

Exeter-Fudan Global Thought Network Annual Symposium

Call for Papers

Global Imagination: Rethinking History, Languages, Culture, and International Futures

Convenor: Professor LI Li, University of Exeter; Professor LU Li'an, Professor ZHENG Yongyan, Fudan University

Conference Date: 24-25 April

Location: Fudan University, China

Building on the success of the inaugural conference held at the University of Exeter in June 2024, we are hosting the second annual conference at Fudan University this April.

Rationale: In an era of rapid technological advancements, cultural contestation, and the pressing need for sustainable global development, **imagination** plays a critical role in shaping how we understand the past, interpret the present, and envision the future. This conference explores how imagination—historical, linguistic, cultural, and political and economic—provides the foundation for rethinking global connections, identities, and futures.

The conference theme emphasises the synergies between history, languages, culture, and international relations and development. It highlights the power of imagination in constructing narratives about the world while also challenging dominant paradigms. We invite scholars to reflect on how histories are imagined, how languages shape global realities, how cultural expressions generate new ideas, new shared experiences and new forms of belonging, and how international relations are driven by imagined possibilities and uncertainties.

This interdisciplinary conference will foster dialogue across the humanities and social sciences, drawing on the rich intellectual traditions of the University of Exeter and Fudan University. It will engage with pressing global questions from diverse cultural and linguistic perspectives.

Key Questions:

- How do imaginative constructions of history influence global power dynamics and international development?
- In what ways do languages and translation mediate global imaginaries, shaping cooperation or conflict?

- How can cultural imagination inspire new approaches to diplomacy, development, and cross-cultural engagement?
- How might imaginative futures offer alternatives to dominant models of global governance and development?

Sub-Themes:

1. **Imagining Global Histories:** This sub-theme explores how historical narratives and collective memory shape international relations, diplomacy, and development. It considers the role of historical imagination in crafting national identities, influencing global power structures, and addressing legacies of colonialism and conflict. Topics may include:
 - Historical memory and diplomacy
 - Decolonising global narratives
 - Competing imaginations of modernity and development
 - The future of history: Rewriting and rethinking global histories
2. **Languages and the Global Imaginary:** This sub-theme investigates the role of languages, translation, and linguistic diversity in shaping global imaginaries and facilitating or hindering international cooperation. It considers how language frames our understanding of global challenges and cross-cultural encounters. Topics may include:
 - Language as power in global politics
 - Translation and miscommunication in international relations
 - Linguistic imaginaries and the shaping of transnational identities
 - Multilingualism as a resource for diplomacy and global development
3. **Cultural Imagination and Global Futures:** This sub-theme examines how cultural expression, artistic production, and literary imagination offer alternative ways of envisioning global futures. It emphasises the creative potential of culture to challenge existing structures and inspire new models of practical cooperation, intellectual dialogue, and social development. Topics may include:
 - Artistic imaginaries of global justice
 - Literature as a site of resistance and possibility
 - Cultural diplomacy and the politics of soft power
 - The travelling and cross-fertilisation of ideas, traditions and material forms of culture

- Concepts across cultures
- Heritage, tradition, and innovation in global cultural exchanges
- International development, global challenges and cross-broader collaboration
- Imaginative capacity of learning from other cultural and social contexts

4. Citizenship, Public Things and Political Imaginaries

This sub-theme reflects on how political imagination shapes how citizens interact with each other and the state, including our perception of what constitutes public space, how social bonds are sustained over time and what we have in common. It explores how we imagine 'public things' (e.g. the state, citizenship or civil society) shape our sense of political reality and possibility. Topics might include:

- Imagining government and how it works in practice
- Public deliberation and political participation
- The social bond and practices of citizenship
- Imagining public order and social change
- Social dreaming and utopian thinking in the anthropocene

Conference Goals:

- Foster interdisciplinary dialogue among scholars from history, languages, culture, international relations, and development.
- Strengthen cross-cultural academic partnerships, particularly between the University of Exeter and Fudan University, while engaging broader global research networks.
- Advance new ways of imagining global futures, informed by historical consciousness, linguistic diversity, and cultural creativity.
- Highlight the role of the humanities and social sciences in addressing pressing global issues, from sustainability and inequality to diplomacy and development.
- Explore how emerging research technologies, including AI, can be used responsibly to enhance interdisciplinary research and ensure ethical and inclusive knowledge production

Submission Guidelines: We welcome proposals for individual papers, panels, and roundtables. Submissions should include:

- An abstract of 100-300 words

- Indication of preferred sub-theme

Deadline for Submissions: 13 March

Submission link: [here](#)

We look forward to receiving your contributions and engaging in thought-provoking discussions on global imagination and the future of international humanities research.

Professor Li Li

Global Thought Network Coordinator