

Friday Seminar



Department of Anthropology
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
香港中文大學人類學系

Negotiating Acceleration and the Pursuit of Happy Childhoods: Parents' Perceptions of Education in Urban China

My talk explores acceleration as a governing logic in China's pursuit of modernization, tracing its trajectory from the Great Leap Forward to the present AI era. Acceleration has long shaped China's developmental imagination, linking national strength with productivity and efficiency, yet today it takes new form as AI becomes the agent of progress. This drive for speed stands in tension with recent educational reforms such as the *Double Reduction* policy, which aims to nurture "happy, healthy childhoods." Drawing on interviews with Chinese urban parents, I examine how acceleration is experienced in everyday life and how parents negotiate the pressure to accelerate while pursuing their own visions of a good education.

Avital Binah-Pollak is a socio-cultural anthropologist whose research examines how education in contemporary China is shaped by cultural and epistemic frameworks, with particular attention to science, technology, and the place of the child in society. She holds a PhD in Anthropology from Tel Aviv University and was a postdoctoral researcher at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) Munich. Since 2007, she has conducted long-term ethnographic fieldwork in China. Her current work investigates how national policy, cultural narratives, and technological change seek to cultivate the future citizen.

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