

Xuefei Ren

Professor of Sociology | Michigan State University

Email: renxuefe@msu.edu

APPOINTMENT

Michigan State University, 2007-present

Professor of Sociology

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Sociology, University of Chicago, 2007

M.A., Urban Planning, Tokyo Metropolitan University, 2001

RESEARCH AREAS

Comparative Urbanism; Urban Governance and Planning; Infrastructure, Technology, and Territory; Political Economy; China and India

CURRENT RESEARCH

Peripheries of Power: AI, Data Centers and the Urban Future – Guggenheim Fellowship project (2026–2028). The project examines how the AI infrastructural buildout is reorganizing territory and political-economic power across cities and hinterlands in the United States and China.

Future-Proofing Climate Boomtowns – CIFAR (Canadian Institute for Advanced Research) / Swiss National Science Foundation collaboration (2024–2026). The project examines how relatively climate-fortunate cities anticipate and govern intensifying climate risks, comparing emerging adaptation strategies in Chicago, Toronto, Geneva, and Zurich.

SELECTED FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

2026 Guggenheim Fellow, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation

2024–2028 CIFAR Fellow, Humanity's Urban Future Program, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR)

2022 Robert E. Park Best Book Award for *Governing the Urban in China and India*, American Sociological Association

2022–2023 Fellow, India China Center, The New School for Social Research

2021–2023 Public Intellectuals Fellow, National Committee on U.S.–China Relations

2016–2017 Frederick Burkhardt Fellow, American Council of Learned Societies

2011–2012 Fellow, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

2012 Best Book Award for *Building Globalization*, American Sociological Association

BOOKS

SINGLE-AUTHORED

Ren, Xuefei. 2020. *Governing the Urban in China and India: Land Grabs, Slum Clearance and the War on Air Pollution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Winner, Robert E. Park Best Book Award, Community and Urban Sociology, American Sociological Association, 2022.

Honorable Mention, Dennis Judd Best Book Award, Urban and Local Politics, American Political Science Association, 2021.

Ren, Xuefei. 2013. *Urban China*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Outstanding Academic Title, Choice Magazine, 2013.

Ren, Xuefei. 2011. *Building Globalization: Transnational Architecture Production in Urban China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Winner, Best Book Award, Political Economy of the World System, American Sociological Association, 2012.

Honorable Mention, Robert E. Park Best Book Award, Community and Urban Sociology, American Sociological Association, 2012

CO-AUTHORED

Birch, Hilary, Graeme Götz, Phillip Harrison, Roger Keil, and **Xuefei Ren**. 2026. *The City after COVID-19: Vulnerability and Urban Governance in Chicago, Toronto and Johannesburg*. New York: Routledge. (*Authors listed alphabetically)

Julie-Anne Boudreau, Simon Goldhill, Roger Keil, and **Xuefei Ren**. Forthcoming. *Imagining the Urban Future*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. (*Authors listed alphabetically)

CO-EDITED

Ren, Xuefei and Roger Keil. 2018. *The Globalizing Cities Reader*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.

EDITORIAL LEADERSHIP

Incoming Editor: International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (2027-2031)

Associate Editor: City & Community (2022-2025), Journal of Urban Affairs (2015-2021)

Editorial Board Member: Eurasian Geography & Economics (2013-present), Urban Planning International (2007-present), International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (2024-present)

Guest Editor: Urban Studies, City & Community, Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy & Society, Journal of Urban Affairs, Urban Political Ecology

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Julie-Anne Boudreau, Simon Goldhill, Roger Keil, and Xuefei Ren. Forthcoming. "Imag(in)ing the urban future," Urban Studies.

Ren, Xuefei. Forthcoming. "Beyond the state and the present: What can historians bring to infrastructure studies," Journal of Asian Studies.

Ren, Xuefei. 2025. "The comparative future of a canonical city," Dialogues in Urban Research, 4(1): 42-45.

Kipfer, Stefan, Philip Harrison, and Xuefei Ren. 2025. "The materiality of urbanization: Politics, regions and networks in the work of Roger Keil," Urban Political Ecology, 1(3): 151-162.

Ren, Xuefei. 2025. "Rethinking southern urbanism from the periphery," Revista Brasileira de Estudos Urbanos e Regionais (Brazilian Journal of Urban and Regional Research), 27: 1-10.

Ponzini, Davide, Robert Hassink, Dieter Kogler and Xuefei Ren. 2025. "Megaprojects: Symbolic Value in Urban-Regional Economy," Cambridge Journal of Economy, Regions and Society, 18(2): 255-263.

