

Matthias Schumann

Research Fellow

“Worldmaking from a Global Perspective: A Dialogue with China”

Project Title: The Changing Life Worlds of Humans and Animals in Early Twentieth Century Shanghai

In my project, I study the changing life worlds of humans and animals in early twentieth century Shanghai (1900–1949). Being the centre of the Chinese publishing market and harbouring a multi-ethnic community of residents, Shanghai provided a “contact zone” for different actors to negotiate the understanding and place of animals in the city. In the 1930s, it thus became the home of a Buddhist animal protection movement, which saw the human mistreatment of animals as one major reason for China’s social and political crises. Due to the foreign concessions and the Japanese occupation in 1937, Shanghai also experienced different political regimes, which – in their own distinct ways – sought to regulate, centralize and exhibit animals in an attempt at creating a modern and hygienic city. This project seeks to come to terms with the often contradictory views of animals at the time and understand how they contributed to the transformation, disappearance and emergence of the shared life world of humans and animals.