

Curriculum vitae

Prof. Dr. Thorben PELZER
Hong Kong University of Science & Technology

Career

- since 2025 Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities
School of Humanities and Social Science,
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Tenure track research & teaching of computational humanities, history of science & technology
- 2025/01–06 Lead Coordinator
China Centre, Kiel University
Restructuring of the institute; programme management & team lead; communication with presidium; third-party grant applications
- 2020–2024 Senior Researcher
Research Centre Global Dynamics,
Leipzig University, Germany
Researching the sociology of Chinese space in an interdisciplinary environment, plus administration, coordination of assistants, database management
- 2023/07–09 JSPS Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Economic History, Keio University, Japan
Investigating infrastructural plans for the Chinese West by the Japanese and their WW2 collaborators
- 2017–2021 Lecturer & Researcher
Department for East Asia Studies,
Leipzig University, Germany
Teaching of seminars on Modern China, student counselling, administrating, coordinating, organizing, and researching
- 2017/05–08 Freelance, German as a Second Language, Bochum
- 2015–2017 Research assistant, Institute for Advanced Studies in Humanities (KWI), Duisburg-Essen University
- 2016/03–06 Internship, German Consulate General, Shanghai
- 2012–2013 Student assistant, Ruhr-University Bochum



THE HONG KONG
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY



UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG

LEIPZIG RESEARCH CENTRE
GLOBAL DYNAMICS **ReCentGlobe**



慶應義塾
Keio University



ABTEILUNG
KULTUR UND
BILDUNG
Generalkonsulat der
Bundesrepublik Deutschland
德国驻上海总领事馆
文化教育处



Education

- 2018–2022 **PhD (Dr. phil.)**
Chinese History / Global Studies
Leipzig University
Graduate School Global & Area Studies
Thesis: “Engineering Trouble. U.S.–Chinese
Experiences of Professional Discontent.”
Supervisors: Elisabeth Kaske (Leipzig) &
Emma Teng (M. I. T.); grades scl/mcl/scl (≈A)
- 2011–2017 **Full Scholarship**
German Academic Scholarship Foundation
(*Studienstiftung*)
- 2015–2017 **M. A. Programme**
East Asia Studies
Ruhr-University Bochum
Seminars on social history; philosophy; contemporary
politics & economy; Chinese literature; Chinese,
Japanese, and Korean languages
Supervisors: Heiner Roetz & Ilse Lenz
Final grade: 1.2 (≈A)
- 2016–2017 **National Taiwan Normal University**
Postgraduate exchange semester
East Asia Studies department
- 2011–2015 **B. A. Programme**
Chinese Studies & Japanese Studies
Ruhr-University Bochum
Two-majors-programme featuring seminars on
classical and modern Chinese & Japanese languages;
history; philosophy; literature; linguistics
Supervisors: Regine Mathias & Jan Schmidt
Final grade: 1.0 (≈A+)
- 2014, 2012 **Tongji University, Shanghai**
Undergraduate exchange semester & Summer school
- 2013–2014 **Osaka University**
Undergraduate exchange semester
- 2009–2011 High School *Abitur*
Gymnasium Bad Essen
Final grade: 1.1 (≈A+)



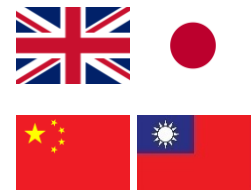
Technical Qualifications

- **IBM Full Stack Programmer** (Professional Certificate)
JavaScript, React, Node, Python, Flask, Django, Git, Docker
- **Google Advanced Data Analyst** (Professional Certificate)
Python, statistics, regression analysis, machine learning
- **Google Data Analyst** (Professional Certificate)
R, SQL, relational databases, data viz, spreadsheets, Tableau
- GIS; spatial analysis, movement & transport analysis
- Social network analysis, sequence analysis
- Topic modelling, tokenization, text similarity calculation
- “Foundational C#” Microsoft Certificate
- “Responsive Web Design” freeCodeCamp Certificate
- Content management systems & E-commerce systems
- “Google AI Essentials” Course



Languages

- Proficiency in **German, English, Mandarin Chinese (Simplified & Traditional), Literary Chinese, Japanese**
- Limited coursework in French, Korean, Latin, Classical Japanese, Classical Tibetan



Professional Skills

- **Google Project Management** (Professional Certificate)
Agile project management, scrum, quality management, budgeting & procurement, risk management, stakeholder communication
- **Science Communication** Course
(National Institute for Science Communication)



