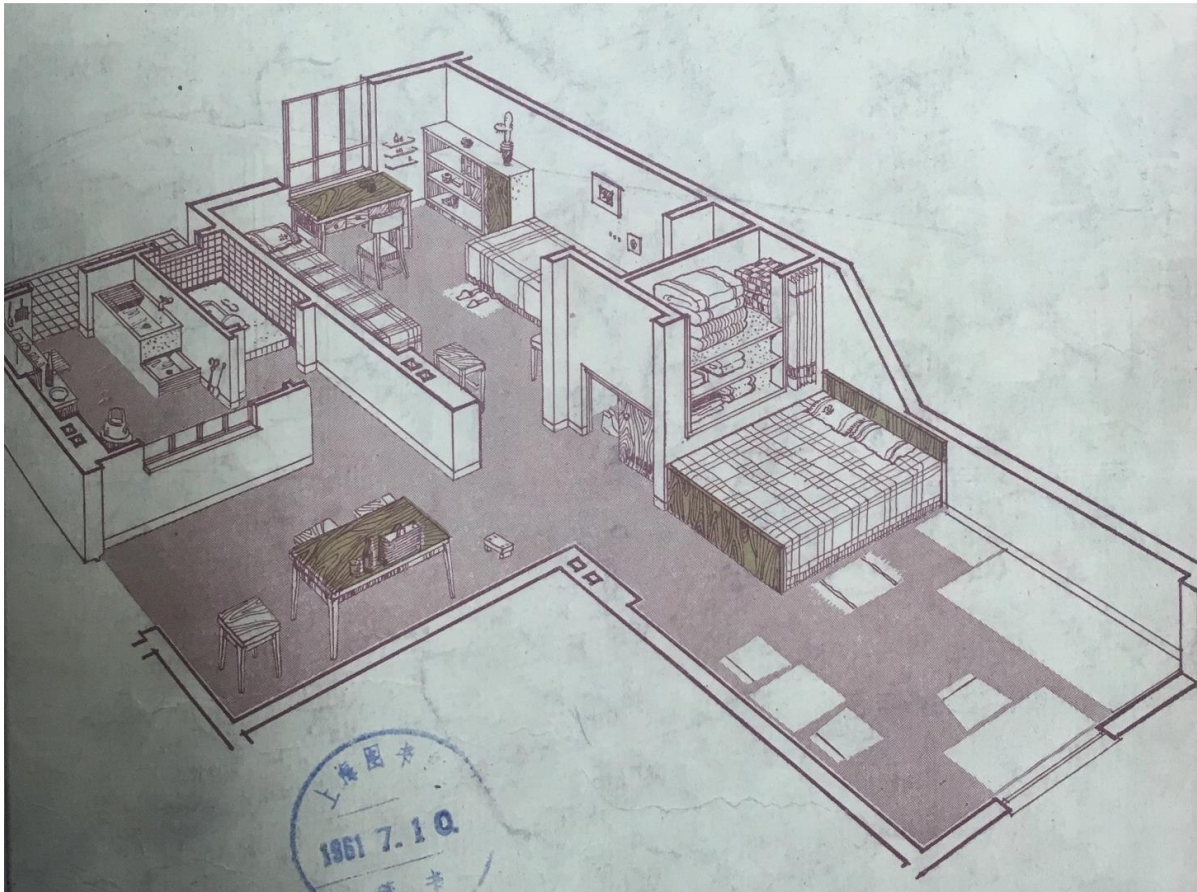


China Research Seminar Series (Michaelmas 2020)

*Materials, Design and
Revolution
in the Early People's Republic of China*



Dr Jennifer Altehenger

(University of Oxford)

5pm, 18 Nov, 2020 (Wednesday) via Zoom (pre-registration required)

Please register in advance for this seminar:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAsd-urpzMtGdzMSzkM3sBY-WAPnzcl58nB>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

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Abstract

The PRC is one of the world's main producers of furniture and engineered woods (plywood, particleboard, fibreboard) today. Wood products from China furnish the world and shape our material environments. Yet little is known about the history of engineered woods in China, their connection to China's mid-century revolution and to the development of technology and industry during the early years of Chinese Communist Party rule. Looking at the work of designers, carpenters, material scientists, and state planners, this talk examines the search for 'modern materials', 'new designs', and more 'efficient' forms of producing and consuming things during the Mao period. This history has implications for how we write about life during the early PRC, and it also demonstrates why socialist China should feature more prominently in the global history of the industrial modern.

Speaker

Jennifer Althenger is Associate Professor of Chinese History/Jessica Rawson Fellow in Modern Asian History at the University of Oxford and Merton College. She is the author of *Legal Lessons: Popularizing Laws in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1989* (Harvard, 2018) and has also written on the history of propaganda, lexicography, and on China's exchanges with other socialist countries at venues such as the Leipzig trade fairs. Funded by the AHRC and the British Academy, her current work examines the history of materials and everyday industrial design in the PRC.