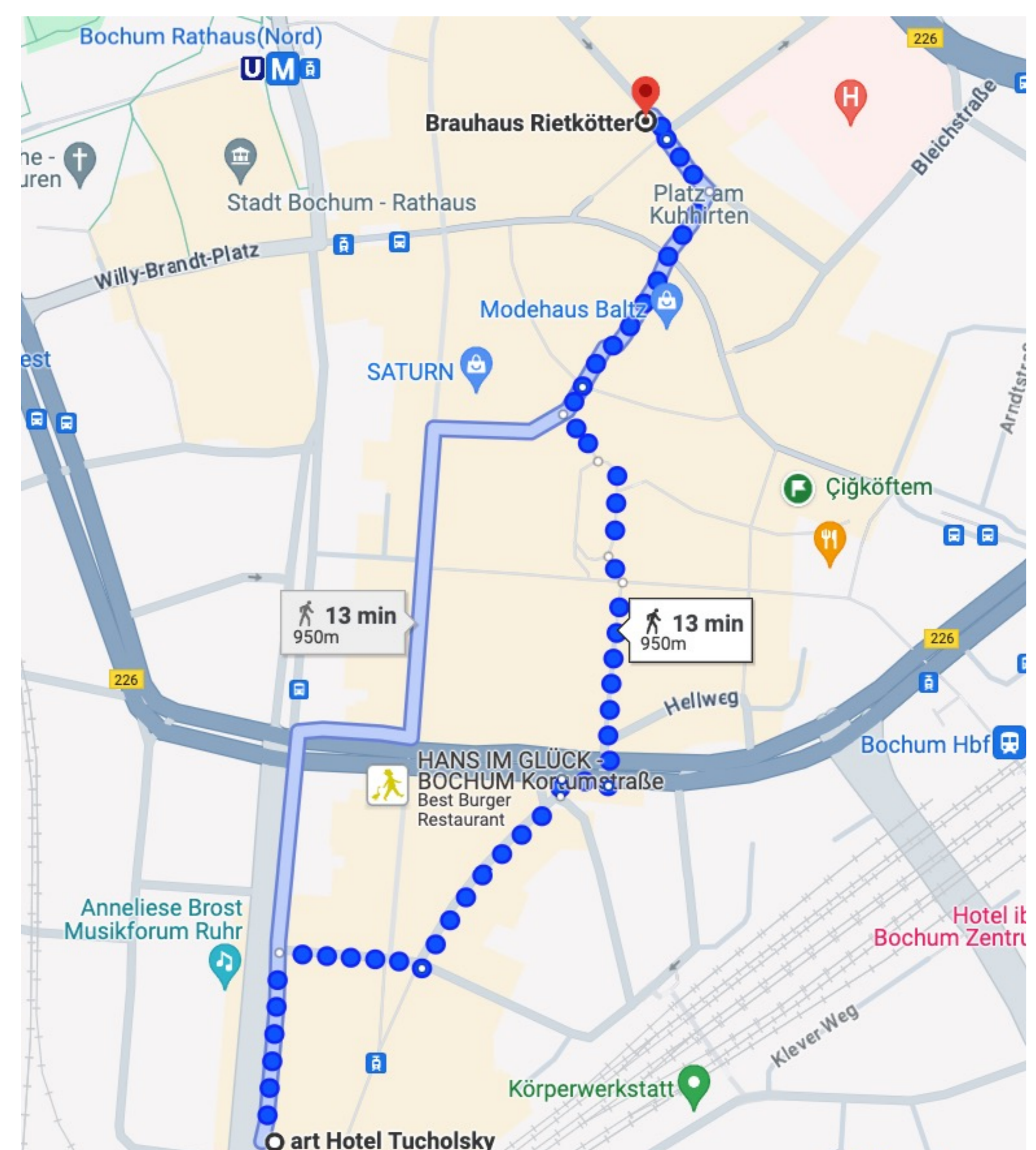
Presenters:

- Dr. Nana de Graaff (VU Amsterdam), "European responses to Chinese involvement in 5G networks – a new wave of techno-nationalism?"
- Prof. Jörn-Carsten Gottwald (RUB University) and Dr. Niall Duggan (University College Cork), "The Limits and Side-effects to Unilateral Role Change: The Strategic Miscalculation at the Heart of EU-China Tensions"
- Stanislav Gubenko, M.A. (University of Luxembourg), "In the Shadows: Assessing Human Rights and CSR Policies of Chinese Actors in Balkan Energy Projects"

19:00

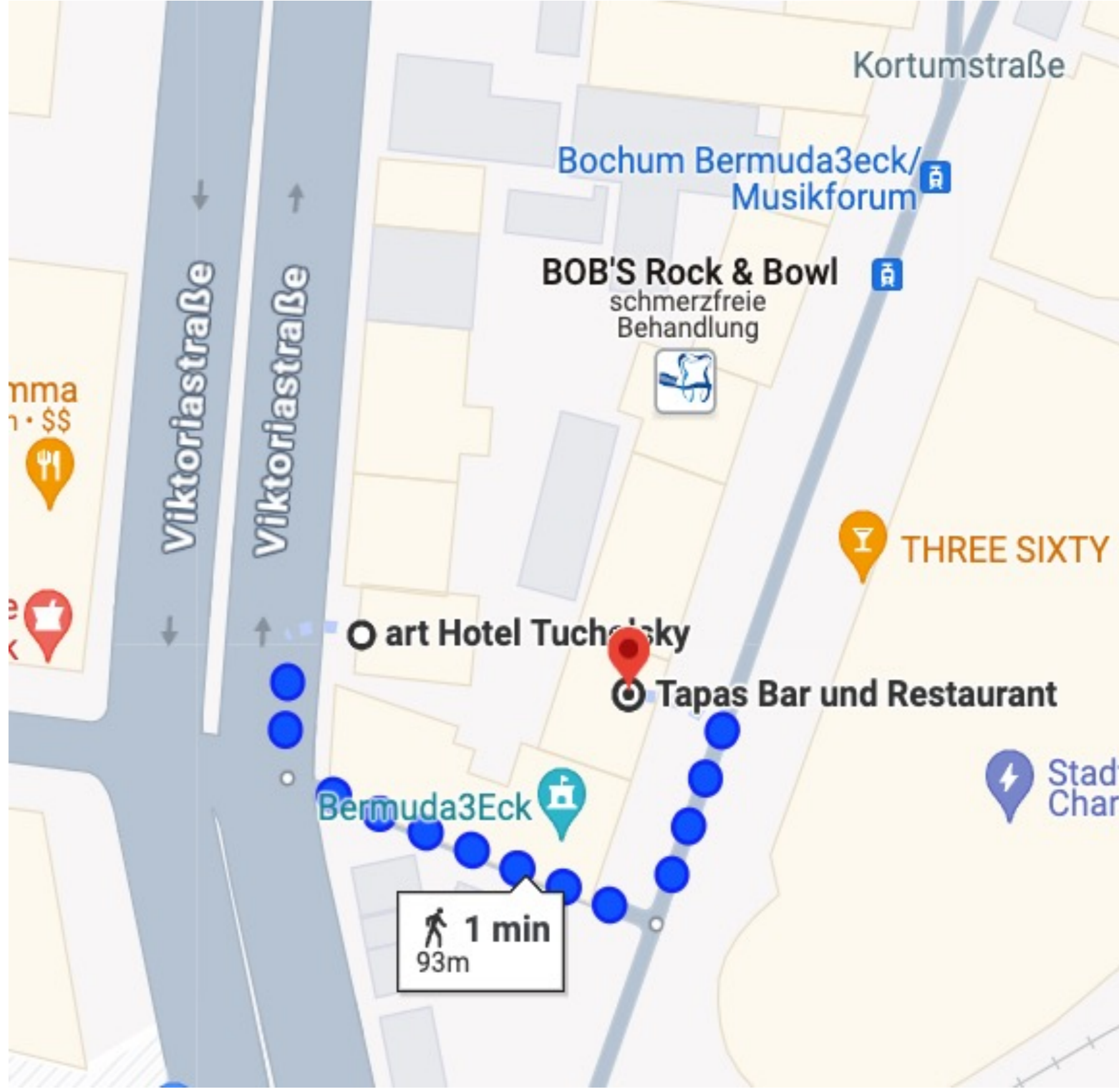
Dinner

Brauhaus Rietkötter,
Große Beckstraße 7
44787 Bochum



DAY 2 12 April, 2024

(Workshop venue: Seminar room La Réunion, 01/054.
Mensa building, first floor. In front of the restaurant/canteen "Rote Bete")

