Orientation for Cultural Cooperation
Between China and Europe

Europe-China Cultural Compass

EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture)
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Cultural Compass

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Foreword by the Project Partners of EUNIC in China

It is commonly acknowledged that we are living in a period where the focus of economic development is shifting from West to East, especially through the emergence of the new economies of China and India. The changing direction of economic power and influence is accompanied by an increasing interest in cultural engagement between the East and the West, both on governmental and civil society level.

In view of the current global economic crisis however, one can see that culture is not necessarily top priority on the agenda of decision makers. But particularly in difficult times, culture is there to assure human development beyond national GDP and it plays an important role in developing a healthy, balanced modern society. Therefore support towards cultural exchange between the East and the West is important in assuring a continuous dialogue and increased cultural understanding. Support for international cultural cooperation is at the core to achieve this.

The EUROPE CHINA CULTURAL COMPASS project is part of an ongoing dialogue between Europe and China. It responds to the need to document this dialogue, to reflect on it, for a continuous improvement in the process. By presenting a broad range of information and perspectives relevant to Europe-China cultural cooperation, the COMPASS wants to contribute to the understanding of Europe-China cultural cooperation. Through three types of information – knowledge, experience, and resources – the intention is to help prepare cultural practitioners for collaboration. The COMPASS addresses both Chinese and European readers. To meet the different needs of the two target groups, two separate publications were produced, one in Chinese and one in English. Both publications follow the same overall structure, however each contains different information depending on the different needs of the particular target readership.

Acknowledging the potential for pooling know-how and resources, the Goethe-Institut, the British Council and the Danish Cultural Institute came together as partners for the COMPASS project in the framework of EUNIC. Both Europe and China have rich and diverse cultures. The project partners believe that a more balanced cooperation can result from a dialogue between the diversity of Europe and the diversity of China. China and the EU have progressively developed a strategic partnership that reflects the importance of their economic and political ties as well as their role in global governance. Culture is a new dimension on the partnership agenda. It was clear to the project partners that cooperation was needed to develop the COMPASS.

The COMPASS presents analysis by Chinese authors on China alongside analysis of Europeans on China and vice versa. Of course, we found that these views are not always the same. However, we want to emphasize that we chose not to frame these with our own judgements or editorial comments. Rather, we wanted them to stand next to each other, representing a true diversity of viewpoints.

The project partners would like to thank the editor-in-chief, Katja Hellkötter, and the extensive team of writers, editors, advisors, designers and contributors who contributed to the COMPASS publication.

Peter Anders, Goethe-Institut
Joanna Burke, British Council
Eric Messerschmidt, The Danish Cultural Institute
For centuries the compass has been an indispensable orientation tool for those travelling by sea or on land. Whilst travelling far away from known waters or countries, there were very few clues as to the traveller’s location or the path to choose to arrive at the desired destination. For seafarers, the compass – alongside the stars – was essential to orientation, and this was the case both in Europe as well as in China. During the early part of the second Christian millennium, at about the same time but independently, the compass was developed and exploited on both sides of the world. The compass not only enabled the world to be explored and investigated, it decisively changed the view of the world. Yet the compass also pointed up differences between Europe and China and not only of external phenomena: the compass developed in Europe showed the traveller the way north, for centuries the Chinese compass pointed towards the south.

The idea of creating a compass for cultural relationships between Europe and China was born of experience: the incentive to collaborate across cultural borders appears far greater than understanding each other. Splendid cooperations and auspicious mutual projects often collapse because, although we might hear what our opposite number is saying, only sometimes do we suspect that asking the question “Do we mean the same thing when we say the same thing” would in fact point us in the right direction.

This is the question that the cultural COMPASS wants to pose and to illuminate its different meanings. And so we have got together with creative artists, academics and others to consider what misunderstandings occur most frequently, where do world views differ, and why, when we cross cultural borders, do we constantly misunderstand each other. Often the difficulties are not to be found in a lack of mutual goals, but rather in an inability to understand each other, to appraise each other or follow each other on the way to our common destination.

In this book we ask questions that touch on philosophy and the doctrines of wisdom - beginning with the constellation of subject and object and the question, how much creative drive and creative scope can be given to people? However the questioning does not simply end with, what is the relationship between process and decision-making? The cultural COMPASS also looks at more concrete questions such as, how is the cultural sector constructed? At what point does who decide what in this sector? What questions do I have to ask and to whom? And last but not least, how does thinking about culture relate to thoughts about economic viability? Does culture only make sense when it makes a profit? What role do state subsidies play and what influence do companies have as sponsors? And so the COMPASS illuminates not only the backdrop, it points the way forward to overcoming cultural boundaries.

We have found many authors who have taken on board bridge-building between the two cultures: Chinese authors, who understand the European way of thinking, and Europeans who do not find Chinese ways foreign. The initiative for this book came originally from the Goethe-Institut and it has been promoted and implemented by EUNIC, the Network of European Union Cultural Relations Institutes. We had impressed upon EUNIC that exchange with Chinese culture is one of the most important tasks that lie ahead and that we had to increase dialogue and exchange between the two cultures. We are convinced
that a dialogue in the cultural arena needs to be strongly developed alongside economic and security policy. In terms of economic and security policy, differing interests are negotiated and then decided. When it comes to cultural policy, on the other hand, the essence of the counterpart is taken seriously, singularities and differences are studied with curiosity, and all this happens outside the interests of the individual economics or power-politics.

Over several years now I have come to know China personally and have made a number of great friends, met extraordinary artists and admirable people. And I am only one of many from Europe who are looking to China full of interest and curiosity. Even so I am convinced that our European knowledge of Chinese culture is much less than theirs is of ours. And yet we are ever coming closer. There may well be irritations along the way. But that is perfectly normal, there are also irritations within Europe, in fact they are a feature of human relationships. However they are not a good reason for breaking off communication, communication needs to carry on. There will be moments, even after a particularly intense exchange, when we will arrive at the same conclusion – that ‘we agree to disagree’. But this is not defeat – this is simply the nature of things.

This book is one small contribution – in the ways I have briefly set out – to help open doors that otherwise might otherwise remain closed. And at the same time it aims to give courage to those who are dealing with other cultures. It is worth the effort.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the authors who have contributed to this book as well as to the editorial team, who have done a tremendous job. And finally I would like to thank my colleagues in EUNIC, who have made this book possible and who have followed its inception with joy and energy.

We hope you find reading this book both exciting and interesting.

Dr. Hans-Georg Knopp
Secretary-General of the Goethe-Institut, previously president of EUNIC
Acknowledgements by the Editor-in-Chief

“Evaluation is reflection in action” – when I came across this idea in a book at the final stage of the COMPASS production, I thought: “Yes – in the end that is what this project was really about.” This book was produced in a collective and participatory way – something that makes it stand out among other publications. It was commissioned by EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture) and the Goethe-Institut. As the author of the concept, I wrote parts of the text and was Editor-in-Chief. My role was therefore equally about knowledge management and moderating this multi-voiced approach. I brought together a core team of highly competent individuals with Chinese and European backgrounds, who contributed practical experience from arts and cultural fields, expertise on project management, on learning in general and academic insights.

