



## University of Oxford China Centre

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## Life Amidst Rubble: Migrant Mental Health and the Management of Subjectivity in Urban China



**Speaker: Dr Lisa Richaud, FNRS postdoctoral researcher at Université Libre de Bruxelles**

**Discussant: Dr Harry Pettit, ESRC postdoctoral researcher at Oxford School of Geography and the Environment**

**Wednesday 5 June 2019, 4–6pm  
Lucina Ho Seminar Room**

While previous studies have documented the trials of rural-to-urban migration in post-reform China, little is known of the consequences of urban demolition and attendant uncertainty on migrant mental health. Exploring the affective and subjective dimensions of life lived amidst rubble in a migrant neighbourhood on the outskirts of Shanghai, this talk describes and analyses small-scale practices of endurance through dynamics of time, place, and sociality. We understand these modes of dwelling in a ruined environment as key to what we refer to as the management of subjectivity, producing moments of being that potentially enable to feel and act otherwise. Considering the management of subjectivity in its own right rather than as mere echoes of postsocialist governmentalities, we sustain a dialogue with recent writing on the production of happy and self-reliant marginalized subjects through the Chinese authorities' turn to 'therapeutic governance'. The paper upon which this presentation is based was co-written with Prof Ash Amin under the project: ESRC-NSFC funded project, 'Migration, Mental Health, and the Chinese Mega-City' (<https://urbanbrainlab.com/about-m3-shanghai/>)

**Lisa Richaud** is an anthropologist of urban China. She is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher of the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, and was formerly involved in the ESRC-NSFC funded project, 'Migration, Mental Health, and the Chinese Mega-City'. Her most recent ethnographic research has focused on how rural migrants in Shanghai negotiate their precarious conditions through affective experiences of public spaces, sociality and ambivalent temporal orientations. She is currently preparing a monograph on the popular deployments and re-framing of Socialist amateur performance culture in China's public parks, based on her PhD research.