9:00-09:15	Registration & Coffee
9:15-10:45	<p>Roundtable: "Challenges and Prospects: Chinese Investments in European Strategic Sectors"</p> <p>Chair: Dr. Niall Duggan (University College Cork)</p> <p>Presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Prof. Sebastian Bersick (RUB University)➤ Prof. Francesca Spigarelli (University of Macerata)➤ Prof. Bahri Yilmaz (Sabanci University)➤ Dr. Nana de Graaff (VU Amsterdam)➤ Prof. Jörn-Carsten Gottwald (RUB University)➤ Dr. Ágnes Szunomár (Corvinus University of Budapest)
10:45-11:00	COFFEE BREAK
11:00-12:00	<p>Discussion on Publications</p> <p>Chair: Prof. Sebastian Bersick (RUB University)</p>
12:00-12:30	<p>Concluding Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Dr. Ágnes Szunomár (Corvinus University of Budapest),➤ Dr. Niall Duggan (University College Cork)
12:30-14:00	LUNCH BREAK
14:00-16:00	Visit to the Botanic and Chinese Garden at RUB
<u>20:15</u>	<p>Closing Dinner</p> <p>Restaurant Tapas, Kortumstraße 3, 44787 Bochum</p> 

Workshop: “EU Responses to Chinese Investments in European Strategic Sectors”

April 11-12, 2024

The workshop titled “EU Responses to Chinese Investments in European Strategic Sectors” was conducted on April 11-12, 2024, at the Faculty of East Asian Studies, Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB), Germany. This event was jointly organised by the China Europe Research Network (CHERN), COST Action, and the Centre for EU-Asia Connectivity (CEAC), a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence. It convened a distinguished group of researchers to discuss on current developments concerning Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in European critical infrastructure.

The areas specifically addressed included Chinese investments in European seaport infrastructure, 5G networks, and industrial infrastructure, alongside EU-level and member state-level policy responses. The workshop began with opening remarks by Dr. Nana de Graaff from VU Amsterdam and Prof. Sebastian Bersick from RUB, who also outlined the key themes and objectives of the workshop.



Session 1: Chinese Investments in European Industrial Infrastructure

Chair: Mireia Paulo (RUB University)

Presenters:

Samuel Rogers (The Open University, FU Berlin) and Prof. Giles Mohan (The Open University),
“*Westeurocentrism*“

In much scholarship and many policymaking circles there is a continued assumption 'Europe' is a flat ontological space that ostensibly 'made' capitalism and thus became 'developed'. However, myriad factors have characterised the 'old continent' in distinct ways creating markedly diverse development trajectories. This research moves beyond what is known as 'Eurocentrism' by underscoring the hegemonic position parts of 'Western' Europe continue to have in determining development. We conceptualise and theorise what we term *Westeurocentrism*: the privileged dominance of (parts of) 'Western' Europe narrowly defined in – amongst other factors – policymaking at the supranational level (i.e., EU), ideological preference (domination of a neoliberal doctrine of 'globalisation'), and the consequent silencing/othering of development choices in other parts of Europe that do not conform with what are typically meaninglessly categorised 'European values'. After all, this is essentially what is *really* meant by the term 'Eurocentrism' (cf Amin, 2009).

A chief victim of Westeurocentrism is Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), a remnant of what was once categorised the Second World. To help overcome the perennial misunderstanding of this diverse region on the part of many 'Western' policymakers and much scholarship, this research asserts there are three key CEE aspects Westeurocentrism overlooks: (1) developmental differences, which means the EU often 'gets CEE wrong'; (2) the strength of ideas (ideology) e.g., conservative/'traditional' values and illiberalism; and (3) the attraction of non-European 'Eastern' (i.e., non-EU) capital to finance (largescale) infrastructure projects to supposedly alleviate infrastructural inequalities and move beyond reliance on inward transfers from EU and other 'Western' organisations.

