

International Workshop

Fictitious Commodities Revisited: Enquiries into the Great Transformations of Market Socialism

Time: April 8-10th, 2026

Venue: Bielefeld University, Germany

Convenors:

Minh Nguyen

Professor of Social Anthropology, Faculty of Sociology, Bielefeld University

Ngoc Luong

Post-doctoral Researcher, Social Anthropology, Faculty of Sociology, Bielefeld University

Hairuo Jin, Post-doctoral Researcher, Faculty of Sociology, Bielefeld University

Tentative program

WEDNESDAY, 8 APRIL 2026

- Arrival** – Check in at hotels
- 16:30 - 17:30 **Bielefeld City Tour** (Optional)
- 17:30 - 20:00 *Dinner in the city (optional, self-paid)*

THURSDAY, 9 APRIL 2026

- 8:30 - 9:00 Arrival and registration
- 9:00 - 9:30 Welcome address by **Dean of Sociology Faculty**, Bielefeld University (GER)
Opening remarks by **Minh Nguyen**, Bielefeld University (GER)
- 9:30 - 10:45 Keynote lecture by **Erik Harms**, Yale University (USA)
- 10:45 – 11:00 – *Coffee, tea & cake break* –
- 11:00 - 12:40 **Panel – Changing Accumulation Regimes**
- Governing the Circuit: Vietnam's World-System Position, Social Reproduction, and the Entangled Commodification of Labour, Land, and Money – **Do Ta Khanh**, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VN) and **Pietro Masina**, University of Naples (IT)
 - Industrial Parks with Financial Wings: Land, Capital, and Production in China's New Normal Economy – **Yingyao Wang**, University of Virginia (USA)
 - Financial Transformation of Market Socialism in Laos: A Motivation of Working Household Towards Financial Activities – **Phanhpakit Onphanhdala and Vanvisa Philavong**, Independent, (LA)
- Chair: TBC
Discussant: **Don Kalb**, University of Bergen (NO)
- 12:40 – 14:00 – *Lunch break*–

14:00 - 15:40 **Panel – Transforming Property Relations**

- Land Acquisition, Indebtedness and Precarisation of Labour around the Global Factory – **Ngoc Luong**, Bielefeld University (GER)
- Reproduction of the Rural-urban Relation : A Case Study of the Low-Efficiency Construction Land Reduction in Shanghai – **Lan Wei**, Fudan Development Institute (CN)
- Land Commercialization and the New Culture of Commerce in Rural China – **Julia Chuang**, University of Maryland (USA) and **Shengxiang Chen**, Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics (CN)

Chair: TBC

Discussant: **Anne-Christine Trémon**, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (FR)

15:40 - 16:00 – *Coffee, tea & cake break* –

16:00 - 17:40 **Panel – Farmland and Nature**

- Protective commodification? The regulation of markets for land and forest carbon in contemporary upland Laos – **Michael Dwyer**, Indiana University, Bloomington (USA)
- Transforming Agricultural Land into a “Fictitious Commodity”: The Financialized Trade of Farmland on the Urban Fringe of Hanoi – **Tuan Anh Nguyen**, Vietnam National University (VN) and **Jonathan Rigg**, University of Bristol (UK)
- The Specter Still Haunts: How Post-Socialist Legacy Shapes Polanyian Double Movement Around Farmland Commodification in China – **Tiantian Liu**, University of Manchester (UK)

Chair: TBC

Discussant: **Pierre Alary**, University of Lille (FR)

17:40 - 18:30 **FinancialLives Project Kick-off**

19:00 *Dinner at Das Wirtshaus 1802 im Bültmannshof (Walking from University)*

FRIDAY, 10 APRIL 2026

9:00 -10:40 **Panel - Time and Life**

- No time to rest: The pressure on more-than-human relations in late socialist Vietnam – **Hoàng Cầm**, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VN) and **Sango Mahanty**, Australian National University (AUS)
- “There are no taboo days, it’s cardamom harvest!”- Agricultural Commodification, Socialist Rationalism and the Disenchantment of (Labour) Time Among Khmu in Laos – **Paul-David Lutz**, Université libre de Bruxelles (BE)
- Longevity Capitalism in East Asia: Speculative Infrastructures and the Politics of Aging in China and Singapore – **Giulia Dal Maso**, Ca' Foscari University of Venice (IT)

Chair: TBC

Discussant: **Christina Schwenkel**, University of California, Riverside (USA)

10:40 – 11:00 – *Coffee, tea & cake break* –

- 11:00 - 12:40 **Panel – Local Configurations of Risk**
- Coffee Brokers and the Financial Lives of Fertilizer – **Sarah Grant**, California State University, Fullerton (USA)
 - Digitalization of agriculture and the conceptualization of money, land and labour – **Horacio Ortiz**, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (FR)
 - Inclusion or Limbo? Land Exit and Marketization Risk Differentiation Among China's Migrant Workers – **Tao Liu**, Zhejiang University (CHN)
- Chair: TBC
Discussant: **Sango Mahanty**, Australian National University (AUS)
- 12:40 - 14:00 – *Lunch break*–
- 14:00 - 15:40 **Panel – Moralities of Commodification**
- “Keep faith in the state”: understanding international politics, foreign capital, and nationalism through retail trading in China – **Hairuo Jin**, Bielefeld University (GER)
 - The Moral-Economic Development of the Lao Development Lottery – **Chip Zuckerman**, Boston College (USA)
 - Gaining Credits and Reducing Carbon Emissions: The Politics of Gamification and Digital Green Volunteering in China – **Yueran Tian**, IT University of Copenhagen (DK)
- Chair: TBC
Discussant: **Pietro Masina**, University of Naples (IT)
- 15:40 - 16:00 – *Coffee, tea & cake break* –
- 16:00 - 17:40 **Panel – Aspiration and Disenchantment**
- Intimate Alliances in Northern Laos: Money and Development in Hmong-Chinese Connections – **Phill Wilcox**, Bielefeld University (GER)
 - Knowledge as a fictitious commodity: Insights from the analysis of Lao international graduates’ labour market outcomes – **Soubin Sisavath**, National University of Laos, (LA)
 - Student loans and the making of compliant citizens in the Global South – **Huong Nguyen**, Vietnam National University (VN)
 - Contradictions of market socialism: Wage volatility and labour commodification in China's steel industry – **Catrina Schwendener**, Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University (CN) (TBC)
- Chair: TBC
Discussant: **Jonathan Rigg**, University of Bristol (UK)
- 17:40 - 18:40 ***Plenary discussion and publication plans***
- 19:30 *Dinner at Hofbräu am Alten Rathaus (Tram to city centre)*

- End of the Workshop -