- Li, Yifei and Xuefei Ren. 2024. "Everyday oblivion in eco-civilized China," *Qualitative Sociology*, 47(3): 1-20.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2021. "The peripheral turn in global urban studies," *South Asia Interdisciplinary Academic Journal*, 26: 1-8.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2021. "Suburbs and urban peripheries in a global perspective," *City & Community*, 20(1): 38-47.
- Garrido, Marco, Xuefei Ren, and Liza Weinstein. 2021. "Toward a Global Urban Sociology: Keywords," *City & Community*, 20(1): 4-12.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2020. "Historical Preservation in Rustbelt China: The Life and Death of Jihong Bridge," *Journal of Chinese Architecture and Urbanism*, 2(2): 1-12.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2020. "From a comparative gesture to structured comparison: An analysis of air pollution control in Beijing and Delhi," *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 13(3): 461-473.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2020. "Pandemic and lockdown: A territorial approach to COVID-19 in China, Italy, and the U.S." *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 61(4-5): 423-434.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2020. "Slums, favelas, and urban villages: Housing crises in Guangzhou, Mumbai, and Rio de Janeiro," *Current History*, 119 (813): 15-21.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2018. "From Chicago to China and India: Studying the city in the 21st century," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 44: 497-513.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2017. "Aspirational urbanism from Beijing to Rio de Janeiro: Olympic cities in the Global South and contradictions," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 39(7): 894-908.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2017. "Governing the informal: Housing policies over informal settlements in China, India, and Brazil," *Housing Policy Debate*, 28(1): 79-93.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2017. "Land acquisition, rural protests, and the local state in China and India," *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 35(1): 22-38.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2015. "City power and urban fiscal crises," *International Journal of Urban Sciences*, 19(1): 73-81.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2014. "The political economy of urban ruins: Redeveloping Shanghai," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38(2): 1081-91.
- Morgan, George and Xuefei Ren. 2012. "The creative underclass: Culture, subculture and urban renewal," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 34(2): 127-130.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2012. "'Green' as spectacle in China," *Journal of International Affairs*, 65: 19-30.
- Ren, Xuefei and Meng Sun. 2012. "Artistic urbanization: Creative industries and creative control in Beijing," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 36(3): 504-521.

- Weinstein, Liza and Xuefei Ren. 2009. "The changing right to the city: Urban renewal and housing rights in globalizing Shanghai and Mumbai," *City & Community*, 8(4): 407-432.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2009. "Olympic Beijing: Reflections on urban space and global connectivity," *International Journal of the History of Sports*, 26(8): 1011-1039.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2008. "Forward to the past: Historical preservation in globalizing Shanghai," *City & Community*, 7(1): 23-43.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2008. "Architecture and nation building in the age of globalization: Construction of the National Stadium of Beijing for the 2008 Olympic Games," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, (30)2: 175-190.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2008. "Architecture and China's urban revolution," *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action*, 12(2): 217-225.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2008. "Architecture as branding: Mega-project developments in Beijing," *Built Environment*, 34(4): 517-531.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2006. "La ville Chinoise et ses 'grands projets' urbains : l'architecture internationale en question," *La Vie des Idées*, 12: 77-83.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2005. "The first Chicago School of urban sociology: 1910s-1930s," *Urban China Review*, 1(1): 85-93.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2004. "The rise of the creative class and urban amenity theory," *The Annals of Japanese Association for Urban Sociology*, 22: 189-98.

SELECTED BOOK CHAPTERS

- Ren, Xuefei and Roger Keil. Forthcoming. "Managed Futures? Chicago and Toronto as Climate Boomtowns," *Handbook of North American Urban Futures*, Diane Davis, Roger Keil and Julie-Anne Boudreau (eds). Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2025. "Experts, policymaking, and China's responses to COVID-19", in *Constrained Expertise in India and China: Knowledge and Power in Policymaking*, Manjari Mahajan and Mark W. Frazier (eds), p.63-76. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2023. "Urban China and COVID-19: How Chinese cities responded to the pandemic," in *Handbook on Local Governance in China: Structures, Variations, and Innovations*, Ceren Ergenc and David S. G. Goodman (eds), p.378-385. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2020. "Redeveloping informal settlements in China, India, and Brazil," in *Chinese Cities in the 21st Century*, Youqin Huang (ed), p.81-90. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2019. "Robert Park in China: From the Chicago School to urban China studies," in *The City in China: New Perspectives on Contemporary Urbanism*, Ray Forrest, Julie Ren, and Bart Wissink (eds), p.1-16. Bristol: Policy Press.

