



社會科學院  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



地理系  
Department of Geography

# Department of Geography --- Public Seminar Series

## *“Towards Critical Remote Sensing: Reflections on Infrastructure Development along China’s New Silk Roads”*

Speaker:

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The University of Hong Kong

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 (Thursday)

Time: 2:30 – 4:00 pm

Venue:

Room AAB1312, Multi-purpose Room, Faculty of Social Sciences  
Academic and Administration Building (AAB), Baptist University Road Campus  
Hong Kong Baptist University

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has attracted great fanfare and speculation regarding its potential investment, with some estimates approaching one trillion dollars. Yet there is a lack of transparency regarding which projects are actually happening, in what manner, and at what speed. Fieldwork and the “view from the ground” allow important insights into the progress (or lack thereof) of BRI projects. Such a perspective, however, cannot always provide continual updates on every BRI project for various reasons, from research budget limitations to political impracticalities. As an alternative means of researching the BRI, this paper calls for a more critical remote sensing that offers a “view from above” complementary to more grounded ethnographic research. Specifically, night-light (DMSP-OLS and VIIRS) and occasionally Landsat-8 satellite imagery is used to identify which places BRI investment is privileging and assess how BRI investment may affect patterns of uneven development in China and its 14 neighboring countries, particularly in and around its borderlands. Remotely sensed data can help fill in spatial and temporal gaps in our understanding of how BRI projects are proceeding while shedding light on subnational patterns of uneven development that tend to be overlooked in the more typical nationally-scaled analyses of the BRI. More broadly, advancing a critical remote sensing agenda can also create opportunities for social scientists advocating for more socially and environmentally just futures to leverage quantitative and geospatial methods.

Mia Bennett is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and School of Modern Languages & Cultures (China Studies Programme) at the University of Hong Kong. As a political geographer with geospatial skills, she researches the processes driving infrastructure development in spaces typically thought of as “frontiers,” primarily the Arctic and areas included within China’s Belt and Road Initiative, using a combination of fieldwork and satellite imagery. She has conducted field research in Russia’s Sakha Republic, Canada’s Northwest Territories, and Singapore, and has presented and published widely on Arctic development, including through her long-running blog on the Arctic, Cryopolitics. Mia received a PhD in Geography from UCLA holds an MPhil from the University of Cambridge’s Scott Polar Research Institute.