Using qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews across multiple research trips, this research studies sectoral development in Hungary as a paradigmatic example of the above trends. Specifically, we study Chinese telecommunications firm Huawei's development in tandem with 'Western' firms e.g., Vodafone. Despite an ostensible Sino-'Western' rivalry, sectoral study reveals deep economic interconnectedness, between European (seen as positive) and Chinese (seen as negative) companies in CEE (seen as both positive and negative). The findings we present have significant implications for understanding not just Hungary or illiberal capitalist development, but crucially Sino-European relations, the content and meaning of the EU's so-called 'de-risking' agenda, the geographies of 'Western' and Chinese investment engagement, and development theory itself.

Ágnes Szunomár (Corvinus University of Budapest), “Chinese EV battery investment in the V4: Industrial infrastructure and (the fear of) environmental impacts

To penetrate the European market, optimise transaction costs and avoid possible tariffs and other trade barriers, Chinese electric vehicle (EV) companies are setting up European production centres, especially in countries, (1) with extensive experience in automotive assembly, (2) where other car manufacturers also carry out manufacturing activities, and (3) where major European car manufacturers are located nearby. The Visegrad Four (V4) countries therefore seem to be an ideal location.

EV-related Chinese investments result in huge construction projects in the V4 region as EV manufacturing facilities have specific infrastructure requirements, including high-voltage power supply, battery assembly lines, charging base installation facilities, and advanced robotics and automation systems. All of these elements rely on stable power flows and access to electricity and water, which are key to the continued strong growth of the sector.

Although many of the announced EV projects in the V4 are still in the planning stages, a clear pattern is already emerging. Most of the investment has been concentrated in the battery segment and Hungary is clearly the number one location. Chinese EV manufacturers chose the V4 because it offers good logistics and transport links, as well as access to a good supplier base but Hungary's attractiveness is also due to the political relationship and the generous state support.

These projects are, however, not always welcomed by local V4 residents. Especially battery plants to be built have raised public alarm. The main complaints concern the environmental impacts of the investment: locals are afraid of soil and air pollution, but also of wasting water resources. A further complaint is about the land occupied by EV factories, which are often being sold off and concreted over at the expense of farmland.

