



China in Europe Research Network (CHERN) - CA 18215

Mapping EU-China infrastructure investment policies and regulations (CHERN WG1)

Basics

Host Organization: The Open University

Host Organizations's representative: Professor Giles Mohan

Representative's contact: giles.mohan@open.ac.uk

The tentative length of the STSM: 1 month in total spread over 3-4 months

Call's description and objectives

The STSM would be based with the European Research Council-funded project entitled *Re-orienting development: the dynamics and effects of Chinese infrastructure investment in Europe (REDEFINE)* at the Open University. You would join a team of 9 researchers headed by Professor Giles Mohan.

Chinese investment into advanced economies first occurred in Australia, North America and Japan and has only started to increase into Europe since 2010. Such internationalisation was necessary in sectors where the Chinese market was relatively saturated or where domestic sources of raw materials were diminishing. In addition to markets and supply lines, Chinese firms are seeking technology, know-how and experience of international business. REDEFINE seeks to better understand the range of Chinese firms operating in Europe, assess their business models, and track the rapidly changing policy environment in China that shapes their internationalisation.

Infrastructure is a key focus for China. Propelled by its strong growth and capital surpluses, China is a ready infrastructure financier but also, crucially, engaged in construction. As such, things like the BRI and *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank* are part of a wider 'infrastructure push'. Allied to these

economic drivers, China is seeking to spread its political influence. The European economic crisis provided Chinese investors with two types of bargains: economic bargains due to depressed prices and a greater number of assets for sale, and political bargains due to the reduced resistance to deals that may have been more contentious in flusher times (Meunier 2016¹). Moreover, the European crisis has played out differently across the continent which has afforded different opportunities for Chinese firms. The selection of REDEFINE's case studies covers examples of these different rationales on the part of China and the variegated economic geography of Europe.

As Raco *et al* (2020²) note when looking at inward investment from China in real estate and infrastructure in the UK that the emphasis is usually on the entrepreneurial local state altering its regulations to become more attractive to international capital; a similar point is made by Schindler and Kanai (2019³) around what they call the 'infrastructure state'. Yet, because investment is relational, we have to understand how Chinese regulatory changes and institutional practices interface with their local counterparts in Europe. The STSM would focus on one aspect of this research agenda – how policies and regulations are evolving and why.

Objectives:

The REDEFINE project will track a number of high-profile infrastructure projects across Hungary, UK, Germany and Greece. One of the first steps is to understand how policies and regulations which shape infrastructure are evolving. Therefore, the aim of the STSM is **to understand the evolution of China-EU policies and regulations around infrastructure investments.**

Research questions: *How have policy discourses and regulations around China-EU relations evolved, with a particular focus on the last 5 years? How do infrastructure investments feature in these policies and regulations? To what extent do national and sub-national policies and regulations in one of the REDEFINE case study countries mirror these higher-level policy processes?*

Research plan:

The successful STSM applicant would conduct the following:

- Content analysis of EU and Chinese policy and regulatory documents. This would treat both the 'EU' and 'China' as complex and heterogenous and would thus look at different institutions and political scales.
- Content analysis of policy and regulatory documents from one of the REDEFINE case study countries. Given that much investment is brokered bilaterally and even city-to-city we need to understand how different scales devise policies and regulations.
- Review of existing academic analysis of China-EU-national policies and regulations.

¹ Meunier, S. (2016) 'Beggars can't be choosers': The European crisis and Chinese direct investment in the European Union', in Tosun, J., Wetzels, A. and Zaprtanova, G. (eds) *Coping with Crisis: Europe's Challenges and Strategies*, Routledge: London, 89-107

² Raco, M., Sun, Y. & Brill, F. (2020) 'Relational regulation and Chinese real estate investment in London: moving beyond the territorial trap', *Territory, Politics, Governance*, DOI: [10.1080/21622671.2020.1837224](https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2020.1837224)

³ Schindler, S., & Kanai, M. (2019) 'Getting the territory right: Infrastructure-led development and the re-emergence of spatial planning strategies', *Regional Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1661984>

Call's specific requirements

In addition to COST rules (see section "Who is eligible to be an STSM Applicant" in the [STSM BASIC FACTS](#)), the applicant should have a good social sciences background, ideally with language (reading) capability in Chinese as well as one of the REDEFINE case study languages (Hungarian, English, German or Greek).

Results

A successful applicant will be asked to prepare a REDEFINE/ CHERN working paper under the guidance of Professor Mohan for submission to a peer-reviewed journal as well as fulfill requirements by COST Organization or CHERN Action (for details see section »How does it work?« in the [STSM BASIC FACTS](#)).

Practical details

All applicants must carefully read the [STSM instructions](#) on the CHERN website before applying.

Pandemic restrictions would mean that initial meetings and activities would be done remotely. The successful STSM would join REDEFINE's reading groups and be mentored by Professor Mohan. As restrictions lift, we aim to arrange a research stay of 1-2 weeks at the Open University campus in early Fall 2021.

Deadlines

Deadline for applications to be submitted: **June 5, 2021**

Notification of application outcome: June 20, 2021

Period of STSM: 1 month during July to September 2021 period

Submitting the reports: **within 30 days from the end date**

Accepting/ rejecting the reports: **within 2 weeks** after submission of the report

Execution of the payment of the grant: **within 4 weeks** after submission of the report.

More information

For more information please contact STSM Coordinator Martina Bofulin (martina.bofulin@zrc-sazu.si).