Publications

Monographs

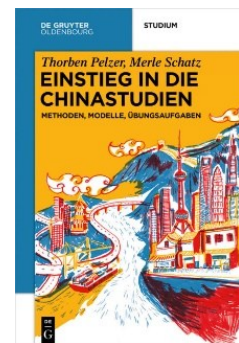
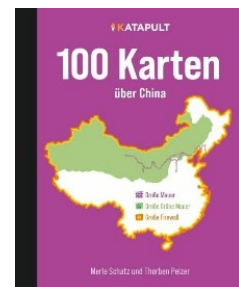
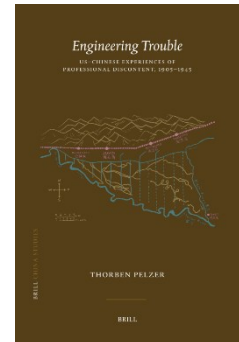
1. *Engineering Trouble. U.S.–Chinese Experiences of Professional Discontent, 1905–1945*. China Studies 52, ed. Rana Mitter. Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2023. doi:10.1163/9789004549555. **PEER-REVIEWED**
 - Reviewed by Delphine Spicq (*Technology and Culture* 65, no. 3), Diego Cavalcanti Araújo (*Journal of History of Science and Technology* 18, no. 2)
2. *100 Karten über China [100 Maps about China]*. Greifswald: Katapult, 2022. w/ Merle Schatz.
 - Reviewed by Wolfgang Hirn (*Chinahirn* 10/2022), Martin Lätzel (*Das Historisch-Politische Buch* 70), Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer (*Fachbuchjournal* 3/2023), in *Konfuzius Institut* 6/2022, and in *Profil* 4/2023
 - “This is finest communication of knowledge, in an entertaining way” —*Chinahirn* 54 (10/2022, translated)
 - Total circulation: 10,000+ copies
3. *Einstieg in die Chinastudien. Methoden, Modelle, Übungsaufgaben [Introduction to China Studies. Methods, Models, Exercise]*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2019. w/ Merle Schatz. doi: 10.1515/9783110665024. **PEER-REVIEWED**

Journal Articles

4. “Bridging the Gap: Hijacking the British Boxer Indemnity Fund to Complete the Guangzhou–Hankou Railway.” In production, *Twentieth-century China* 51, no.1 (2026). **PEER-REVIEWED**
5. “Engineering Societies in Republican China, 1912–1949. Spaces of Professionalisation and Participation.” *East Asian Science, Technology and Society* 19, no. 3 (2025). doi: 10.1080/18752160.2025.2546742. **PEER-REVIEWED**
6. “Engineers on the Move. Geographic Mobility in Republican China.” *Twentieth-century China* 50, no. 1 (2025), 25–55. doi: 10.1353/tcc.2025.a950426. **PEER-REVIEWED**
7. “Enter the Pragmatic Engineer. Ling Hongxun at Jiaotong University, 1920–1927.” *History of Education* 53, no. 2 (2024), 256–280. doi: 10.1080/0046760X.2023.2220287. **PEER-REVIEWED**

Book Chapters

8. “Technocracy and Technostructure in Nationalist China—Expert Rule or Rule over Experts?” In *Modern China in Flux. Networks, Mobility, and Transformation*, ed. Christian Henriot, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2024: 99–133. doi: 10.1515/9783111374437-004. **PEER-REVIEWED**
9. “Infrastructure, Ethnology, and the Reintegration of Xinjiang. The Northwest Reconstruction Expedition of 1943.” In *Age of*



Explorations, eds. Elisabeth Kaske and Elisabeth Köll. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2024: 95–123. doi: 10.1515/9783111245362-005. *PEER-REVIEWED*

Datasets and Interfaces

10. “Atlas der Ostasien-Forschung in Norddeutschland [Atlas of East Asia Research in Northern Germany].” Kiel: China Centre, 2025. Online interface at <https://turban.shinyapps.io/chikon/>.
11. “PASTWAY: Platform for Analytical Simulations of Transport and Wayfinding across Yesteryears.” Preprint 2024. Online interface at <https://turban.shinyapps.io/PASTWAY/>.
12. “Chinese Engineers Relational Database (CERD).” Geneva, Budapest: Zenodo, 2021/22. w/ Elisabeth Kaske, Hailian Chen, et al., eds. Online interface at <https://home.uni-leipzig.de/cerd/>. doi:10.5281/zenodo.4075601.

Working Papers

13. *Chinese Engineers Relational Database (CERD) Design Manual*. Working Paper Series SFB 1199, no. 21. Leipzig: Leipzig University Press, 2020.