In the concept phase of this project my Chinese partner was Yi Wen, an expert in communication studies with strong conceptual skills whose input ensured the book ‘design’ would meet the expectations of both Chinese and Europeans. Our main advisor on the European side was Katelijn Verstraete, a sinologist with long-term work experience for various public and private stakeholders in Asia-Europe cultural cooperation and cultural policy, currently at the cultural department of the Asia-Europe Foundation in Singapore. Shen Qilan, editor of the prestigious Chinese magazine Art World, acted as our Chinese advisor, with an eye for the macro-picture and good connections with the cultural scene. Shen Qilan also was Editor of the Chinese version of the COMPASS.

Irene Oehler, a cross cultural coach and sinologist, and Kerstin Gal, a researcher in cultural learning, brought training know-how, learning theory and practice. Emilie Wang contributed knowledge of East-West cultural collaborations to the Chinese version of the project process chapter. Roman Wilhelm, a multilingual graphic and typeface designer, complemented the team with their cross-cultural design and communication skills. Judith Staines, arts consultant and editor from the UK, and Tao Yang, former journalist and public relations expert from Beijing, were chief language editors. The core team did over 60 structured interviews, with reflection and analysis in numerous internal discussions. Our commissioned external authors also undertook many more interviews.

But the quantity of interviews alone is not what made this project process so intensive. The greatest benefit was that many of our conversations had a subtlety and depth that felt truly enriching. We want to thank all those who were open and willing to invest time and trust in sharing with us their experiences, observations and sometimes even their emotions.

We hope that the results and knowledge provided will be useful for the reader. In an age of rapid change, the COMPASS should be seen and understood as an orientation point and knowledge base for cultural managers and stakeholders in Europe-China cultural cooperation, rather than a ready-made toolkit. Its sharing process is open and it hopefully provides the impulse for further exchanges of experience. Feedback is most welcome. Finally, I want to thank all the helpers not mentioned here by name, particularly our translators and language proofreaders, and to Simon Kirby for valuable input at the concept stage.

Katja Hellkötter
Editor-in-Chief on behalf of project partners of EUNIC in China and the Goethe-Institut
There are two kinds of relationship between two subjects: “I-and-the-other” and “I-and-you”. China and Europe have regarded the other side as the remote “other” for a long time.

If we look back in history, the Silk Road delivered the messages from one side to the other, but the messages from mouth to mouth have always been exaggerated. Exotic oriental sceneries were favoured in fine European ceramics. In China the descriptions of occidental countries were also mainly based on the imagination. China and Europe were in a relationship with an “imagined” other.

In the 20th century the relationship between China and Europe was a confrontation. During this century, every possible relationship was developed and experienced: trade, war, truce, cooperation, wrestle… It has been a relationship of “I-and-it” or “I-and-the-other”. In this kind of relationship, people are intent on the game, not cooperation.

In a relationship of “I-and-the-other”, people intend to regard “the other” as not the same kind. “The other” comes from another world, irrelevant to one’s own world. Even if there is relevance, it is just a temporary relationship based on interests.

Now we have entered a new century. The mutual future of humankind emphasizes the need for communication and cooperation. The meaning of cultural exchange is to turn an “I-and-the-other” relationship into one of “I-and-you”.

In a relationship of “I-and-you”, people recognize the same existence and dignity of the other. The other is a “you”, “you” live in the same world as we do, and “you” are relevant to everything in our life. In an “I-and-you” relationship, people widen their vision, enrich their lives, and together create an “us”.

This COMPASS can hopefully contribute to the dialogue between China and Europe. Any kind of “I-and-you” relationship relies on a recognition and tolerance of diversities, respect and appreciation of the counterpart, an understanding of conflicts, and the patience to wait for change.

Cultural exchanges are like dancing hand in hand. People must have the other’s hand in their own hand, or on the waist, they must look into the eyes, understand and appreciate each other, together find the rhythm that suits them both, then could they together create the most beautiful and joyful dance. During the process, one might step on the other’s foot, but it is the only way of learning to cooperate and dance together.

I believe that China and Europe can develop a down-to-earth “I-and-You” relationship where each side treats the other with an equal attitude and open mind. This relationship respects diversity and enriches both sides. It will be a creative and a constructive relationship.

I appreciate very much the opportunity to be one of the authors of the COMPASS. Being its advisor makes me feel both responsibility and honour. I regard this book as a beginning. The music of cultural exchange between China and Europe has just begun.

Let’s dance.

Dr. Qilan Shen
COMPASS advisor and co-author, Director of Editorial Department of Art World Magazine
Do We Always Mean the Same When We Say the Same? A Glossary

An Overview of Terms Commonly used in the Context of Cultural Cooperation between Europe and China
You may wonder why this publication starts with a glossary of Chinese and English terms. During the conception of the COMPASS project, we planned this as a reference appendix at the end of the book. But since the entire publication centres on perceptions, meanings and connotations of words and concepts in different cultural settings, we wanted to focus more attention on it. Eventually, the glossary migrated to Chapter One, where it aims to confront the reader with a selection of terms and concepts that are relevant to the context, crucial for the understanding of this book and designed to stimulate further reading.

“Do we always mean the same when we say the same?” is an ironic question. We don’t – and we can’t. The Chinese and English languages have such different structures that straightforward equivalents often just don’t exist; as every student of a foreign language has found. Since language primarily mediates culture, some terms and concepts within cultural cooperation will appear unique or even strange to one of the parties. These concepts are often the ones which strike at the heart of a culture’s self-definition, and this can be the source of the most serious misunderstandings. The Western reader is unlikely to be familiar with the Chinese concept of harmony (héxié 和谐), while a Chinese person might have difficulty accepting the importance of dialogue (dialogos) in the West.

Yet there are many Chinese terms that seem to have direct equivalents. Why worry? But you’d be wrong. These are mainly terms adopted from the West as products of an increasingly globalised world. And even if I can say ‘kua wenhua xing' (跨文化性) in Chinese, ‘transculturality’ remains a Western concept. On the other hand, for Westerners, using the Chinese term ‘xuanchuan' (propaganda), nowadays often used in the sense of public relations, is uncomfortable.

Don't try to read the glossary from start to finish; it aims to be a playful introduction to the COMPASS. We have taken a very close look at some of these words. So close you can see the details of their linguistic origins and subsequent evolution. We did not intend to create a glossary in the conventional sense, but rather a creative interpretation, experimenting with different formats. Some terms are grouped in what we call ‘context clouds'; some are to be rearranged or assembled by the reader. The selection of terms evolved through discussion amongst the COMPASS core team and by monitoring how often terms appeared in the situations discussed and articles by contributors. Since idioms are a central element of the Chinese language, we conclude the glossary with a context-based selection of Chinese idioms which should mainly be of interest to the Western reader.

