

# RESEARCH SEMINAR

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT  
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

## More than H<sub>2</sub>O: Rethinking Chinese hydrogeopolitics from a critical geographical perspective

19 Feb 2024 (Mon)  
10:00-11:30am (UTC+8)  
Rm221, Chen Kou Building  
CUHK

In China, water issues have traditionally been approached from scientific and engineering perspectives, treating water as a scarce natural resource to be harnessed, transformed, and utilised for socioeconomic development. However, the inherently political nature of water remains largely underexplored. This presentation delves into two main approaches to Chinese hydrogeopolitics. One approach seeks to unpack China's political system and examines central-local, inter-jurisdictional, state-society, and state-market relationships through the lens of water governance. The other approach adopts a critical geographical perspective, viewing water not merely as H<sub>2</sub>O, but as an integral element of power and social structures. This approach considers the agential roles of water in broader social-historical processes, often emphasising its materiality, relationality, and spatiality. While still nascent in China, critical hydrogeopolitical studies have unveiled how hydraulic infrastructures enable institutional, economic, and environmental changes, and how the discourses, knowledge, narratives, and imaginaries surrounding water render societies and spaces governable. They have also explored how everyday water practices reshape state-centric projects and policies. This critical geographical perspective can provide new theoretical and empirical insights into water governance and Chinese politics by unravelling the complex interplay between water, infrastructures, institutions, development, and inequalities.

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Raymond Yu Wang is an Associate Professor at the Center for Social Sciences, Southern University of Science and Technology. Formerly an Associate Professor at Sun Yat-sen University, he earned his PhD and conducted post-doctoral research at The University of Hong Kong. His research centers on political processes, institutional dynamics, and social relationships in natural resource and environmental governance, particularly through water issues. His work has been featured in esteemed journals such as *China Quarterly*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, and *Regulation & Governance*. He is a member of the editorial boards of *International Journal of Water Resources Development* and *Water Alternatives*.



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