

CHMS HDR Conference 2026

Research, Professional Development and Career Pathways

29–30 September 2026

Seminar Room, China in the World, ANU

The Australian National University, Building 188, Fellows La, Acton ACT 2601

Conference Overview

The CHMS HDR Conference brings together Confirmation of Candidature (CoC) and Final Presentation candidates with museum professionals, alumni and researchers. The conference supports candidature milestones while strengthening professional development, interdisciplinary exchange and career preparation.

ZOOM details: <https://anu.zoom.us/j/86299685188?pwd=8cGrPf2aGllzpbuJap2nTAeMVinwUD.1>

Day 1 – Tuesday 29 September 2026

Theme: Developing Your Research

Time	Session
9:30–9:50	Registration and Morning Tea
9:50–10:00	Welcome and Introduction
10:00–10:45	Confirmation of Candidature – Junghee Yang <i>Negotiating Colonial Pasts in Northeast China: Korean Connections, Heritage Agency, and Unequal Remembrance</i> Chair: Cressida Fforde
10:45–11:30	Confirmation of Candidature – Guohong Li <i>From Tea Forest to Heritage Field: World Heritage, Value Conversion, and Everyday Rural Life in Jingmai Mountain, China</i> Chair: Alexandra Dellios
11:30–12:30	HDR Master Class – David C. Harvey <i>Make Heritage Great Again? Responsibilities and consequences of thinking critically with heritage: research questions, trajectories and futures</i> Aarhus University, Denmark
12:30–1:30	Lunch
1:30–2:15	Confirmation of Candidature – Sarah Ward <i>The Governance of Underwater Cultural Heritage in Cambodia: Power, Participation and the Koh Sdach Shipwreck</i> Chair: Mat Trinca
2:15–3:00	Afternoon Tea and Informal Discussion
3:00–4:00	Break / transition to SRWB
4:00–5:00	CHMS Centre Seminar (at SRWB) <i>What Counts as Museum Research? Insights from ASSEMBLY's National Conversations</i> Sejul Malde, Maya Haviland and Vince Dziekan

Day 2 – Wednesday 30 September 2026

Theme: Completing Your PhD and Building Your Career

Time	Session
9:30–10:00	Morning Tea
10:00–11:00	Final Presentation – Yinong Li <i>Remembering and the Transformation of Class Politics in China</i>
11:00–12:00	HDR Session with Associate Dean HDR Ruth Morgan
12:00–1:00	Lunch
1:00–2:00	Final Presentation – Yicheng Jiang <i>Re-reading museum digitalisation and visitor engagement through a historical materialist approach: A visitor study in Australia and China</i>
2:00–3:00	Professional Development Panel <i>Beyond the PhD: Museums, Heritage and Professional Practice</i> Jilda Andrews, National Museum of Australia Anna Wong, Canberra Museum + Gallery
3:00–3:30	Afternoon Tea and Farewell

Programme Notes

- Confirmation of Candidature presentations are allocated 45 minutes each, including presentation and discussion.
- Final Presentations are allocated 60 minutes each, including presentation and discussion.
- Professional development sessions are designed for all HDR candidates.
- The CHMS Centre Seminar on Day 1 is held at SRWB.
- Programme subject to change.

Presentation Abstracts and Session Details

Sessions are presented below in programme order.

Day 1 – Tuesday 29 September

Theme: Developing Your Research

CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE PRESENTATION

Negotiating Colonial Pasts in Northeast China: Korean Connections, Heritage Agency, and Unequal Remembrance

Junghee Yang

Chair: Cressida Fforde | 10:00–10:45

Abstract

Recent studies on collective memory and national heritage have shown that the public visibility of colonial pasts is contingent on power relations between diverse social actors. Northeast China provides a productive setting for examining this process in a transnational scope. Its urban landscapes, shaped by successive Russo-Japanese imperial projects, have long been connected to the Korean Peninsula through migration and mobility, while carrying different historical meanings for Korean and Chinese communities. This research asks how differently positioned social actors—political authorities, heritage institutions, cultural organisations as well as local Chinese and Korean residents, travellers, and tourism entrepreneurs—engage with these colonial pasts, and how unequal power dynamics shape their capacities to remember, represent, and mobilise them. Through long-term ethnographic fieldwork across urban historical and tourism settings, I will examine how colonial pasts are negotiated through commemoration, tourism, commerce, mobility, and everyday practice. Ultimately, it asks how a transnational colonial past becomes heritage under the political sovereignty of China.

CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE PRESENTATION

From Tea Forest to Heritage Field: World Heritage, Value Conversion, and Everyday Rural Life in Jingmai Mountain, China

Guohong Li

Chair: Alex Dellios | 10:45–11:30

Abstract

World Heritage governance in rural areas is increasingly embedded in processes of modernisation, marketisation, and local development, reshaping how local resources are represented, valued, and legitimised. Located on China's borderland, Jingmai Mountain is a living cultural landscape centred on tea planting and production, providing a productive case for examining the local effects of heritage governance. Drawing on Bourdieu's field theory, this research asks how does World Heritage inscription convert local resources and everyday practices into new forms of value, and how the different evaluative logics associated with heritage governance, local development, markets, and public communication intersect and are negotiated around these resources, thereby reordering everyday life and cultural authority. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, the study examines these processes through discursive production, value conversion, and relational reordering. In doing so, it seeks to illuminate the evolving relationship between global governance logics and rural social transformation.