We wish to express our gratitude to Richard Trappl, Professor at the University of Vienna, who kindly allowed us to quote from his recently completed publication *Sino-Western Glossary of Intercultural Terms* a collaborative work with Chinese colleagues from the Confucius Institute at the University of Vienna, Ms Zhang Ning and Dr. Cai. Our thanks also to Berlin-based artist Kathrin Ganser who was the chief inspiration for the design of the crystal-shaped ‘word constellations’ seen on many of the pages.

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1 Since this work is not yet published, we cannot reference page numbers; however, it is highly recommended for a deeper understanding into issues we can only briefly present here (to be published by Peter Lang Verlag, Frankfurt, Editor: Barbara Kastovsky).

2 Kathrin Ganser (b. 1977 in Germany) lives and works in Berlin. She generates word clouds based on automatic online search engines and presents them as complex vector graphics, combining them with other media such as photographs. [http://www.artnews.org/artist.php?i=3193](http://www.artnews.org/artist.php?i=3193)
RESOURCES / FOR FURTHER READING

● DICTIONARIES
Das neue chinesisch-deutsche Wörterbuch, Commercial Press, 2003
Kangxi Dictionary, Zhang Yushu, Shanghai Cishu, 2008
Shuowen Jiezi 说文解字, Xu Zhen, Jiuzhou Press, 2005

● LINGUISTICS/PHILOSOPHY
Hyperkulturalität, Byung Chul-Han, Merve, 2005
Culture Management in China, Uwe Nitschke; Klaus Siebenhaar, B & S Siebenhaar Verlag, 2010
Sino-Western Glossary of Intercultural Terms, Richard Trappel, to be published in 2011
Der Umweg über China, François Jullien, Merve, 2002
Chinese Character Semiotics 汉字研究, Academy Press, 2005

● ONLINE DICTIONARIES
Online Kangxi Dictionary (康熙字典): http://www.kangxizidian.com
Online Shuowen Jiezi (说文解字): http://www.shuowenjiezi.com
Wiktionary, the Free Dictionary: http://en.wiktionary.org

About the Glossary Author/Designer:
Roman Wilhelm is a graphic and typeface designer, a specialist for cultural interaction between China and the West. Besides his job as a creative director for the Berlin- and Beijing-based agency INSIDE A Communications, he is working as a member of the Multilingual Research Group "design2context" at the Institute for Design Research, Zurich University of the Arts. As well as numerous workshops and lectures in China, he teaches hand lettering at the Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design Halle. The glossary was elaborated as part of Roman Wilhelm’s work for INSIDE A and with the support of Song Xinyan, INSIDE A’s founder.
**culture**

[\(n\) 名] ① 文化 ② 培养 (biol. 生物学)

Lat. 拉丁语 colere
[v 动] ① to till | 种地 ② to protect | 保护 ③ to worship; to honour 崇拜

-ure
[suffix | 后缀] ① a process | 过程； a result of an action 过程的结果

派生 Derivates:
Lat. agricola [n] 农民 | peasant
(ager | 农田 | field + colo | 种地 | till)
Lat. cultus [n] ① 种地 | act of tilling | 犁地 | act of worshipping | 祭拜 | act of worshipping
Lat. colonia [n] 农场 | farmer | 农场 | occupants | 群体 | colonist
culture (n) [名] ① 能力 | achievements | created by humans in the course of intentional interaction with society | 由人类在与社会的有意互动过程中获得的能力和成就 | 拉丁词“cultura”，其原意是“耕作土地和种植植物”，后来的意义扩展为指对身体和心灵的培养。

The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively; the attitudes and behaviour characteristic of a particular social group; the cultivation of plants, etc. The Western term “culture” is derived from agricultural origins, the tilling of land. There is also a conservative aspect to the concept: only well-cultivated land is fruitful. Fruits of the land were used as sacrificial offerings, thus giving us the word “cult”.

Abilities gained and achievements created by humans in the course of intentional interaction with society. In the West, “culture” stems from the Latin word cultura, whose original meaning is “to work the land and cultivate plants”, and later the meaning extends to refer to the cultivation of both the body and mind.

Hao Xiajun, Encyclopedia of China Online (Trappi)
The meaning of the Chinese, Japanese or Korean words for culture (Chin. wénhuà, Jap. bun-ka, Kor. mun-wha) stem from the European term. At the end of the 19th century, the European concept of culture was probably taken over by the Japanese and they used the formerly existing Chinese compound to refer denote it. The first character wén means pattern, line, character, script, or literature. The second character huà means change or transformation. The modern term for chemistry also contains the character huà.

Byung-Chul Han, 57

In ancient Chinese texts, culture refers to civil administration and education. In a broader sense, culture embodies the capacity of material and spiritual production as well as all material and spiritual products.

Hao Xiajun, Encyclopedia of China Online (Trappi)
kuà [v | 动] ① step ② ride; bridge
③ exceed

跨—
inter—
Lat. 拉丁语 inter—
[prefix | 前缀 ] ① among | 中间
② between | 之间
③ mutual | 互相；opposite | 反义：
intra- ① inside | 内

kuà [v | 动] ① step ② ride; bridge
③ exceed

跨—
trans—
Lat. 拉丁语 trans—
[prefix | 前缀 ] ① through | 通过
② across | 横跨
③ beyond | 以外 ④ outside | 外部

duōyuán
[v | 动] ① plural ② poly-

多元—
multi—
Lat. 拉丁语 multi—
[prefix | 前缀 ] ① much; many | 许多
② diverse | 多重

chāo
[v | 动] ① jump over ② surpass
③ transcend ④ ultra-

超—
hyper—
Lat. 拉丁语 hyper—
[prefix | 前缀 ] ① over; exceed | 出；
跨 ② above | 上头
③ excessive | 极度；过分的；
过当；过渡的
The Western concept of culture as an open system

The Greek language itself encouraged a focus on attributes and on turning attributes into abstraction. As in other Indo-European languages, every adjective can be granted noun status by adding the English equivalent of “-ness” as a suffix: “white” becomes “whiteness”; “kind” becomes “kindness”. […] The Chinese language itself is remarkably concrete. There is no word for “size”. If you want to fit someone for shoes, you ask them for the “big-small” (大 小) of their feet. […] So there is no “whiteness” – only the white of the swan and the white of the snow. The Chinese are disinclined to use precisely defined terms or categories in any field, but instead use expressive, metaphorical language. […] Although there was no suffix equivalent to “-ness” in classic Chinese, the modern language now uses the character 性 xìng, meaning “consistence; nature” as a suffix to express precisely the Western terms. So it comes as no surprise that many of the Western suffix-constructions are not well known in China, and even might be irritating.