Book Reviews

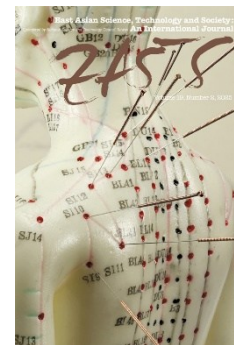
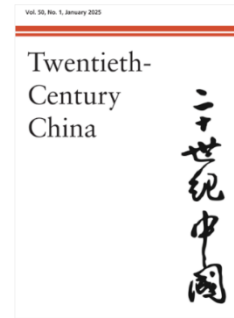
13. “Carnino, Guillaume, Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, and Jérôme Lamy, eds. *Global History of Techniques (Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries)*.” *Connections*, 2024.
14. “Schmalz, Stefan, *Machtverschiebungen im Weltsystem*, Strittmatter, Kai, *Die Neuerfindung der Diktatur*, Wemheuer, Felix, *Chinas große Umwelzung*,” *Comparativ* 30 (5/6), 2020: 644–649.
15. “Chang, Gordon H., and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, ed. *The Chinese and the Iron Road. Building the Transcontinental Railroad*,” *Comparativ* 30 (3/4), 2020: 426–428.
16. “Karl, Rebecca E. *The Magic of Concepts. History and the Economic in Twentieth-century China*,” *Connections. A Journal for Historians and Area Specialists*, 2019.
17. “Clinton, Maggie. *Revolutionary Nativism. Fascism and Culture in China, 1925–1937*,” *Comparativ* 28 (6), 2018: 117–119.

Blog Entries and Columns

18. “Retracing Professional Mobility—Historical Network Analysis through CERD,” *TRAFO*, 11/2021.
19. “China’s LGBT Community Still Fighting for their Rights,” w/ L. Shen, *CNN*, Hong Kong, 6/2016.

In Production: Forthcoming Chapters and Articles

20. “Towards a Historical Simulation of Spaces as Networks: Tracing Transportation and Elite Mobility in Modern China,” *Rethinking Elites*, eds. Cécile Armand, Christian Henriot, Lien Ling-ling. In peer review, Springer VS.
21. “Taming the Dragon of Many Dragons: Reliably Joining Biographies from Multiple Historical Datasets,” w/ Nora van den Bosch, *Taming the Digital Dragon: Datafication, Textbases, and Historical Research on Modern China*, eds. Cécile Armand, Baptiste Blouin, Christian Henriot.
22. “CERD-Taiwan: A New Historical Dataset for Prosopographical Analysis,” *Area Ruhr Working Papers*.



Elected Positions

- 2021–2025 **Treasurer and board member, German China Studies Association (DVCS)**
Budgeting, administration, accounting; conjoint business matters including legal and public relations
- 2021–2023 Board representative, Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) 1199, Leipzig University
- 2016–2017 Board representative, Centre for Religious Studies (CERES), Ruhr-University Bochum
- 2012–2013 Appointments committee, Chair for Central Asian Religions, Ruhr-University Bochum



Administrative Projects

- 2022/03–08 Advisor, Payment service system administration, 24th EACS Conference, Olomouc
- 2019–2021 **Chief coordinator of the 23rd EACS Conference, Leipzig**
Full range of academic administration and management, including budgeting, contracting of sponsors and exhibitors, peer review coordination, scheduling, payment system and website, design and editing, coordination of a team of 15 assistants, planning of the offline infrastructure, and later, in response to the pandemic regulations, the setup and management of a commercial conference software



Research Trips

- 2023/07–09 Archival research at Diet Library, Tokyo Tech, Tokyo/Kyoto/Osaka University archives
- 22/12–23/01 Archival research at Academia Sinica, Academia Historica, National Central Library, Taipei
- 2022/09 Research associate, Aix-Marseille University
- 2020/02–03 Archival research at Stanford, Utah, Illinois, Purdue
- 2018/11 Archival research at LSE & SOAS, London
- 2018/08–10 Invited visit to M. I. T.; archival research at Harvard, M. I. T., Yale, LoC, Smithsonian, Columbia
- 2018/07–08 Invited guest researcher, Renmin U., Beijing



Grants

2025	Teaching grant, BNC (c. 56,000 €), via A. Messner, for a lecturer at China Centre, Kiel University
2025	OA Waiver, National Science and Technology Council, Taiwan (c. 3,000 €)
2025	Research grant “The Chinese Northwest,” DFG (c. 350,000 €), approved unconditionally (returned)
2023	Postdoc fellowship, JSPS/DAAD (c. 9,000 €)
2020–2021	Conference grant, DFG (c. 15,000 €), via P. Clart
2018–2019	Teaching project grant, Federal Ministry of Education (c. 20,000 €), w/ Merle Schatz
2018	Overseas research grants, DAAD IPID4all