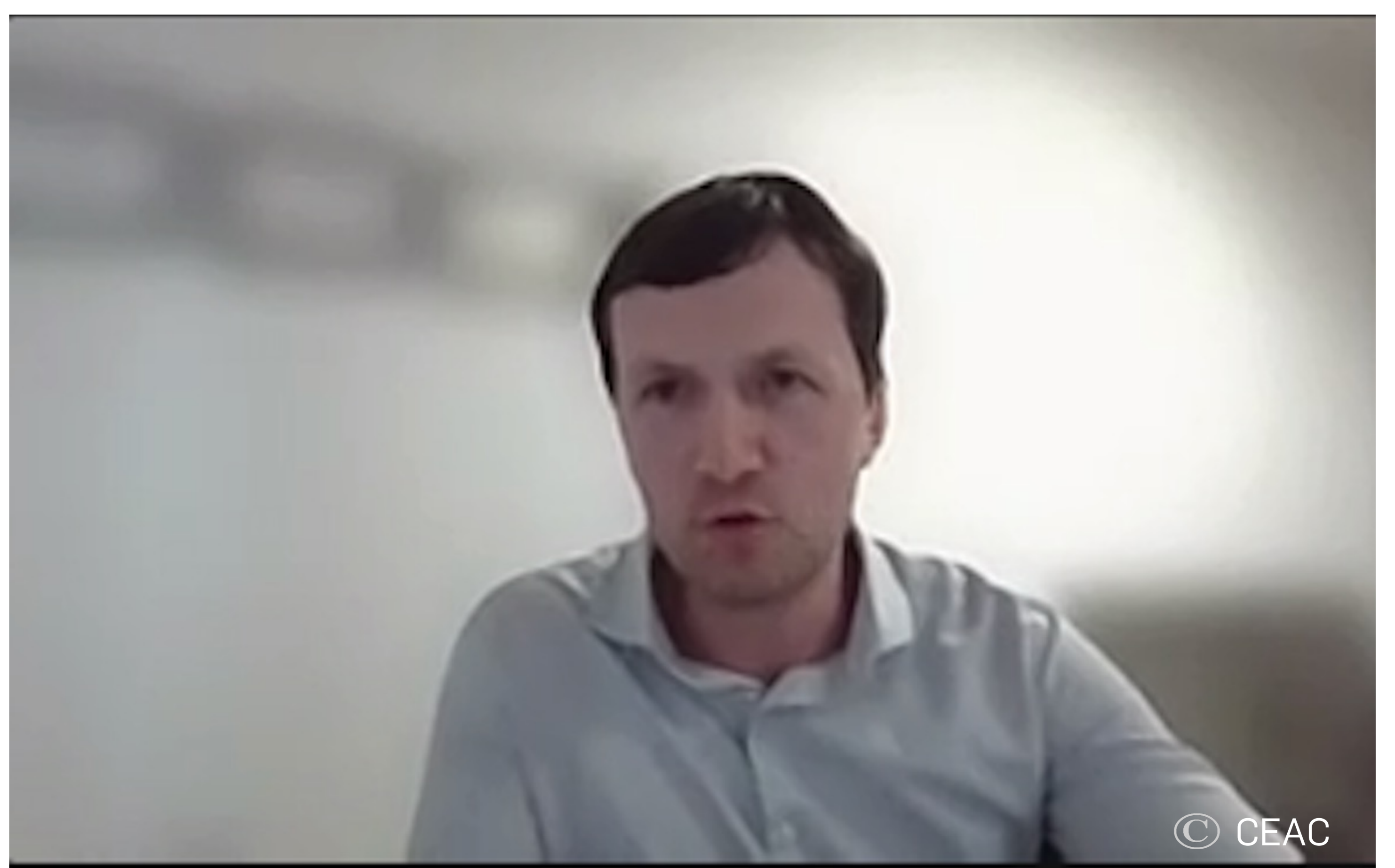
The presence of EV companies creates a few additional challenges: local workers may be displaced by cheaper migrant workers; R&D activity is not typical for (Chinese) investments in the V4 region, as investors usually only bring assembly; in addition, the chances of involving local suppliers are not very high either but could improve over time.

Alexandr Svetlicinii (University of Macau), “The EU Responses to Chinese Investments in European Strategic Sectors: Merging Foreign Investment and Export Controls”

If adopted in the present form, the proposed new EU FDI Screening Regulation will transpose previously non-binding recommendations into a legal instrument with direct effect, which will introduce a substantial degree of harmonization to the existing national FDI screening frameworks operated by the Member States.

The proposed EU FDI Screening Regulation will have a substantial restrictive effect on the freedom of establishment in the EU as it extends the screening procedures to the entities established in the EU but controlled by the persons outside the EU.

The Commission White Paper on export controls signifies a decisive move away from the partly dysfunctional multilateral non-proliferation regimes towards a more assertive unilateral export control system, with a possibility of coordination with key allies including the US.



Session 2: Chinese Investments in European Strategic Infrastructure (I)

Chair: Dr. Samuel Rogers (The Open University)

Presenters:

David Styan (Birkbeck College, University of London), "Reversing Chinese investment in the UK's strategic infrastructure: political and legislative manoeuvres"

The UK's relationship with China has seen an important shift between 2014 and 2024. Initially focused on promoting trade and investment, the UK became increasingly wary of Chinese involvement in critical infrastructure, particularly nuclear power and telecommunications. This concern translated into a series of legislative measures. The 2021 National Security Investment Act, along with the Telecoms (Security) Act, empowered the government to scrutinize foreign investments and tighten national security safeguards. This legislative shift resulted in the UK scaling back Chinese involvement in nuclear power and ordering the phasing out of Huawei from 5G networks. Furthermore, in the political arena, these changes have prompted an acute politicisation within Tory governments.

Debates within the government between economic interests and security concerns led to some incoherence in UK-China policy. Despite ongoing trade ties, the UK has implemented stricter controls on foreign investment in critical sectors. This reflects a growing emphasis on national security and a more cautious approach to China. The UK has also actively sought international cooperation with allies.

Yuqiao Li (RUB University), "Two-way selection: What factors contributed to Duisburg becoming an independent hub within the China Railway Express?"