- Ren, Xuefei. 2019. "Building on quicksand: Infrastructural megaprojects in China," in *Critical Perspectives on Suburban Infrastructures: Contemporary International Cases*, Pierre Filion and Nina M. Pulver (eds), p.301-317. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2018. "'Green' as urban spectacle in China," in *Sustainable Cities in Asia*, Federico Caprotti and Li Yu (eds), p.77-85. London: Routledge.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2017. "Fragile entrepreneurialism: The Mumbai airport slum redevelopment project," in *Entrepreneurial Urbanism in India: The Politics of Spatial Restructuring and Local Contestation*, Smitha Kanekanti Chandrashekar (ed), p.157-173. Singapore: Springer.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2017. "Biggest infrastructure bubble ever? City and nation building with debt-financed megaprojects in China," in *The Oxford Handbook of Megaproject Management*, Bent Flyvbjerg (ed), p.137-152. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2017. "Cities in China and India: Disjuncture, master-concepts, and comparisons," in *A Research Agenda for Cities*, John R. Short (ed), p.195-205. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2017. "Lost in translation: Names, meanings, and development strategies of Beijing's periphery," in *What's in a Name? Talking about Urban Peripheries*, Richard Harris and Charlotte Vorms (eds), p.316-333. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ren, Xuefei. 2014. "Architecture as branding: Mega-project developments in Beijing," in *Megaproject Planning and Management: Essential Readings*, Bent Flyvbjerg (ed), p. 699-713. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Ren, Xuefei and Liza Weinstein. 2013. "Urban governance, mega-projects, and scalar transformations in China and India," in *Locating Right to the City in the Global South*, Tony Samara, Shenjing He, and Guo Chen (eds), p.107-126. New York: Routledge.

TRANSLATION

- Abbott, Andrew. 2011. 社会学科と社会学：シカゴ社会学百年の真相 [*Department and Discipline: Chicago Sociology at One Hundred*]. Translated by **Xuefei Ren** and Yasushi Matsumoto. Tokyo: Harvest. Originally published 1999 by the University of Chicago Press.

MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS

- Ren, Xuefei. "After the global city: Strategic places in the fractured world economy."
- Ren, Xuefei. "Frontiers of compute: Data centers and territorial transformation in Wisconsin."
- Ren, Xuefei. "Urban futures beyond growth in China's rustbelt."
- Ren, Xuefei, Sébastien Lambelet, Roger Keil and David Kaufmann. "Heat waves in cool cities: Imaginaries from climate boomtowns."
- Yifei Li and Xuefei Ren. "Catching up with the future: Chinese-style modernization and a temporal urban political ecology."

JOURNAL SPECIAL ISSUES EDITED

2026. "Rethinking urban political ecology from China," with Yifei Li, *Urban Political Ecology*.
2026. "Imagining the urban future," with Julie-Anne Boudreau and Roger Keil. *Urban Studies*.
2025. "Mega-projects and their symbolic value for urban and regional economies," with Davide Ponzini, Robert Hassink and Dieter Kogler. *Cambridge Journal of Economy, Regions and Society*.
2021. "Toward a global urban sociology: Keywords," with Marco Garrido and Liza Weinstein. *City & Community*.
2017. "Urban spectacles and transformation in Brazil," *Journal of Urban Affairs*.
2009. "The creative underclass: Culture, subculture and urban renewal," with George Morgan, *Journal of Urban Affairs*.

EXTERNAL FUNDING

- 2026 *Peripheries of Power: AI, Data Centers and the Urban Future*. **Guggenheim Foundation**.
- 2024–2026 *Future-Proofing Climate Boomtowns*, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) and the **Swiss National Science Foundation**. With Roger Keil, David Kaufmann, and Sébastien Lambelet.
- 2022–2025 *The City after COVID-19: Comparing Vulnerability and Urban Governance in Chicago, Toronto and Johannesburg*, **Urban Studies Foundation**. With Roger Keil and Philip Harrison.
- 2016–2022 *Detroit in China: Postindustrial Cities and Urban Representation*. **Mellon Foundation**.
- 2015-2016 *Governing the Urban in China and India*. **American Council of Learned Societies**.
- 2011-2012 *Governing the Urban in China and India*. **Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars**.

KEYNOTES, LECTURES & CONFERENCES (2019-PRESENT)

Conference Series, Humanity's Urban Future Program, CIFAR

2026. Humanity's Urban Future: Shanghai, New York University-Shanghai (*Organizer)
2026. Urban Futures in the Age of Techno-Capitalism, University of California-Santa Cruz (*Organizer)
2026. Humanity's Urban Future: Kolkata
2025. Detroit and Contested Urban Futures, Michigan State University Detroit Center (*Organizer)
2025. Istanbul Imaginings, Columbia University Global Center, Istanbul (*Co-organizer)
2024. Humanity's Urban Future: Vienna, Central European University
2024. Humanity's Urban Future: Mexico City, UNAM, Mexico City
2023. Humanity's Urban Future: Toronto, York University and CIFAR
2023. Humanity's Urban Future: Naples, University of Naples

Data Centers, AI Infrastructure, and the New Geography of Power

- 2026. Session on “Frontiers of Compute,” AAG, San Francisco
- 2025. Bloomberg Center for Cities, Harvard University

Climate Boomtowns and Imaginaries

- 2026. Presentation at the Urban Affairs Association conference, Chicago
- 2025. Workshop, ETH-Zurich
- 2025. Climate Policy Forum, Bern, Switzerland
- 2025. Presentation at the Urban Affairs Association conference, Vancouver

Rethinking Southern Urbanism from the Periphery

- 2026. University of California-Santa Cruz
- 2026. Western Michigan University
- 2025. The British Academy, London
- 2025. Brussels Center for Urban Studies, Brussels
- 2025. **Keynote**, Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, Detroit.

Pandemic Urbanism, The Political Economy of China’s Zero Covid Policy, The City after COVID-19

- 2025. Urban Studies Foundation conference, Detroit
- 2023. University of Witwatersrand and GCRO (Gauteng City-Region Observatory)
- 2023. University of Western Cape, Cape Town
- 2023. **Distinguished Lecture**, Department of Political Science, University of Illinois-Chicago
- 2022. Booth School of Business, University of Chicago
- 2022. LSE
- 2020. Marron Institute of Urban Management, New York University
- 2021. Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Global Urban Comparisons: Theory, Method, Evidence

- 2023. University of British Columbia
- 2023, 2019. University of California-Berkeley
- 2021. Tsinghua University, Beijing
- 2021. Center for South Asian Studies, EHESS, Paris
- 2019. Urban Democracy Lab, New York University

How China and India Govern Their Cities

- 2023. **Distinguished Lecture**, David Lam Center, Simon Fraser University
- 2023. National University of Singapore
- 2023. Ashoka Center for China Studies, Ashoka University
- 2022. Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University
- 2021. Royal Asiatic Society, Shanghai
- 2021. Cities are Back in Town Series, Sciences Po
- 2021. Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan
- 2021. Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University

2021. Center for East Asian Studies, University of Chicago
2020. Department of History, Northwestern University
2020. GSAPP, Columbia University
2020. University of Oxford China Center
2019. Center on Contemporary China, Princeton University

SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP

2026. "IJURR Urban China Studies Virtual Issue," 成识 | UrbanSense Blog & Podcast.
2022. "Urbanization, Migration and Families in China and India," United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
2022. "How COVID-19 Lockdown Measures—and Their Outcomes—Varied in Cities Around the World," *The Conversation*, with Roger Keil and Phillip Harrison.
2021. "The Urban Century of China and India," Chicago Council on Global Affairs.
2020. "The 'People's War' on Coronavirus in China," Chicago Council on Global Affairs.
2014. "Urban Design and Inequality: The Case of Urban Villages in China's Megacities," Social Science Research Council, *The Cities Papers*.

TEACHING & MENTORING

Courses

Urban Theory, Social Theory, Global Urban Comparisons, International Development, Urban Politics, Urban Sociology, World Urban System

Mentoring at MSU

Ph.D. and M.A. Students in Sociology, Geography, Planning, and Global Urban Studies

Mentoring of Students at Other Institutions

Served on Ph.D. dissertation and M.A. thesis committees in Urban Studies, Geography, Sociology, Planning and Architecture at:

Sciences Po

University of Milano-Bicocca

Politecnico di Torino

Central European University

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The University of Melbourne

The University of Hong Kong

University of California, Davis

School of the Art Institute of Chicago

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

External Reviewer for:

National Science Foundation

European Research Council

European Science Foundation

Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies
American Council for Learned Societies
Research Grants Council of Hong Kong
Singapore Ministry of Education Academic Research Fund

2023-present, Urban China Research Network, Board Member
2025 External Reviewer, Asian Studies Program, York University, Canada
2025 External Reviewer, City Institute, York University, Canada
2024 Selection committee, Azrieli Global Scholars Program, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research
2022 Invited Expert on Urbanization, Migration, and Family, United Nations

SELECTED DEPARTMENTAL & UNIVERSITY SERVICE

2025–2028 Tenure and Promotion Committee, College of Social Science
2021–2024 College of Social Science Research Committee
2007–present Core faculty, Asian Studies Program, Latin American Studies Program
2007–present Core faculty, Center for Advanced Studies of International Development, Michigan State University
2022–2026 Faculty Advisory Committee, Department of Sociology
2007-present Job search committees for all ranks

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

National Committee on U.S.-China Relations
Association of American Geographers
Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning
American Sociological Association
Urban Affairs Association
Association of Asian Studies
International Sociological Association, Research Committee 21 (Urban and Regional Development)