Grant Applications

2024	ERC Starting grant, 1.5 mil. € (unsuccessful)
2022–2023	Co-drafting SFB application, DFG (sub-project rated excellent; application in total unsuccessful)



DFG
DAAD

Editorships

since 2024	<i>Jahrbuch der Deutschen Vereinigung für Chinastudien</i>
2015–2019	<i>Climate and Culture</i> [as editing assistant only]

Peer Review Assignments

- *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*
- *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Vereinigung für Chinastudien*
- *Journal of Chinese History*
- *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*

Teaching Overview

- Introduction to China Studies (BA: 2017, 2018, 2020)
- Chinese Societies (BA: 2018 & 2020)
- Japanese for Sinologists (MA: 2021)
- Digital History (PhD: 2023)

Talks and Presentations

Conference Papers & Workshop Presentations

- “Chinaforschung in Norddeutschland: Eine quantitative Analyse [China Research in Northern Germany: A Quantitative Analysis],” *DVCS*, Hamburg University, 2025.
- “Digital China: AI and the Humanities?,” *China Lunch*, TU Berlin, 2025.
- “Die Modernisierung der Wasser-Infrastruktur in Nordwest-China: Ökonomie und Ökologie im Zeichen des Zweiten Weltkriegs [Modernisation of Water Infrastructure in Northwest China: Economy & Ecology under the Banner of WW2],” *DOT*, FAU Erlangen, 2025.
- “Policy Shifts in China: Implications for Germany’s Research Sector,” *Secure Data Exchange Forum*, GEOMAR, Kiel, 2025.
- “Strategien und Ziele der Volksrepublik China und Implikationen für Wissenschaft und Forschung in Deutschland [PRC Strategies and Goals, and Implications for Science and Research in Germany],” Rostock University, 2025.
- “From Archives to Algorithms: Digital History of Global China through the Lens of AI,” Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong, 2024.
- “Lanzhou im Krieg: Urbanisierung eines infrastrukturellen Knotenpunkts [Lanzhou during Wartime: Urbanisation of an Infrastructural Hub],” *DVCS*, Münster University, 2024.
- “Engineers in Taiwan, 1945–1974: Migration & Taiwanisation,” *Taiwan as Pioneer*, Bochum U., 2024.
- “The Transformation of Lanzhou through Wartime Infrastructural Planning,” *Transitions and Transformations of Urban Mobility Infrastructures and Practices in 20th Century East Asia, 22th Annual Conference of the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic & Mobility (T2M)*, Lancaster University, Leipzig, 2024.
- “Identifying Critical Infrastructures and Transport Hubs through Digital Simulations based on Archival Maps,” MPIWG, Berlin, 2024.
- “Utilising Prosopographic Databases for Network and Spatial Analysis,” MPIWG, Berlin, 2024.
- “Simulating Historical Transport Networks through Archival Maps Geographic Mobility in Late Republican China,” Aix-Marseille University, Aix-en-Provence, 2024.
- “Chinese Engineers Relational Database (CERD)—Retrospective and Outlook,” Aix-Marseille, 2024.
- “Chinese Engineers Relational Database,” *Digital Humanities Day*, Leipzig University, 2023.
- Chair, Papers on Republican China, DVCS Annual Conference, Erlangen, 2023.
- “Pragmatist Influence on Engineering Courses in Republican China,” EdUHK, Hong Kong, 2023.
- “Bridging the Gap: Anglophone ‘Young China’ and the British Boxer Indemnity Fund, 1925–1950,” *Revisiting the Study Abroad Movement in Modern China*, Aix-Marseille University, 2023.
- “The Chinese West during Wartime—Spatial Imaginations from Japan,” Center for Contemporary Chinese Studies, **Keio University**, Tokyo, 2023.
- “Lustration and Transitional Justice—Useful Categories for Pre-1949 China?,” *Seventh European Congress on World and Global History (ENIUGH)*, The Hague, 2023.
- “Chinese Engineers Relational Database,” *Tools of the Trade*, **Harvard University**, Cambridge, 2023.
- “Technocracy and Technostructure in Nationalist China. Expert Rule or Rule over Experts?” *Elites in China and Taiwan*, **Academia Sinica**, Taipei, 2023.
- “Engineering Associations in Republican China. Professional Resilience during Dispersed Political Control,” *World Economic History Congress*, Paris, 2022.
- “The Role of Engineers within the Guomindang Technostructure. A Database-Driven Assessment,” *Elites in China*, Aix-Marseille University, Aix-en-Provence, 2022.
- Discussant, “Forschungskompetenz, Innovationsfähigkeit, Tenure-Track-Programm, #IchbinHanna [Research Expertise, Innovation Skills, Tenure Track Programme, #IchbinHanna] *ReCentGlobe Annual Conference*, Leipzig University, 2022.
- Discussant, “Wissen entgrenzen [Dissolving Knowledge],” Max Weber Foundation, Leipzig, 2021.