The China Railway Express (CRE), a major component of the Belt and Road Initiative, is designed to establish direct and efficient terrestrial connectivity between China and the European Union. Among CRE's European destinations, the German city of Duisburg has emerged as a critical node. This city's strategic importance is underscored by the pronounced interest and willingness of Chinese railway and logistics firms to prioritise investments there. Notably, Duisburg has elicited considerably less criticism in comparison to European seaport cities such as Hamburg or Piraeus. This observation prompts the research inquiry: What factors contribute to Duisburg's allure for the CRE and Chinese investors, and how does this involvement preserve the city's autonomy?

Several factors underpin the favourable perception of Duisburg by Chinese investors. Primarily, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) has implemented initiatives to cultivate an advantageous commercial milieu for foreign, including Chinese, investors. Duisburg's geographical positioning as a central logistics hub within the Ruhr area significantly enhances its attractiveness to logistics companies. Moreover, Duisburg offers relatively lower costs for warehouse and land rentals compared to other major NRW cities such as Düsseldorf, Cologne, or Bonn. Additionally, the availability of fiscal incentives through policy subsidies from Chinese provincial and municipal governments acts as a significant financial lure.

Duisburg's engagement with China is also a strategic choice. In alignment with the EU Green Deal, which advocates for railway transport as a means to reduce carbon emissions, Duisburg is strategically positioned to contribute to these environmental goals. Concurrently, faced with economic challenges relative to other prominent Ruhr cities, Duisburg's administration is driven to prioritise the attraction of foreign investments and the development of emerging economic sectors. The opportunities presented by the CRE initiative represent a pragmatic avenue for commercial collaboration.

Despite the close ties with Chinese investors, Duisburg has retained its independence. Duisburger Hafen AG (Duisport), the entity owning and managing the port and harbour of Duisburg, engages with Chinese investors within its operational scope and has not conceded control over any railway port, harbour, or terminal to Chinese entities. Moreover, railway transportation is inherently perceived as more secure and less risky than maritime shipping from an infrastructural standpoint. Duisport's status as a public enterprise also provides political leaders with a framework to effectively navigate potential risks.

In summary, Duisburg has leveraged its comparative advantages to attract Chinese investment in railway transport, concurrently ensuring the preservation of its independence through strategic enterprise management and the inherent stability of rail transportation.

Session 3: Chinese Investments in European Strategic Infrastructure (II)

Chair: Johanna Rust (RUB University)

Presenters:

Prof. Francesca Spigarelli (University of Macerata), topic: Chinese investments in Italian sea ports

With the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which positions Italy as a bridge between Europe and the Mediterranean area, Italian ports have been competing to attract container traffic and gain value from the growing trade flows with China. Nevertheless, Chinese investments in Mediterranean ports raise diverse concerns about European competitiveness as well as their geopolitical impact. These issues resurfaced after Italy committed itself to the BRI by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China in March 2019.

The presentation maps and interprets the motivations for China's involvement in the Italian port systems as well as its subsequent economic, social and geopolitical implications. The analysis is based on the exemplary cases of Genoa, Trieste and Venice ports. It shows that the Chinese investments may not always be successful due to political opposition, competition among ports, and/or possibility of European alternatives. Even so, when Chinese investors succeed in integrating with their Italian counterparts, as happened in the case of Genoa, they can bring economic and social gains by boosting the port's domestic and international positioning as well as employment opportunities.

Prof. Sebastian Bersick (RUB University), "Chinese Investments in European Seaports: The Case of Germany"

Chinese investments in European seaport infrastructure needs to be analysed in the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), i.e. the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI). The EU, particularly German seaports, require investment for infrastructure projects. However, as seaports are considered critical infrastructure, the enforcement of EU investment mechanisms is essential to mitigate security risks.

The case of COSCO's attempted acquisition of a 35% stake in the Container Terminal Tollerort (CTT) at the Port of Hamburg exemplifies the interplay of drivers and challenges. Investment in the port would enhance its status as a regional logistics hub, yet German authorities express concerns regarding the potential security risks associated with Chinese control over critical infrastructure. Another example is the planned establishment of a logistics centre at JadeWeserPort (DWP), Germany's only deep-water port, by Chinese companies. In 2020, China Logistics Co. invested 100 million euros in the port, with plans to build one of the largest Chinese logistics centres in Europe on their leased 20 hectares.

