

# Brokering China's extroversion: Intermediaries in the Sino-African transborder trade



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**19 May 2016 (Thu) 4:30-6:00 pm**

**CRT-4.36, Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus, HKU**

Brokerage played a central role in Guangzhou's emergence as the center for Chinese trade with Africa. The first Africans to settle in the city – Nigerians trading in secondhand vehicles in the late 1990s – made the market legible to other traders, providing accommodation, food, money transfer, interpretation, and logistics services. Intermediation between traders and factories could initially generate handsome profits, but brokers experienced a double squeeze as the market matured: Clients became more familiar with Guangzhou's trading economy, and tightening immigration control raised the costs of being based in China. Some intermediaries have responded by trading more on their own, while others seek to control larger parts of value chains, for example by establishing production, warehouses, or wholesale outlets.



Heidi Østbø Haugen is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo. She has done research on migration and trade between West Africa and China since 2003. Between 2009 and 2014, she has carried out a total of 16 months of fieldwork among Africans living in Guangzhou, South China, following several persons over a five-year period. She was a visiting scholar at Sun Yat-sen University in 2014 and has studied Chinese at Beijing Normal University. Prior to starting her PhD, she worked at the World Food Programme's West Africa Bureau.