The Governance of Underwater Cultural Heritage in Cambodia: Power, Participation and the Koh Sdach Shipwreck

Sarah Ward

Chair: Mat Trinca | 1:30–2:15

Abstract

This research investigates how underwater cultural heritage (UCH) is constituted, governed and valued in Cambodia, and how more participatory forms of governance might be developed. Using the Koh Sdach shipwreck as a catalytic case study, it examines how power, authority and agency are produced and negotiated within Cambodia's emerging UCH regime. The study triangulates archaeological, critical heritage and postcolonial theories, informed by governmentality, within a Transformative Critical Dialectical Pluralist paradigm. Community-Based Participatory Action Research provides the overarching strategy, operationalised through a complex mixed-methods design integrating archaeological, archival, policy, ethnographic and participatory inquiry to co-create socially just frameworks for UCH governance.

HDR MASTER CLASS

Make Heritage Great Again? Responsibilities and consequences of thinking critically with heritage: research questions, trajectories and futures

David C. Harvey

Aarhus University, Denmark | 11:30–12:30

Abstract

Exploring some of the consequences of thinking about heritage in processual terms, this paper examines how heritage-based narratives of future-making have been used to inspire action in an unfolding present in a variety of ways. Examining the role of heritage in science fiction in particular, the paper reflects on how 'heritage future-making' might have implications for the choices we make today.

With heritage continuing to provide productive resources for exclusionary politics and post-truth populist resurgence, I ask what responsibility does heritage studies have, and how should we respond? As a dynamic and highly malleable sense of heritage is put to work in forming the legacies of tomorrow, an awareness of political context and even taking sides – being partial – seems to be ever-more important.

CHMS CENTRE SEMINAR

What Counts as Museum Research? Insights from ASSEMBLY's National Conversations

Sejul Malde, Maya Haviland and Vince Dziekan

4:00–5:00 | Location: SRWB

Abstract

ASSEMBLY is a national collaborative initiative exploring how museums and galleries can better value, enable and practise collaborative research in changing public contexts. Over the past two years, the project has convened national and local conversations, workshops and collaborative inquiry involving museums, galleries, universities and other partners across Australia.

Those conversations have revealed a sector navigating significant change. Museums and universities alike are operating in increasingly complex cultural, political and economic environments, while being asked to demonstrate public value, community relevance and social impact in new ways. At the same time, collaborative research involving museums, galleries, universities and communities is becoming increasingly important—yet often difficult to support, recognise and sustain. Practitioners describe tensions around resources, ownership, decision-making, legitimacy, impact and the visibility of different forms of expertise and knowledge.

ASSEMBLY was established in response to these challenges. While museums have long been sites of research and knowledge production, the landscape in which that work takes place is changing. Practice-led inquiry, community engagement, collaborative creation, evaluation, interpretation and organisational learning are increasingly central to

how museums fulfil their public purpose. Yet these forms of knowledge practices are not always well recognised within dominant research systems, creating questions about what counts as research, whose knowledge is valued and how collaborative work can be appropriately supported.

Across ASSEMBLY's national conversations, three interconnected themes emerged as critical to strengthening museum collaborative research: Knowledge Practice, Collaborative Process and Organising Purpose. Together, they provide a lens for understanding how questions of people, power and politics are shaping collaborative research across the sector today.

This session offers a snapshot of what ASSEMBLY has learned so far and invites discussion about the conditions, capabilities and collaborations needed to support the next evolution of museum research practice in Australia.

Day 2 – Wednesday 30 September

Theme: Completing Your PhD and Building Your Career

FINAL PRESENTATION

Remembering and the Transformation of Class Politics in China

Yinong Li

10:00–11:00

Abstract

Why have class politics changed in contemporary China? This thesis approaches the question through subjectivity and identification, asking how migrant workers make sense of their experiences and come to identify with different subject positions. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Picun, Beijing, including life-history interviews, autobiographical writing and worker-led cultural practices, I conceptualise remembering as a process of affective meaning-making. The research shows that workers mobilise competing discursive resources, including self-development, socialist collectivism and gender critique, to interpret emotionally significant experiences of labour and migration. These different ways of remembering can sustain, negotiate or challenge particular forms of working-class subjectivity. I argue that transformations in class politics therefore need to be understood not only through structural change, but also through changing processes of identification.

HDR SESSION

Session with Associate Dean HDR

Ruth Morgan

11:00–12:00

FINAL PRESENTATION

Re-reading museum digitalisation and visitor engagement through a historical materialist approach: A visitor study in Australia and China

Yicheng Jiang

1:00–2:00

Abstract

Digital technologies are increasingly expected to be transformative forces that reshape museological practices, tempting researchers to water down established critical approaches to evaluating social inequalities behind visitor engagement. Historical materialism reminds us that a mistake arises when we see emerging technologies as 'new'. Are social consequences of 'new' technologies driven by historically accumulated systems of political economy rather than technologies themselves? In this sense, are 'new' technologies a continuation of the 'old' ones such as televisions or industrial machines? This thesis revisits the intellectual precedents, including Hegel, Marx, Williams and Benjamin, that inspired and were subsequently reworked within historical materialism, to recover their significance for contemporary Critical Heritage Studies. Based on visitor interviews in two museums in Australia and China, this thesis demonstrates that visitor engagement is less fundamentally transformed by digital technologies than it is conditioned by visitors' feelings towards pre-existing national infrastructures, relations of production and political contexts.

Beyond the PhD: Museums, Heritage and Professional Practice

Jilda Andrews (National Museum of Australia) and Anna Wong (Canberra Museum + Gallery)

2:00–3:00