

Visiting Speaker Series 2018-19 Term 2

“When It’s Dark in the East, It’s Light in the West”: Reconceptualizing Labor Mobility through the Culture of Venturing in Chinese Urban Villages

Yang ZHAN

Assistant Professor
Department of Applied Social Sciences, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

9 Apr 2019 (Tuesday)

4:30 – 6:00pm

Room 1118, 11/F,

Yasumoto International Academic Park



ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Yang Zhan is Assistant Professor in the Department of Applied Social Sciences at Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She is a cultural anthropologist by training. Her research interests include rural-urban relations, migrant labor and informality, and governance. Her work has appeared in *Urban Studies*, *Dialectical Anthropology*, *Culture, Mind and Activity*, *Urban Anthropology* and *Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, and *Anthropological Forum*.

ABOUT THE TALK

Since the neoliberal restructuration in the 1970s, the urban world has become increasingly unequal. Under the force of what Sassen calls “expulsion,” many, including Chinese rural migrants, are pushed to the urban fringes and the informal sectors. In response, resistance and life strategies in the form of occupying/squatting have risen. For example, the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011 became a strong symbolic act of reclaiming space by the disadvantaged and exploited. However, Chinese migrant workers have adopted a strategy of “venturing,” which is the opposite of occupying. In urban villages, rural migrants don’t squat and don’t see themselves as squatters. If squatting/occupying means “sedimentation” and moving in the direction of permanent settlement, then venturing signifies mobility, uncertainty and unpredictability. In mobility, rural migrants as “venturers” see possibilities for new socio-spatial relations, agencies, materiality, and even structure. This talk explores the migrant culture of venturing and the cultural logic of labor mobility in the informal sector.

Free Admission

The seminar is conducted in English

Enquiry: Centre for China Studies | ccs@cuhk.edu.hk | www.cuhk.edu.hk/ccs