These two case studies highlight several key findings. Firstly, political, regulation, and security considerations are increasingly influencing Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) movements towards Europe. Secondly, the case studies also reflect the ongoing debate within Germany regarding its policy towards China. Thirdly, the EU's involvement through its FDI screening mechanism further underscores the evolving landscape for Chinese investments in the Eurozone. Additionally, COSCO's interest underlines China's strategic focus on acquiring European port infrastructure. Concurrently, there is an absence of reciprocity in terms of European investment and market access into the Chinese market. The two cases examined indicate a growing awareness of the perceived risks associated with Chinese investments in European critical infrastructure. New regulations at both the EU-level and member state-level reflect a shifting stance vis-à-vis Chinese investments in Europe. However, despite these concerns, Chinese state-owned enterprises continue their involvement in German seaports.

Session 4: EU-level and Member State-level Policy Reactions

Chair: Prof. Ágnes Szunomár (Corvinus University of Budapest)

Presenters:

Prof. Nana de Graaff (VU Amsterdam), "European responses to Chinese involvement in 5G networks – a new wave of techno-nationalism?"

European responses to Chinese involvement in 5G networks, particularly with respect to Huawei, are influenced by an increasing trend of techno-nationalism. This perspective regards technological development as essential for national security and economic competitiveness. This study argues that this shift reflects a significant change in Europe-China relations in recent years. Using diverse research methods, including the analysis of policy documents and the application of network analysis techniques, this research aims to understand the dynamics of the techno-nationalist movement.

Building on the concept of techno-nationalism, this research examines how security concerns are restricting technological exchange with China, while also contextualising this trend within the broader US-China rivalry. Examples such as the Huawei ban and export controls on technology to China indicate a potential decoupling between Europe and China, driven in part by U.S. pressure. This 'decoupling' refers to a reduction in technological interdependence between the regions. The study also questions who benefits from this shift and whether it represents a conflict between political and economic interests.

Therefore, the focus of this study centres on the securitisation of technology from China in Europe. It explores how technology, particularly in relation to China, is framed as a security threat, potentially reflecting the U.S. influence. Recognising limitations in traditional security theories, the study aims to identify the actors and institutions involved in this process.

Prof. Jörn-Carsten Gottwald (RUB University) and Dr. Niall Duggan (University College Cork), "The Limits and Side-effects to Unilateral Role Change: The Strategic Miscalculation at the Heart of EU-China Tensions"

The relationship between the European Union (EU) and China has undergone a significant transformation. Initially envisioned as a strong and collaborative "strategic partnership," the dynamic has become increasingly complex and competitive. Our work analyses this shift through the theoretical lens of social constructivism and role theory. Role theory highlights how role perceptions are shaped by internal expectations, external pressures, and the broader social setting in which interactions take place. To analyse the EU-China dynamic, we employ a social constructivist interpretative methodology. This involves qualitative methods like discourse analysis and policy tracing, examining speeches, reports, and expert interviews to understand how both the EU and China conceptualize their roles in the relationship and how these concepts influence their foreign policy actions.

A central finding is the Chinese unilateral role change. China's growing emphasis on security and its assertive actions on the world stage is seen by the EU as incompatible with a true partnership. This has led the EU to develop a multifaceted "de-risking" strategy, which aims to reduce the EU's dependence on China, particularly in critical sectors and technologies, while still maintaining some level of economic engagement. The de-risking approach has four key pillars: strengthening the EU's economic competitiveness and resilience, strategically utilizing existing trade instruments, developing new defensive tools to protect sensitive European sectors, and forging closer partnerships with the EU's partners.

In conclusion, a process of mutual adaptation on both sides can be ascertained when addressing both positions. The EU, as mentioned, is adjusting its foreign policy and economic strategy to China's changing role. Despite these tensions and the EU's de-risking strategy suggesting a gradual decoupling from China, a complete breakdown in relations seems unlikely as both sides recognize the importance of economic cooperation.

