

## Man-made

**A**T A DINNER with the American ambassador in 2007, Li Keqiang, future premier of China, said that when he wanted to know what was happening to the country's economy, he looked at the numbers for electricity use, rail cargo and bank lending. There was no point using the official GDP statistics, Li said, because they are 'man-made'. That remark, which we know about thanks to WikiLeaks, is fascinating for two reasons. First, because it shows a sly, subtle, worldly humour – a rare glimpse of the sort of thing Chinese Communist Party leaders say in private. Second, because it's true. A whole strand in contemporary thinking about the production of knowledge is summed up there: data and statistics, all of them, are man-made.

---

Date: 2024-03-30  
Words: 5  
Time to read: 1 min

---

[Newer](#)

[Older](#)

30 Mar 2024

Failed four

24 Mar 2024

Left

Russell © 2022-2025

[Tags](#) [Archive](#) [RSS feed](#)

Made with [Montaigne](#) and [bigmission](#) 