- “Reflecting Boundaries: A Discussion of Frontiers, Borders, and Processes of Spatialization,” *Processes of Spatialization*, Leipzig University, 2021.
- “Dynamics of the 1920s Sino-American Network of Hydraulic Engineers,” *EACS Biennial Conference*, Leipzig University [digital], 2021.
- “The Civil Engineer Ling Hongxun (1894–1981) as an Educator,” *International Committee for the History of Technology*, Prague [hybrid], 2021.
- “Nationalising Colonial Space through Infrastructure. The Luo Expedition to Xinjiang in 1943,” *Radical Nationalism and Fascism in East Asia. New Approaches in Research*, Masaryk University, Brno, [conference cancelled (Covid-19)], 2020.
- “Social Cohesion and Radical Infrastructures in Nationalist China,” *Social Cohesion in a Transregional and Global Perspective*, Leipzig University, 2020.
- “US-Educated Engineers in Beiyang China. Wang Jingchun (1882–1956) and the Politics of Transportation,” *AAS in Asia*, Kobe [hybrid], 2020.
- “Three Ludic Commentaries on Tian’anmen,” *1989—A Caesura in Global History and its Consequences*, Leipzig University, 2019.
- “Der frühe Technokrat Wang Jingchun (1882–1956) und sein Lobbyismus für die Yue–Han-Eisenbahn [The Early Technocrat Wang Jingchun (1882–1956) and His Lobbyism for the Yue–Han-Railway],” *DVCS*, Berlin, 2018.
- “The School of Natural Justice. Chinese Anarchists in Tokyo,” *Initiative Japanforschung*, Leuven, 2017.
- “The Transculture of China’s Engineers,” *SFB Colloquium*, Leipzig University, 2017.
- “Historising Power Architectures. Revisiting Japanese *nanshoku* in the 20th Century,” *The Third What is & How to Do LGBT History Conference*, Manchester University, 2016.
- “A Pride for Shanghai. Strategies of Adaption and Contextualization,” *Queer East Asia Conference*, Vienna, 2015.

General Audience Talks

- “China: Bunter als ein Panda [China: More Diverse than a Panda],” Frankfurt Book Fair, 2022.
- Chair, “Heiter scheitern [To Fail Cheerfully],” Leipzig University, 2022.
- “Einflussnahmen, Abhängigkeiten und Selbstzensur: Gefahren des akademischen Engagements mit der VR China [Interferences, Dependencies, and Self-Censorship: Risks of Academic Engagement with the PR China],” *TiCK*, Paderborn University, 2020.
- Discussant, film talk “*Papa Rainbow*, dir. Fan Popo,” *wide queer world*, Leipzig, 2019.
- Chair, film talk “Hong Kong 2019 ELAB protests/*Boundaries (Gaaihaan/Naambak)*, dir. Lee Chun Fung,” Das Japanische Haus, Leipzig, 2019.
- “30. Jahrestag Tianan’men-Massaker [Thirtieth Anniversary of the Tianan’men Massacre],” *mephisto 97.6—Faustschlag*, Leipzig University, 2019.
- Discussant, “Chungkuk LGBT hwaltongüi kwaköwa, hyönchae, chönmang [Past, Present, and Prospects of China’s LGBT Project],” *2015 Asia Conference on LGBT*, Seoul, 2015.

Invited Classroom Lectures

- Research Policies in China, *China Competence Certificate*, TU Berlin, 2026.
- The Use of Databases in Digital Humanities, EdUHK, Hong Kong, 2023.
- “Engineering Trouble—Book Talk,” PhD workshop, Keio University, 2023.
- “Engineers in Early Republican China,” *Economic History Seminar*, Keio University, 2023.
- “Datenbankerstellung in den Humanities mit der Software Heurist [Database Creation in the Humanities Using Heurist],” *Digital Lab*, Leipzig University, 2022.
- “Chinesische Ingenieursstudenten in den USA. Hintergründe und Folgen, 1905–1937, [Chinese Engineering Students in the USA. Backgrounds and Consequences, 1905–1937],” *Aktuelle Forschungen zur und Tendenzen der Technikgeschichte*, PhD Colloquium, TU Dresden, 2019.