Stanislav Gubenko (University of Luxembourg), "In the Shadows: Assessing Human Rights and CSR Policies of Chinese Actors in Balkan Energy Projects"

Over the past decade, Chinese state-affiliated entities have significantly influenced the energy sector in Western Balkan countries, particularly Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Chiefly, Chinese banks and construction firms have been actively involved in large-scale energy infrastructure projects aimed at bolstering the energy capacities of Balkans nations to ensure their energy security. This research aims to define and analyse the strategies of Chinese state-affiliated entities regarding human rights and corporate social responsibility within the context of three case projects: the Kostolac and Kolubara Thermal Power Plants in Serbia, and the Tuzla Thermal Power Plant in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Considering that Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are hosts to substantial EU investments and are committed to adhering to the EU Acquis as part of their EU accession process, it becomes critical to assess the interactions of Chinese entities with the domestic legal frameworks of these countries. The research shows preliminary research findings which suggest that Chinese actors involved in energy projects often do not have clearly defined, project-specific approaches to human rights and corporate social responsibility. Their strategies may not consistently align with the Chinese state's vision of law and human rights. There are notable differences in the approaches to human rights and corporate responsibility between Chinese and European actors in the energy sectors of these countries. Moreover, the research highlights the lack of empirical evidence to support the hypothesis that Serbian and Bosnian authorities prefer Chinese approaches to human rights and corporate social responsibility over EU standards.



Roundtable:

“Challenges and Prospects: Chinese Investments in European Strategic Sectors”

The second day featured a roundtable discussion on the challenges and prospects of Chinese investments, chaired by Dr. Niall Duggan, with contributions from senior researchers: Prof. Sebastian Bersick, Prof. Jörn-Carsten Gottwald, Dr. Nana de Graaff, Prof. Francesca Spigarelli, Dr. Ágnes Szunomár, and Prof. Bahri Yilmaz.



The discussions underscored the intricate interplay between economic interests and political considerations in shaping European responses to Chinese investments. It explored the evolving economic, strategic, and security dynamics. The discussion provided a platform to examine diverse perspectives, particularly emphasising Chinese investments in sectors like infrastructure, energy, and technology. A central theme that emerged was the role of the EU and member states' intervention in economic and security strategies, reflecting on the EU's cautious approach towards Chinese investments. A recurring theme among the researchers' findings was the conceptualisation of Chinese FDI in terms of securitisation, linking it to economic security and influencing the European economic security strategy. This strategy has guided laws and regulations assessing foreign investment projects and strategic sectors within the EU, indicating a shift toward more interventionist policies in response to perceived risks, including those from infrastructures and technological advancements.

The speakers discussed the unpredictable nature of EU-China relations, influenced by internal factors like domestic politics and external pressures from global actors like the US, Russia, and the Middle East. The significant impact of the US was noted as a crucial factor affecting EU-China relations, including Chinese investments in the region and EU responses. This underscores the necessity for Europe to carefully navigate its position among major global powers, understanding the broader geopolitical environment, including the economic policies and security strategies of other influential nations. The discussion revealed that the resurgence of state-driven strategies in both Europe and China represents a move away from previous *laissez-faire* approaches, largely driven by the changing global landscape that includes challenges from health crises and climate change. The complexity of defining what is strategic or important was highlighted, focusing particularly on infrastructure developments. The debate illustrated how traditional perceptions of strategic sectors have evolved, now requiring a broader security approach that transcends simple state-to-state relations.

As the roundtable concluded, there was a collective acknowledgment of the need for ongoing research and dialogue to fully grasp the nuances of the evolving EU-China relationship, especially concerning statecraft and security related to European responses to Chinese investment in strategic sectors. The speakers advocated for a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach to studying these dynamics, considering the layered complexities of economic ties, strategic alignments, and security concerns that define the interaction between Europe and China in the contemporary international order. This academic exchange not only highlighted significant shifts in challenges and prospects of Chinese investments in European strategic sectors and European responses, but also set the stage for future scholarly work that will produce a series of policy briefing and a publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Photos Cultural and Networking Activities





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Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence for EU-Asia Connectivity (CEAC)

Workshop: “EU Responses to Chinese Investments in European Strategic Sectors”

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Faculty of East Asian Studies, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany