COP21 – Fighting climate change on the world stage

Dr Peter Matanle

The 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP21) (http://unfccc.int/meetings/paris_nov_2015/meeting/8926.php) was the most ambitious diplomatic engagement in environmental issues in world history.

I attended the conference during its second week and witnessed the agreement being reached. The previous September I had presented about my research at the Faculty of Social Sciences Research Conference. I was then invited by Mr Matthew Billson and Dr Dora Fazekas of the University of Sheffield’s Energy2050 research institute to convene a panel for our University’s contribution to the COP21 negotiations. Together with Professor Jusen Asuka of Tohoku University, Dr Paul Scalise of Duisburg-Essen University in Germany, and Chaired by Matthew Bilson, on 10 December 2015 we presented a panel titled ‘Population Decline and Climate Change in the 21st Century: Achieving A ‘Depopulation Dividend’ in the Asia-Pacific Region’ (http://cop21-japanpavilion.jp/en/program/151210/1030-1200/) at the Japanese government’s Pavilion in the convention’s Blue Zone.

History may come to judge the 2015 Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change a turning point in the struggle to prevent runaway climate change. In December 2015 the French government hosted representatives from 195 countries to negotiate the world’s first comprehensive climate agreement, and to reach the ‘global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions’ as soon as possible.

On the one hand, Jasmin Knowles, who was awarded a first-class degree and a Sheffield Graduate Award, also received the Robert Sloss Prize for an outstanding performance on her dual honours degree in Chinese Studies and Business Management. Since graduation Jasmin has begun working for PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The other prize winner was Lewis Williams, who was awarded the Margaret Daniels Prize for his first-class performance on his single-honours degree in Japanese Studies. Lewis is currently studying for an MSc in Translation Studies at Edinburgh University.

Professor Hugo Dobson, Head of School, commented that “once again we have seen some excellent truly academic performances alongside high levels of student engagement in a range of extra-curricular and volunteering activities. This all demonstrates the kind of fully-rounded students who graduate from SEAS”.

From next year, thanks to generous donations made by Emeritus Professors Tim Wright and James Grayson, SEAS will offer two further dedicated prizes in East Asian Studies and Korean Studies respectively.

SEAS is deeply grateful to Professors Wright and Grayson for their kind donations and wishes all its graduates every success in their chosen careers.
SEAS welcomes
a new lecturer

Dr Markus Bell
Lecturer in Korean and Japanese Studies

Markus completed his Master’s degree at Seoul National University’s department of anthropology, after spending two years carrying out ethnographic fieldwork in the North Korean refugee community in Seoul. For his doctoral degree, completed through the Australian National University, he turned his attention east, to Japan. For a year Markus carried out ethnographic research into the everyday lives of some 300 migrants from North Korea living in Osaka and Tokyo.

During the period of his doctoral research Markus also worked as lead researcher on a Toyota Foundation funded project entitled: ‘The ideal and the reality of overseas North Korean defectors’. As part of this project, Markus contributed towards the creation of a non-governmental organisation in Australia for the purpose of organising young North Korean refugees to study in a Sydney based language institutes.

Markus’s current research project uses ethnographic research methods to examine contemporary and cold war migration between Japan and North Korea. Markus is particularly interested in the lives of individuals who have moved back and forth between Japan and North Korea and the significance of their memories of movement and resettlement in shaping a diasporic identity. These questions are contextualised within the larger social processes and historical forces that shaped the latter half of the twentieth century in Northeast Asia, and the epoch defining challenges that continue to cast a long shadow on relations between North Korea, South Korea, and Japan.

Markus has published in academic journals on the topic of North Korean migrants and publishes on diverse topics in public forums such as East Asia Forum, The Guardian, The Diplomat, and NPR’s Salt. He is currently collaborating with scholars at the University of Southern California, working on the topic of security, nuclear armament and human rights in North Korea.

www.sheffield.ac.uk/seas/staff/korean/bell

PhD student Audrey Dugué-Nevers from the School of East Asian Studies received the winning prize for best research poster at the White Rose Doctoral Training Centre Welcome Event, two years in a row.

The White Rose Doctoral Training Centre Welcome Event is a conference aimed at welcoming all new Social Sciences PhD researchers from the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York, which make up the White Rose Social Sciences Doctoral Training Centre. The conference introduced students to the doctoral development scheme which will be equipping them with research and professional skills for their careers, whether it be academic or not.

Audrey had this to say about her achievement.

“The welcome event is a great opportunity for PhD students to showcase their experiences and work through presentations and posters. The audience were thus getting familiar with a wide range of compelling research topics from all disciplines, which is certainly making the poster competition difficult, as projects cannot be compared. Because of this, winning feels special and it is a rewarding achievement in a long, intense academic journey.

My research interests encompass politics, international relations, international development, culture, and focus on East Asia and particularly China in the new global order. I am examining how the concept of Soft Power, coined by Joseph Nye, is used as a tool of foreign policy to attenuate the impact of globalisation and economic power. China’s recent economic growth, spanning three decades in a globalised economy, shows that China has become a regional leader and a prominent actor in international affairs. China is seeking to expand its cultural and diplomatic influence worldwide, so as not to be perceived as a “threat”. My aim is to analyse how China is wielding soft power, which involves cultural attractiveness, policy and values, to alter its image into a “peaceful rise”.

The School of East Asian Studies is a unique interdisciplinary department welcoming students specialising in East Asia, and from a wide range of disciplines within the Faculty of Social Sciences.”
The second session, on building transnational research projects, was led by Vera Mackie from Wollongong University in Australia, a leading historian and cultural studies expert with extensive experience in these kinds of projects. According to workshop participant Kuusisto, Mackie’s key message was that the extent of transnational collaboration needs to emerge from the nature of the research itself, with collaboration ‘having the potential to bring value for the project, and on the other hand can also lead to insuperable obstacles.’ Discussion focused on how to maximise benefit, while minimising problems in collaboration.

Andrew Jackson from Copenhagen University and Louisa Wei from the City University of Hong Kong joined us for a final session on working with visual methodologies. Jackson used North Korean films to discuss how to use cinematic texts as primary sources, while Wei focused on her award-winning 2013 documentary Golden Gate Girls in discussing practice-led research. Masters student Georgia Thomas-Parr reported that the workshop was both ‘inspiring and insightful.’

As a cluster, we are excited about building on these new initiatives as we continue to further strengthen humanities research in the School of East Asian Studies. One important development is the recent creation of the Sheffield Centre for Contemporary and Modern History, a joint project of the History department, School of Modern Languages and Cultures and SEAS, which will provide another means for us to strengthen our research linkages across the university and beyond.

We held a series of workshops aimed at strengthening our knowledge of contemporary trends in humanities research and connecting with leading experts in these fields in October/November 2016. The first session on literary translation included Samuel Perry from Brown University in the USA, who discussed his translations of early 20th century Japanese and Korean literature, with a particular focus on sexuality. He was joined by Yan Ying from Leicester University, who translates Welsh and English literature into Chinese, and Deborah Smith, who won the Man Booker International Prize for her translation of South Korean novelist Han Kang’s The Vegetarian in 2016. All three spoke of the practical difficulties faced in translating between European and East Asian languages, which led to a provocative discussion around best practice in translation amongst workshop participants.

Over the last twelve months, we have been developing strategies for strengthening the humanities research and teaching in the School. We have been delighted to welcome several new PhD students in the last year, including Carvelin Becke who is working on a study of contemporary uses of gendered clothing in Korea and Japan, Xi Liu, who has started this February, will be exploring additional Chinese Tea culture as it has been represented in contemporary film, and Sim-Petrina Kuusisto, who rejoins the department after completing her BA here, to explore the transnational ‘memory problem’ between Korea and Japan. Georgia Thomas-Parr also commenced a funded 1+3 Masters/PhD scholarship in September 2016 and will be pursuing a doctoral project in girlhood studies after completing the Masters component of her funding.
The cluster has been strengthened by our new staff member, Dr Markus Bell, who joined SEAS in September 2016. His research project uses ethnographic research methods to examine the lives of transmigrants moving between North Korea and Japan, their intergenerational, transmigratory journey, and the significance of their memories of movement and resettlement in shaping a diasporic identity. He has recently published an article in Asian Anthropology, entitled ‘Making and Breaking Family: North Korea’s Zainichi Returnees and “the Gift”’. A new research grant has been secured for 2017. Dr Yu Chen is part of an ESRC Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) application with colleagues in the Sheffield Methods Institute that has been successful. The project, entitled ‘Dynamics of Health & Environmental Inequalities in Hebei Province, China: To aim to examine the rising pollution levels in Hebei and the impacts on different social groups, a topical subject with important policy relevance. Dr Harald Conrad has received a grant from the Japan Foundation Endowment Committee, to deliver a project on graduates of Japanese Studies and employment in Japanese companies. He will also organise an international teaching conference, discussing the ways how teaching Japanese studies across the globe can be improved to better prepare graduates for future employment.

Clustering members are actively involved in various research projects during the Autumn seminar 2016-17. For example, Dr Harald Conrad has recently completed his research on the surge in foreign graduates employed by Japanese multinational companies, with his collaborator, Associate Professor Hendrik Meyer-Ohle from the National University of Singapore. He is currently preparing journal articles on international migration and human resource management. Dr Mei Zhang is involved in the AHRC-funded project entitled ‘Intergenerational Justice, Consumption and Sustainability in Comparative Perspectives’, collaborating with colleagues in geography, anthropology, and arts. Dr Yu Chen is working with colleagues in Sheffield, Glasgow, and Beijing to deliver their ESRC-funded project entitled ‘Urban Development, Migration, Segregation and Inequality’, including a successful workshop on rural-to-urban migration and segregation in Chinese cities, held in Beijing in August. Dr Gosia Jakimów was invited to international conferences in China (Guangzhou) and Denmark on migration and integration.

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The cluster consists of researchers with disciplinary backgrounds in sociology, anthropology, politics, economics, business, and law who conduct cutting-edge research to comprehensively assess the shifting social and economic environments of East Asia.

 Movements, Economy and Development in East Asia (MEDEA) Cluster is an inter-disciplinary research group with strong interest in migration, economic and social development in East Asia. The cluster consists of researchers with disciplinary backgrounds in sociology, anthropology, politics, economics, business, and law who conduct cutting-edge research to comprehensively assess the shifting social and economic environments of East Asia.

Power, Cooperation, and Competition in East Asia Research Cluster (PCCEA) organised a series of Research Masterclasses from autumn 2016. Among invited speakers were prominent scholars or emerging research leaders who also took part in the SEAS Research Seminar Series. The Cluster also invited the South Korean Ambassador Mr. Joongook Hwang to speak to staff and students on 22 November 2016 on the topic of ‘chasing China’s South Korean diplomacy, drawing on his extensive experience as the main representative to the Six Party Talks.’

During 2016 PCCEA cluster members have engaged in many scholarly activities. These include:

- Professor Glenn Hoek co-organised and attended a workshop in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia on 26th September on ‘Transnational and Cross-Border Environmental Discourses in the Asia-Pacific’. The workshop was supported by the Toshiba International Foundation, and involved scholars, NGOs, as well as Sheffield PhD student, Christopher Pope and Sheffield PhD graduate, Lui Van der Does-Ikichikawa.


- Professor Katherine Morton published ‘China’s Ambition in the South China Sea: Is a Legitimate Order Possible?’ in International Affairs in July 2016. She also co-organised the Inaugural UK-China Dialogue, held at Fudan University on 5 December 2016, and participated in the Australia–UK Track 1.5 Asia Dialogue, convened at Ditchley Park on 23–25 November 2016.

- Dr Seung-young Kim was awarded the Korea Foundation Field Research grant to carry out research on ‘Diplomacy for Neutrality and Buffer zones over Korea in Modern History’ in Seoul during the latter half of 2017. He also presented a paper ‘Japanese-French Negotiation on Fujian Province, 1906–7’ at the Nissin Institute of Japanese Studies, Oxford University on 4 November 2016.

- PhD Student Audrey Duge-Nevers won first prize in the poster competition organized by WRESTC (Whit’s Rose Doctoral Training Centre) in June 2016, and presented her work at the S2Ihwan International Conference in Taiwan in November 2016.

- Dr Hiro Watanabe presented his paper ‘Labour revitalization in Japan: Challenges to community unions’ at the Joint East Asia Studies Conference at SOAS in September 2016.

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My experience at the Hangzhou G20 Summit, September 2016

Melissa Pilgrim
BA Chinese Studies with French

We were each tasked with producing a policy brief and a blog during our week in Hangzhou, as well as continuously tweeting summit outcomes and breaking news. As we boarded our connecting flight in Beijing we were all eager to experience a major international summit, and were excited at the prospect of attending press conferences with heads of state such as Xi Jinping. The unique experiences began when we stepped off the plane in Hangzhou – we were greeted by some G20 volunteers whose helpfulness and positivity, as we would later realise, played a key part in our enjoyment of the summit.

Our first couple of days in Hangzhou were spent registering ourselves, exploring the scenic West Lake and visiting the official media centre to get our bearings and relax, before what our academic leads had assured us would be two long days of registration and writing! We particularly enjoyed collecting our media passes, which came with a backpack full of G20-themed gifts including notebooks, a fountain pen and a beautiful silk scarf.

The real work began on the first day of the summit. We arrived early at the media centre and got to work researching the topics we had chosen for our policy briefs and blogs. We were also constantly monitoring the big screen in the media centre which was broadcasting live summit coverage, in order to learn about any summit outcomes as soon as possible. As well as writing our policy briefs and blogs, we were eager to attend as many press conferences as possible. Due to the fast-paced nature of the media centre, information about registration and timings for press conferences was often only available at very short notice from the central desk in the media centre. As a result, it was not unusual to see any number of our team running from one end of the media centre to the other in order to register for or get a seat in the next press conference!

A highlight for many members of our team was the opportunity to attend the press conferences of Chinese Premier Xi Jinping and the Managing Director of the IMF, Christine Lagarde. Another unique experience for many of us was the numerous press interviews which our team gave to local and international media. Many media outlets, especially Chinese media, wanted to know about our impressions of the city and our opinions of Xi Jinping’s many summit speeches. By the end of the summit, we had each perfected our answers to the question, “What do you think of Hangzhou?”.

On our final day in Hangzhou we were invited to have lunch with Professor Yu from Zhejiang University who had helped us to navigate the numerous pitfalls and difficulties associated with obtaining a Chinese visa. We discussed the outcomes of the summit and the Hangzhou communiqué, which had been published overnight, with the Professor and some of his colleagues before being treated to a feast of local Zhejiang specialties.

Attending the G20 summit was amazing. We were able to see what the life of a journalist and an academic researcher would be like, as well as develop our research, writing and teamwork skills. Despite only working at the summit for a few days, the entire experience of being a policy analyst was incredible, and the significance of the trip was certainly not lost on our team. The University of Sheffield is the only university in the entire world to have a fully-funded program like this which allows students to attend global summits! It is an incredible opportunity which I will never forget, and fully encourage any student in the School of East Asian Studies to apply to the GLI for the next summit.

Global Leadership Initiative

The Global Leadership Initiative is part of the Global Learning Opportunities in the Social Sciences (GLOSS) program at the University of Sheffield and provides students with the opportunity to attend major international summits taking place during the academic year. Accompanied by academic staff, small groups of approximately 8 students will actively engage in these meetings, developing press and policy briefs facilitated by media and other forms of accreditation.

All student policy briefs produced at the summit are available online via the GLOSS blog [https://glosssheffield.wordpress.com/g20-summit-2016/]. A complete collection of student policy briefs produced at the summit, along with reflective post-summit pieces are available to view online via the GLOSS blog [https://glosssheffield.wordpress.com/g20-summit-2016/].

My name is Melissa Pilgrim and I’m a final year Chinese Studies student in the School of East Asian Studies. On 31st August 2016, a team of seven students, myself included, and two academic staff from the Faculty of Social Sciences travelled to Hangzhou, in China’s Zhejiang province, to work as policy analysts for Global Policy Journal at the 2016 G20 Summit. We had been given this opportunity through the Global Leadership Initiative, which is part of the Global Learning Opportunities in the Social Sciences (GLOSS) program at the University of Sheffield.

Despite only working at the summit for a few days, the entire experience of being a policy analyst was incredible, and the significance of the trip was certainly not lost on our team. The University of Sheffield is the only university in the entire world to have a fully-funded program like this which allows students to attend global summits! It is an incredible opportunity which I will never forget, and fully encourage any student in the School of East Asian Studies to apply to the GLI for the next summit.

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China Now: Independent Visions
By Dr Marjorie Dryburgh

Behind the glossy epics and the Hollywood collaborations of China’s mainstream film industry, the independent sector has been growing too, and independent documentary film offers ways of telling stories about China today, yesterday and tomorrow that more visible commercialised popular culture and print media generally do not reach.

Some of these stories were showcased in a short public season of films that ran at the Showroom Cinema, in cooperation with the AHRC-funded White Rose East Asia Centre project Pasts, Presents and Futures in East Asia and Cinema On The Edge.

www.cinemaontheedge.com

East Asia on film

The films were Xu Tong’s Cut out the Eyes (2014), a close and unsettling portrait of a blind singer in north China; Yang Pingdao’s River of Life (2013) that shows a family facing birth and bereavement; and Hu Jie’s Spank (2013), a memorial to students and activists who tried to expose the Great Famine in 1960. All explored themes that we had examined in the project workshops and other discussions that focused on the use of stories about the past and imaginings of the future are used in East Asian societies to build community, make sense of the present, to comfort and to challenge. All worked through the life stories of individuals or small communities - performers, families, activists - and I was intrigued by the contrast between these life stories on film, delivered in colour and in sometimes shocking detail over ninety minutes, and my own work on the life stories of personal diaries, where the reader can spend many hours over months and years piecing together individual lives from extended, but fragmentary, written records.

The route that the films took to Sheffield shows the challenges that independent film-making faces in China, and the role of international partnerships in bringing films to a wider audience. The films were scheduled for showing in August 2014 at the Beijing Independent Film Festival, an important outlet for non-official work on sensitive topics. When the festival was closed down on the eve of launch by the city authorities, the films programmed became part of the touring series China Now: Independent Visions, curated by the critic-filmmaker-distributor team Cinema On The Edge.

Korean Cinema Class go to the 2016 Korean Film Festival
By Dr Kate Taylor-Jones

The cinema of East Asia operates for many students as their initial gateway into the language, culture and art of the region. The School of East Asian Studies has been steadily growing our provision in this area of undergraduate study and looking at new ways to bring East Asian cinema to Sheffield. As part of the new undergraduate Korean Cinema module, a class of third and final year students undertook a trip to London to attend the 2016 London Korean Film Festival. The London Korean Film Festival is one of the biggest Asian cinema festivals operating in the UK at the current time. The festival brings old and new Korean cinema to an international audience and offers an exhilarating mix of blockbuster films and arthouse classics. Attending the festival allowed the class to see some of the module topics as part of the real life Korean film industry.

One key area we have been talking about in the course of the module is the role of women in the Korean film industry and helpfully the 2016 festival had a whole strand devoted to just that! Women are still a minority voice in South Korean cinema and the students were able, not only to see some notable female directed films, but also to hear esteemed female director Yim Soon-rye talk about her work and see her 2008 film Forever the Moment (2008) Forever the Moment is the inspiring tale of the South Korean Olympic Handball silver medal winners and sparked humour and emotion in the audience in equal measure. Listening to Yim talk afterwards, the real life issues and problems women working in the South Korean film industry face were made abundantly clear but, alongside these negatives, also how women such as Yim are working to overcome barriers and stereotypes.

The second special guest of the day was longstanding actor Baek Yoon-sik. Baek is well known for his television work and is most recognisable in the West for his roles in Save the Green Planet (2003) and the President’s Last Bang (2005). Baek was interviewed by leading film critic Tony Rayns and told several amusing and insightful stories about the Korean film industry as he has experienced it over his 40-year career. The two subsequent films shown at the festival both featured Baek and presented the mixture of politics, sexuality and violence that has come to mark Korean cinema of the last decade. The Taste of Money (2014) and Inside Men (2015) both directly criticise the countries corrupt political and economic elites and allowed us to see how cinema is dealing with the various scandals that have marked South Korean politics in the last few years.

Overall the day was highly enjoyable, informative and allowed students to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of Korean cinema. We look forward to what the 2017 Korean Cinema Festival will bring.

We wish to thank Ms Hyunjin Cho for the Korean Cultural Centre for arranging this trip for us.
In July and August 2016, 56 lecturers from prestigious universities in the United States, Europe and Asia were invited to teach more than 100 courses in business and economics, humanities, sociology and cultural studies, fine arts and design, science, law, politics and international relations, Korean and East Asian Studies, and Korean Language.

Two of the participants in the 2016 KUISC were Dr Judith Cherry and Kathy Deng from SEAS. Dr Cherry was invited to teach her Contemporary Korean Society module and Business and Management in Contemporary Korea course at the summer school. Dr Cherry said “The International Summer Campus was an amazing, unforgettable experience that focused on the joy of teaching and learning … in a fantastic setting! There was a real sense of magic on Graduation Day, with close bonds formed between students and their lecturers, and lifelong friendships between the KUISC alumni and the KU Buddies.”

In recognition of Dr Cherry’s contribution to the KUISC, SEAS was allowed to nominate an outstanding student for a Merit Scholarship which provided a fee waiver for the summer school. The Merit Scholarship was awarded to Kathy Deng, a second year student in East Asian Studies.

Korea University International Summer Campus

My experience at the Korea University International Summer School

Kathy Deng

Seoul never lacks three things: pretty faces, cafés and friendly people. There are different cafés in every corner of Seoul and they function more as a place for talking than drinking coffee and students often go to Cafés to study. Most Cafes open until 11 pm and some offer a 24 hour service. When I came back to China in September, I told my mom that I may want to work in Seoul in the future because Korean people are really friendly.

I went to Korea University for the summer school between June and August 2016. This year around 1800 students enrolled from all over the world. The first day of the summer school began with a wonderful orientation. Students from Korea University taught us traditional Korean songs and dances. It was a lot of fun and a great opportunity to meet new friends on the first day.

Along with our academic classes students were free to choose one extra course from taekwondo, traditional Korean music or Korean cooking. I chose the Korean cooking class and learned how to cook Korean rice cake, gimbap and much more. The University also arranged a day trip to Seoul and offered free tickets to Lotte World to students. One of the most interesting trips the University took me on was to the Nanta Show. Nanta is a non-verbal comedy show in which five actors uses knives, pans and plates to create rhythm and samulnori.

MA Politics and Media in East Asia

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Find out more about the course and the School of East Asian Studies

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