Nisbett, 17f

Yuan Shiquan and Tao Feng (“The Encyclopaedic Dictionary of China”, 392) define cultural pluralism as follows: “Two or more cultural systems, after a long period of continuous contact, adjust and adapt to each other, allow every cultural system to maintain its special way of life, and then a stable state of cultural pluralism is formed. In this state, asymmetric symbiotic relationships usually exist between every group to provide individual special functions.” Trapp
Culture […] refers to cultural similarities, that is, the social nature of human as human, unusually called human nature. **Trapp, Feng**

**puibiànxing** [n | 名]
普遍 pùbiàn [adj | 形]: global; general

**普遍性**
*universality*

[n | 名] 普遍性
来源：拉丁语 gnasci (to be born)

A nation originates […] and establishes a national cultural mode […] based on the national lifestyle, national psychology, national language and national traditions. **Trapp, Feng**

**mínzúxing** [n | 名]
民族 mínzú [n | 名]: nation; people

**民族性**
*nationality*

[n | 名] 民族; 国家
来源：拉丁语 gnasci (to be born)

In a class society, culture reflects the differences in class levels and confrontational nature. **Trapp, Feng**

**jiējíxing** [n | 名]
阶 jiē [n | 名]: stairs; 级 jí [n | 名]: class

**阶级性**
*class nature*

[n | 名] 阶级性
来源：拉丁语 gnasci (to be born)
The historical continuity of social material production is a prerequisite for the continuous development of culture. Trappi, Feng

liánxùxing [n | 名]  
连续 liánxù [adj | 形]: continuous  
连续性 continuity  
[n | 名] 连续性  
来源: 拉丁语 contineō (to hold together)

Every social state witnesses different cultural patterns and different cultural achievements. Individuals cannot live beyond the culture of their era. Trappi, Feng

shídàixìng [n | 名]  
时代 shídài [n | 名]: epoch  
时代性 epochal nature  
[n | 名] 划时代性  
来源: 希腊语 epokhē (cessation; pause; stop)

The creation and dissemination of culture, as well as its generation and development, all have their own objective laws of motion. Trappi, Feng

guìlìxing [n | 名]  
规律 guìlì [n | 名]: regulation; law  
规律性 regularity  
[n | 名] 规律性  
来源: 拉丁语 regularis (continuing rules for guidance), regula (rule), regere (to rule, govern)

A politically inspired Chinese definition of culture  
In the “Dictionary of Chinese Culture” edited by Feng Tianyu (Feng 2001, 1ff.) we can find the following definitions of culture: “Culture, also called humanization, is the objectification of human values, namely, the general process of utility value that people have created, being transformed into wealth, including all humanizing phenomena opposite to pure natural phenomena, therefore called ‘great culture’”. If we try to comment on definitions of encyclopaedic status published in the PR of China, we always have to consider the political context in which a certain text was published. In 2001, the opening and reform process had gained momentum, yet ideological constraints on academic publications had still not been overcome, however a more pluralistic situation emerged. Trappi, Feng
The Chinese idea of creative industries is first a policy mechanism for stimulating and developing cities or regions – it is a model adopted from the West and includes various forms of cooperation with the entertainment or art sectors.  

**Siebenhaar 31**

**chuàngyì**  
[n | 名] ① property  
[ad | 形] creative  ② industry

**创意 产业**  
**Creative industry**

Creative  
[adj | 形] ① 创意  
② 创作性

Those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.

**UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)**

The current DCMS definition recognises eleven creative sectors […]:
advertising; architecture; arts and antique markets; crafts; design; designer fashion; film, video and photography; software, computer games and electronic publishing; music and the visual and performing arts; publishing; television; radio.


**Cultural entrepreneur**

**cultural**  
[adj | 形] 文化的

**entrepreneur**  
[n | 名] 企业家

A Western term not yet being used in the Chinese context. An equivalent term in Chinese is to date not used in China.

Cultural Entrepreneurs are cultural change agents and resourceful visionaries who organise cultural, financial, social and human capital, to generate revenue from a cultural activity. Their innovative solutions result in economically sustainable cultural enterprises that enhance livelihoods and create cultural value and wealth for both creative producers and consumers of cultural services and products.

The coordinates of this common Chinese understanding of culture and creative industry are a distinct market or business positioning and resulting commercialisation of the culture and education sectors. 
Siebenhaar 32

wénhuà chānyè
[n | 名] culture [n | 名] ① property ② industry

Culture and creative industries as “special industries” are subject to the macro-societal perspective of party and government. Their specific value creation does not differentiate between material and immaterial or ideational, but instead focuses on social welfare. This results in the unity of cultural and economic policies, of the cultural and the economic spheres of value. Siebenhaar 32

wénhuà guànlǐ
[n | 名] culture [v | 动] ① lead ② manage; [n | 名] management

The term cultural management connotes several things: firstly, the management of institutions and companies in the public cultural sector, as well as in parts of the creative and entertainment industries; secondly, a practically oriented academic discipline and thirdly, a brand-new occupational image. Siebenhaar 29
While communicating with Europeans, terms such as individualism (gerenzhuyi 个人主义), family (jiating 家庭) or identity (texing 特性) carry potential for intercultural misunderstanding. In Chinese, identity is also translated as status (shenfen 身份) or identification (rentong 认同). Individualism (gerenzhuyi 个人主义) has negative implications in the Chinese cultural context, suggesting one is self-centred and fails to show respect to others or conform to collective interests. Family (jiating 家庭) is another example: For us Chinese, the family makes up a basic unit of society, and many social institutions are regarded as family extensions (jiatinge de yanshen 家庭的延伸), including the nationality (minzu 民族) or state (guojia 国家), being a family of nationalities (yi ge minzu 一个民族).

DAI Xiaodong, Professor for Intercultural Communication, Shanghai Normal University

Identity (gexing 个性 or shenfen 身份) […] seems to be related to the Chinese concept of face (mianzi 面子) which emphasizes social reputation and individual honour – the outside image (waibu xingxiang, lianmian 外部形象, 面) of one’s identity. It has little connection with individual rights. Face, human affection (renqing 人情) and social relations (guanxi 关系) constitute the basis for smooth and effective social communication, all of which highlight the importance of human emotion in Chinese society.

DAI Xiaodong, Professor for Intercultural Communication, Shanghai Normal University

In philosophy, identity [from Latin identitas (sameness)] usually refers to the idea that a person or object can change over time in many ways, but still remain, in some meaningful sense, the same person or object, despite the changes. This is the idea of numerical identity over time, not to be confused with qualitative identity, which is exact similarity. A person is born as a small baby, grows up, grows old, and finally dies. The person that dies bears little similarity to the baby, so, in what sense is it “the same person”? That is the challenge for the philosopher to explain, in the case of personal identity over time.


For Westerners, it is the self who does the acting; for Easterners, action is something that is undertaken in concert with others, or that is the consequence of the self operating in a field of forces. Languages capture this different sort of agency. Recall that there are many different words for “I” in Japanese and in Chinese, reflecting the relationship between self and other.

Part I – Glossary

Nisbett 158
**jiātínɡ** [n | 名] family 家 jia  
(family, home) and 庭 ting (yard)

**家庭** 
family

**mínzú** [n | 名] nation, from 民 min (people) and 族 zú (clan)

**民族** 
nationality

**gérénzhūyì** [n | 名] individual, from 个 gè (piece), 人 rén (person), 主义 zhūyì (doctrine)

**个人主义** 
individualism

**gèxìnɡ** [n | 名] individuality, uniqueness, from 个 gè (piece); 性 xìnɡ (nature; character; disposition)

**个性** 
individuality

**guójiā** [n | 名] state, from 国 guó (state) and 家 jia (family)

**国家** 
state

**guānxì** [n | 名] relationship; connections

**关系** 
relationship
**understand**

**Old English** 古代英语 **under**-
[prefix | 前缀] ① between | 之间；among | 之中 ② beneath | 之下；subordinate | 下级的

**Derivates:**
- underestimate [v] 动 | 低估
- undergo [v] 动 | 受苦
- underground [n] 名 | 地下
- undertone [n] 名 | 潜在的感情

**Old English** 古代英语 **standan**
[v | 动] ① to stand | 站立 ② to tolerate | 忍受 ③ to persevere | 不倦；坚忍

**Derivates:**
- stand-alone [adj | 形] 自立的
- standard [n] 名 | 标准
- standardise [v | 动] 使标准化；使规范化

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The original meaning of *understanding* is to stand between two positions looking in both directions.
To outline something intelligible.

Related to enlightenment, mingbái tends to be used in spontaneous situations: 明白了！mingbái le! Now it is clear to me!
“Mutuality” focuses on the commonalities or similarities between the people.

A difference in language practice that startles both Chinese and English speakers when they hear how the other group handles it concerns the proper way to ask someone whether they would like more tea to drink. In Chinese one asks “Drink more?” In English, one asks “more tea?” To Chinese speakers, it’s perfectly obvious that it is tea that one is talking about drinking more of, so to mention tea would be redundant. To English speakers it is perfectly obvious that one is talking about drinking the tea, as opposed to any other activity that might be carried out with it, so it would be rather bizarre for the question to refer to drinking.

Nisbett 158f.
**hùxiāng**

[adv | 副] ① one another; mutual; reciprocal

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**hù**

[adj | 形] ① mutual

**xiāng**

[v | 动] ① appearance ② mutual

Consisting of a highly figurative pictograph and a descriptive ideographic compound character, hùxiāng is a very meaningful word which serves to emphasize the close connection of language, script and symbol in China. If the characters are in the opposite order, the word has the same meaning.

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The second character liú gives the word a feeling of natural flow (vaguely reminiscent of Heraclitus: *panta rhei* – everything flows).
The Greeks, more than any other ancient peoples, and in fact more than any other people today, had a remarkable sense of persona agency – the sense that they were in charge of their own lives and free to act as they chose. […] A strong sense of individual identity accompanied the Greek sense of personal agency. […] The Greek sense of agency fuelled a tradition of debate. […] The Chinese counterpart to Greek agency was harmony. Every Chinese person was first and foremost a member of a collective, or rather of several collectives – the clan, the village, and especially the family. The individual was not, as for the Greeks, an encapsulated unit who maintained a unique identity across social settings.

A quotation from a resolution by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party demonstrates the high political relevance, which such a seemingly “purely” philosophical term has in the PR of China: […] “The harmonious socialist society we are going to build is a harmonious society, built and shared by all Chinese people along the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics and under the leadership of the CCP.” Trapp

We know that the verb “to be” was formed by Homer, before Plato used it […]. Thus, ontology had become a way of thinking before philosophy. Now Chinese thinking has developed without recurring to ontology. […] The function of allusivity has to be understood in a non-ontological sense. Yet in China it can also be explained by other reasons: On the one hand by the Chinese language, which gives essential meaning to contextualization […], and on the other the scholar’s circumventive relationship to power. Julian 55
We often talk about the dialogue between the cultures, but a “dia-logue” requires the counterpart to be dia. Now the Chinese heterotopia provides the possibility of such a counterpart, whereupon this dialogue simultaneously requires logos based on coherences and leading to a mutual intelligibility. \textit{Julien 103}

I […] want to let intelligibilities react and try them out confronting them with each other. \textit{Julien 61}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Dialogue} [n | 名] dialogue; from 面 duìmiàn: opposite
\item \textbf{Lūnshù} [n | 名] discourse; from 论 lùn: discuss; 述 shù: state; relate; narrate
\item \textbf{Lùnzhèng} [n | 名] argumentation; proof; reason; from 论 lùn (discussion; theory), 据 zhèng (proof)
\item \textbf{Shídù} [n | 名] moderation, from 适 shì (suitable; proper), 度 dù (measure; length)
\item \textbf{Xiūcí} [n | 名] rhetoric, from 修 xiū (repair, cultivate), 辞 cí (speech)
\end{itemize}
Though during the Cultural Revolution propaganda used to be very much associated with politics, in contemporary China it has become a rather neutral expression, many state institutions feature a “xuanchuan bumen 宣传部门”, to be understood as “department of marketing and public relations” (alternatively: “xuanchuan ke 宣传科” or “xuanchuan chu 宣传处”). Enterprises tend to use terms such as “shichang 市场” (marketing) or “gongguan 关头” (public relations) instead. However, when appearing as a part of compound, it can sound completely neutral, such as in “chanpin xuanchuan 产品宣传” (product marketing) or “xuanchuan jieyan 宣传戒烟” (anti-smoking campaign material).

Song Xinyan, INSIDE A Communications AG

**xuānchuan** [v] propagate, public relations

**propaganda**

n | 名  | 宣传

**tōngxùn** [n] communication, from 通 tong (connect), 讯 xùn (message)

**communication**

n | 名 | 通讯；沟通

来源：拉丁语 communícō (share, impart)

**fāsòngzhè**

n | 名 | 发送者

**sender**

n | 名 | 寄件人；发送人

来源：印欧语 sent- (to walk, travel)

**xìnxi** [n] message; information, from 信 xìn (letter, message), 息 xī (breath; cease; news)

**message**

n | 名 | 信息；消息

来源：拉丁语 missaticum, mittere, missum (to send)
méití [n | 名] medium, pl. media, from 媒 méi (go-between) and 体 tǐ (body)

jiěshòuzhě [n | 名] receiver, addressee, recipient from 接 jiē (receive, accept)

接受者 receiver

[mübiāoqún [n | 名] target group, 目标 mùbiāo (target) + 群 qún (group, herd)

目标群 target group

chuánbō [v | 动] transmit, transfer, communicate, from 传 chuán (pass on) and 播 bo (spread, broadcast)

传播 transmit

[mübiàoqún [n | 名] target group, 目标 mùbiāo (target) + 群 qún (group, herd)

目标群 target group

shìmíng [n | 名] mission; life-task, from 使 shǐ (messenger); 命 míng (to command)

使命 mission

[mübiàoqún [n | 名] target group, 目标 mùbiāo (target) + 群 qún (group, herd)

目标群 target group
The sun makes time pass. The traditional character east (dōng) depicts the sun rising behind a tree. However, even if the Gregorian calendar is now officially used in China, traditional holidays and other important dates still follow the lunar calendar.

The tide is rising and falling regularly, following the rhythm of the moon.

**shíjiān**

[n | 名] ① time

- [shí] [n | 名] ① time
  - ② date; point of time
  - ③ hour ④ era
- [jiān] [n | 名] ① interspace

**shíjiān biǎo**

[n | 名] schedule, from 时间 shíjiān (time), 表 (table)

**gōngzuò liúchéng**

[n | 名] workflow, from 工作 gōngzuò (work), 流程 liúchéng (process)

Old English 古代英语 **tima**

[n | 名] ① time; period of time

**schedule**

[n | 名] ① schedule, from 时间 shíjiān (time), 表 (table)

来源: 希腊语 skhedē (papyrus leaf)

**workflow**

[n | 名] workflow, from 工作 gōngzuò (work), 流程 liúchéng (process)

工作流程

[n | 名] workflow, 工作进程

work 工作 + flow 流动
In Chinese, *time gap*, *time difference*, and *jetlag* can both be translated as 时差 *shíchā*. The term points to the difference of global time zones.

In English, *time gap* contains the concept of a gap to be bridged. Jetlag is a very modern term, relating to human time lagging behind that of a fast jet plane. This concept doesn’t exist in Chinese.

One very different thing is that Chinese partners have a much more long-term view on cooperation than Europeans have. Chinese partners not only think about “the follow-up” project, but much further ahead of cooperation and its impact. They always have a “macro-view” on top of a “project-view”. I think in this respect the Chinese are “wiser”. There are different dimensions in China, also in terms of perception of time.

*Eric Messerschmidt, Head of Danish Cultural Institute in China*

Invest time in building long-term contacts, make time for developing partnerships.

*Interviewee, EU China Cultural Compass Survey*
**Time Difference**

The time difference between China and large parts of Europe is up to seven hours during winter time (Standard Time: last Sunday in October – last Sunday in March) and six hours during summer time (Daylight Saving Time). In the UK you should add one more hour. When Europeans are making their morning coffee, the Chinese are already nearly leaving the office. When the Chinese get into the office, the Europeans are sleeping soundly.

There are one or two normal business hours in common. Chinese partners often work overtime to optimize the workflow. European partners have to get up early.

Part I – Glossary

時間與地方  Time and Space
When we speak of Chinese and European cultures, what do we mean? The idea of Europe has been influenced by the ancient Greeks, the Romans, and the emerging nation states. Chinese history can be seen as a long flow of dynasties, of which the Zhou, Han, Tang and Ming have been most influential. However, Europe has never existed as a single political unit, and China was also often divided into multiple entities.
百闻不如一见  bǎi wén bù rú yī jiàn
To see once is far greater than to hear one hundred times
Showing presentable, tangible results is far more effective than a lot of talking. The wording “bùrú” actually means “there is nothing like...” and is a commonly used structure. Origin: Han dynasty

比上不足 比下有余  bǐ shàng bù zú bǐ xià yǒu yú
worse off than some, better off than many
This phrase is composed in a commonly used parallel structure. Sounding more positive than 马马虎虎 māmǎ hūhū (so-so), the idiom admits a lack of quality, but leaves room for interpretation. Although things aren’t great, it could also be worse. It also can be used to show an attitude of modesty, long considered a virtue in China. Origin: Han dynasty

差不多  chà bù duō
not much difference ► almost perfect
Being not a true chéngyù in itself, this very common formulation admits a certain lack of perfection. Westerners often perceive it as a mere excuse for sloppiness, however the true meaning is actually very positive. Perfection has been almost achieved.

趁热打铁 chèn rè dà tiě
forge the metal while it’s hot / strike while the iron is hot
► make hay when the sun shines
To take an opportunity to do something when time and conditions are right. Origin: modern
大事化小 小事化了 -da shi huà xiào  xiǎo shì huà liǎo
To make a large problem smaller, a small one into nothing
The particle huà means to transform. The idiom illustrates the tendency of many Chinese to make a
dissolve problem instead of letting it grow bigger.

大同小异  dà tóng xiǎo yì
essentially the same though differing in minor points
Maybe you have heard of the “Chinglish” phrase “same-same but different”. A foreign culture may
appear very different in the beginning, but after closer examination one finds that many aspects are
essentially the same as in one’s own culture. This idiom is an example of the popular structure of con-
trasting forms, literally meaning “big equality, small difference”. For instance, the illustration shows
the small differences in local variants of one Chinese character. Origin: Warring States period

断章取义  duàn zhāng qǔ yì
take something out of context  → to present sth. in another light
Originally, the idiom described people quoting verses from the Book of Songs to express an
opinion while ignoring the original context. The Book of Songs is the earliest existing collection of
Chinese poems and songs.  Origin: Spring and Autumn period

风马牛不相及  fēng mǎ niú bù xiāng jí
wind, horse and cow don’t relate to each
other  → comparing apples and oranges
Cultural translation requires comparable parameters on both
sides. However there are always aspects that remain
intangible, non-convertible, quite unrelated.
Origin: Spring and Autumn period. At the time, the states of Qi and Chu were so far away from each
other that a horse and a cow trying to find a partner won’t even meet each other. In ancient Chinese,
wind also means sexual behaviour.

过河拆桥  guò hé chāi qiáo
 tear down the bridge after crossing the river  → to pull the rug out from under somebody’s feet
To use someone to reach a goal, and then to discard them. An expression with very negative
connotations.  Origin: Yuan dynasty. During the period of the Three Kingdoms, Zhang Fei from the
kingdom of Shu Han tore down the bridge after the Emperor Liu Bei had crossed in order to shake off
the enemy. Contrary to the new meaning, the original story is rather positive.

捡了芝麻 丢了西瓜  jiǎn le zhī mǎ  diū le xī guā
to strain a melon while searching for a sesame seed
→ strain at a gnat and swallow a camel  → can’t see the wood for the trees

井水不犯河水  jǐng shuǐ bù fàn hé shuǐ
don’t mix well water with river water
Everybody should stick to their own area of expertise. One should not interfere with your colleagues’
work! Everyone should mind their own business.
Origin: Qing dynasty
精诚所至 金石为开 jíng chéng suǒ zhì jīn shí wèi kāi
sincerity is worth as much as gold  good faith moves mountains
Parallel construction (they don’t necessarily rhyme). Sincerity will be profitable in the long run. Origin: Warring States period. Words of encouragement for young people; often written in calligraphy.

居安思危 jū ān sī wēi
remain vigilant even when safe
Even when safe, always be aware of possible dangers. In good times, always have the dangerous times in mind. Never forget there could always be new problems. Origin: Spring and Autumn period

开门见山 kāi mén jiàn shān
open the door and see the mountains  straight talk
Put formalities and politeness aside and let others hear the unadulterated truth! Origin: Tang dynasty. The famous poet Li Bai wrote in a Kai Men Jian Shan style, always straight to the point. As Chinese people usually talk and write in a not very straightforward way, one has to guess at their real attitude. This has remained true throughout Chinese history.

口是心非 kǒu shì xīn fēi
mouth says yes, heart says no
To accept something you disagree with deep inside. Origin: Jin dynasty

六亲不认 liù qīn bù rèn
to disown all one’s relatives
A very negative expression. Origin: modern. Liu Qin now refers to one’s parents, siblings, spouse, children, other family members and even close friends. Though being a rather negative expression, it is sometimes used to describe unbiased, fair-minded people.

路遥知马力 日久见人心 lù yáo zhī mǎ lì rì jiǔ jiàn rén xīn
a long road tests a horse’s strength and a long task proves a man’s heart
Parallel construction (the first phrase can also stand alone). Long-lasting trust can only be proved with time. Loyalty and friendship. Origin: Yuan dynasty.

满招损 谦受益 mǎn zhāo sǔn qiān shòu yì
ccontentment causes loss, modesty brings benefit  modesty is better than pride
Self-content will lead to problems, modesty will bring advantages. Origin: Warring States period

名正言顺 míng zhèng yán shùn
correct titles and proper words
To be perfectly justifiable. The first half of the idiom contains a bit of the Confucian concept of 正名 zhèngmíng: the clarification of names and hierarchical concepts. But zhèngmíng is not only a philosophical, but also a linguistic nature. For instance, this glossary is a small-scale attempt to clarify differing concepts. If the names (titles) are correct, the words will carry weight. Origin: Spring and Autumn period.

Part I – Glossary
抛砖引玉  pāo zhuān yǐn yù
to throw a brick and receive a piece of jade in return
A modest spur to induce someone to come forward with his or her valuable contribution. Spontaneous ideas might seem worthless at first glance, but can bring benefits in the long run.
Origin: Song dynasty

随机应变  suí jī yìng biàn
to adjust to changing circumstances
However forward-looking a concept may be, random opportunities should never be ignored. To have the courage to change a plan if opportunities arise.

文山会海  wén shān huì hǎi
a mountain of documents, a sea of conferences
Derived from the popular saying 人山人海 rén shān rén hǎi
which means “masses of people all around”. The idiom depicts the complications of bureaucracy. One has to climb mountains of documents and cross seas of tiring conferences to achieve one’s aim.
Origin: modern, 人山人海 rén shān rén hǎi: Ming dynasty

小题大做  xiǎo tí dà zuò
small problem, big ado ► much ado about nothing ► to make a mountain out of a molehill
A very popular pair of contrasting forms (big vs. small). Another example using a similar structure is the idiom 大材小用 dà cái xiǎo yòng (big talent, small use) which means wasted talent.

字里行间  zì lǐ háng jiān
inside the characters, between the lines ► read between the lines
What you read between the lines; the meaning hidden behind formulations – as well as cultural codes?

走马观花  zǒu mǎ guān huā
riding a horse, watching the flowers ► to skim the surface
Looking at something very quickly, to skim through something.
You can’t see many details if you try to watch the flowers while riding a horse. What we know about foreign cultures is also mostly best described by this idiom!
Origin: Tang dynasty. The story goes that a young man, who had difficulty finding a partner due to his walking disability, rides by a young lady’s house. Seeing the noble young cavalier, the lady hides her ugly nose behind a bouquet of flowers. They don’t become aware of each other’s flaws and marry in the end.

鹬蚌相争 鸭翁得利  yǔ bàng xiāng zhēng  yǔ wēng dé lì
Snipe and oyster are fighting each other, a fisherman catches both of them at once
There is a similar saying in German: When two people quarrel, the third rejoices. Let the others fight and await your chance! 

Part I – Glossary
Articles in the Chinese COMPASS version in the chapter Context Knowledge – EUROPE are by Prof. Qin Mingrui from Renmin University Beijing: Basic parameters on Europe; Prof. Yu Hai, Fudan University: The impact of Western rights concepts on contemporary society in China and Europe; Prof. Steven Vertovec: Transnationalism and super-diversity – a new European spirit; Dr. Dagmar Lorenz: The main characteristics and traditions influencing European culture, and Western understanding of media culture, journalism & art criticism; and Prof. Zhang Weixiu: The Rise of a Civilisation-State. Please refer to Chinese edition.
China in Seven Parts

Dr. Marcus Hernig and Ye Fang in conversation

Marcus Hernig is a writer about China and intercultural affairs. He is an adjunct professor in cross-cultural studies at Zhejiang University, Hangzhou and an experienced cross-cultural trainer for international companies in China. He has lived in China since the start of the ‘Reform and Opening’ policy in Shanghai in 1992 – the beginning of China’s economic expansion.

Ye Fang is a well-known artist based in Suzhou, an expert on traditional Chinese garden culture as well as on the culture of daily life. He was born in a Suzhou garden, he grew up in a Suzhou garden, he works in a Suzhou garden and he lives in a Suzhou garden. His life is focused on painting, writing about and creating Chinese gardens. His latest creation was a Suzhou-style garden in Venice, Italy. In recent years he has travelled frequently between China and Europe. Ye Fang has become an important figure of cultural exchange between the sister cities of Suzhou and Venice.

This dialogue is not their first encounter. Marcus Hernig and Ye Fang have worked as a cross-cultural team on other projects, such as the 2010 exploration travel “On the Traces of Goethe in Europe” (targeting a Chinese audience). The COMPASS editors identified seven topics as a starting point for understanding the context in China, as well as in Europe, and invited the two of them to reflect on these: History (The Middle Kingdom), Politics, Human Rights, Culture, Education, Food and Cultural Diversity.

The Middle Kingdom

Marcus Hernig (MH): The term ‘Middle Kingdom’ evokes something mysterious. It suggests a picture of the world that is different from what we know in the West. If a kingdom is situated in the middle, then all the other countries and regions of the world are situated around it. It creates a different global picture, a different geography, comparable to that of ‘Heavenly Jerusalem’ in the Middle Ages in Europe. Maps of that time show a world centred on Christianity, as represented by the holy city of God. Chinese maps show a world that is centred on the Middle Kingdom. Going back to the origins of the term Middle Kingdom, it can be seen much more objectively. Originally, the Middle Kingdoms (zhongguo) were small states close to the Yellow River in today’s provinces of Henan and Shaanxi, which formed the core of China’s archaic Zhou dynasty (1100-300 BCE). So it was the name for these small central states that later became used for the whole of China.

Ye Fang (YF): The Middle Kingdom can be understood as a name for a country or a geographical term, as Marcus puts it. But it also can be understood as a formula for the interaction between man and nature. I think the term includes something symbolic, something idealistic, even a kind of symbol of civilisation. ‘Middle’ is related to mediation. From my point of view, Chinese civilisation is a kind of mediation between a more metaphysical ideal of the world and the reality of earthly matter. So ‘middle’ is an interactive term between man and nature that can best be paraphrased as ‘harmony’. That is the world-view expressed by the Middle Kingdom. Middle in this sense also includes the idea of man imitating nature – also a process of harmony.
Politics

MH: The term ‘politics’ is an area of great cultural misunderstandings in Chinese-Western exchange. In the West the Greek *polis* is central to our conception of politics: the citizen of the *polis* has the right to choose governments, to elect and be elected. The common understanding today is that democracy beats all other possible political concepts. In China the term, *zhengzhi* – politics, means control and regulation by larger entities from above (*zhi*). In ancient times, administration (*zheng*) referred to family affairs and the modern term for state, *guojia*, is a kind of super-family formed by families (*jia*). The prosperity and stability of the super-family is the core value of traditional Chinese political thought that still governs the present ‘dynasty’-rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

China is still missing an awareness of what we call citizen, although the equivalent term *gongmin* exists. With the growth of NGOs and civil society in China, *gongmin* will gain in importance and a deeper understanding of its meaning will result. In the West, political success means the constructive participation of individuals in state affairs and the right of individuals to do so; while in China, the political credo is prosperity and growth for the majority – achieved by the state leader – which results in peace and stability.

YF: What is meant by politics is the regulation of administrative affairs and this regulation is the basis for state affairs. *Zheng* is the term for administration and *zhi* for regulation, as Marcus says.

In Chinese history one sees that successful politics always follow a successful and therefore proven idea. It is clear that Confucianism is the political ideal of Confucianists and, till now, remains the most successful framework for governing China. Chinese political concepts were frequently implemented to the exclusion of others and also used in combination with each other. They were often complementary (*hubu*). For instance, under the first Chinese emperor, Qin Shihuang, legalism was the dominating principle – everything else was banned and references to other political philosophies were burned. From the Han dynasty onwards it was quite the opposite: elimination of all political thinking apart from Confucianism. But, in the long run, both concepts depended on each other and together formed the conceptual framework of China: with legalism the world was conquered, with Confucianism it was preserved.

The old Confucian system of politics was challenged by the impact of the Western powers during the Opium War (1840–42). Since then, Chinese politics has been a continuous battle between conservative forces and Western concepts of politics – from democracy to socialism.

If the political institutions of the state lie at the heart of politics, then administration incorporates the power to regulate. The ideal politician was the Confucian scholar who supported the emperor by becoming an administrator of state power. Politics became a profession.

In recent years discussions about Chinese politics and state leadership have included an intense debate about Confucian values, a kind of renaissance of modern Confucianism as well as a clearly articulated focus on modern Western-style politics.

Human rights

MH: Human rights are closely related to politics. Our Western concept depends on the rights of the individual, his or her human dignity free from the coercion of others – as set out in the constitutions of many Western nations. Freedom of thought and speech – and
the public expression of these – are a core value of the concept of human rights, although often contradicted in the records of European history. 

China still concentrates on family values. If families – as well as the super-family, the state – can exist in stable conditions, then a very important human right is achieved. This sometimes supports individual rights, but sometimes contradicts them. Frequently a head of family sets limits to individual freedom. The average Chinese individual has a higher tolerance for less individual space than the average European. This is the impact of Confucianism Ye Fang talked about. But this old concept is facing the growth of civil society in China. The more the Chinese individual becomes aware of the value of participation in public activities, becoming more active in determining his or her own future and relying less on state-only or family decisions, the more China will move towards an individualised society.

YF: The Chinese constitution contains a declaration regarding human rights: under certain circumstances and under the protection of the law, a Chinese citizen should enjoy political, economic, social and cultural freedom – personal freedom and democratic power.

This is a very sensitive statement for the Chinese today. The understanding of personal freedom and democratic power is still weak. The terms have existed for around a century – centuries less than in Europe. Yet, what human rights refer to is a common ideal for people all over the world.

Earlier, this was also very important for China. European thinkers of the Enlightenment regarded it as a feature of the Chinese government at the time, as they understood it. The Chinese emperor was held up as the ideal of an enlightened monarch, suitable indeed even for an enlightened Europe.

But, as Marcus states, the Chinese government then (and later) regarded human rights mainly as the rights of families. I believe the question of human rights is first and foremost a question of ‘special rights’ – always to be balanced with the ‘special rights’ of other individuals.

Human rights are embodied within the constitutions of many nations and form an important part of political conceptions of government. But they are always in danger from the macro-conceptions of the state that try to limit individual freedom. Then, personal rights become more the exception to the ‘normative rights’ of the state: i.e. special rights.

**Culture**

MH: This term is too broad to discuss in a few sentences – especially if one includes both Western and Eastern concepts of culture. But, roughly speaking, *cultura* in the European tradition is something done very actively. *Cultura* was the knowledge of cultivating a field in ancient Rome. Then it evolved to mean the knowledge of doing and knowing the arts. Finally, we talk about a wider understanding of culture that includes nearly all fields of human endeavour. For me, not only knowledge of, but the skill to perform, culture belongs to the Western term *cultura*. The Chinese expression *wen* is a narrower concept, related to written texts and the vast field of literature. A scholar is a *wenren*, a person educated by *wen*, who knows a lot about *wen* and who can perform *wen* such as calligraphy, writing poems, etc. Being a person of culture – in the traditional Chinese sense – is more about the knowledge of written culture. The active protagonist is part of it, but not the main part.

YF: In the old Chinese conceptual framework, culture (*wenhua*) was the objective of civil administrations (*wenzhi*) – to enlighten an individual by means of education (*jiaohua*).
In modern dictionaries, the broad interpretation of culture is what the West understands about the historical development of the human race in a broad, both materialistic and idealistic sense.

After an extended period of emphasis on the culture of economic development in China, now people long more than ever for other elements of culture.

But this craving for culture has evolved into strange forms. Due to the impact of mass media, culture has degenerated into a kind of fast food – fast to get and easy to lose or to hand over to others. What also threatens culture is the increased speed of urbanisation: culture has mutated into a kind of roughly-made mass phenomenon, frequently reduced to a kind of vulgar or even toxic seasoning.

Furthermore, culture in China has become highly commercialised in recent years. It has mutated into a kind of business transaction. We really have to take care with what we refer to as 'culture'.

**Education**

MH: The development of culture and society is based on education. Modern European education starts with Comenius's ideas of universal education, later adopted by many countries as a kind of universal schooling, concentrating on both science and art. Pedagogy became a subject in its own right. Wilhelm von Humboldt's idea of the "research university", in the early 19th century, also emphasized the creative power of the learning individual and free thought. In China, education remained extremely conservative until the abolition of the old exam system in 1905. It was a system of rote learning of enormous amounts of literary content, with no room for scientific education or even pedagogical methods until the 20th century.

The first Minister of Education, the German-educated Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), proposed reforms based on the European system, which can still be seen as one of the most advanced proposals of Western learning in China. Cai also created institutions of modern learning. Despite Cai's far-reaching reforms in the first half of the 20th century, Chinese education today is still highly repetitive and based on frequent exams. It does not focus on the creative free mind but on the tradition of large input of knowledge and knowledge-based learning. The ideal of Western education is the skilled and self-learning individual who asks important questions, the ideal of Chinese education is still the person of knowledge whose knowledge-based answers contribute to the existing rules and morals of the establishment. To find the right balance between these two is the primary challenge to the development of Chinese society.

YF: In ancient times in China, educated people were called students of Confucian thought'. Education was synonymous with Confucian learning and students learned in shuyuan – institutions where the canonical books of Confucianism were taught. With the impact of the West and late 19th century reforms, these institutions were replaced by xuetang, or 'halls of learning'. The aim of the student was to become an official – and an official was selected through exams. The system was called the keju.

The new education system included important elements of Western learning. Study of traditional Chinese elements was for moral education, while Western learning was highly practical. But a century of educational reform brought with it many new problems.

The old Confucian ideals of education such as study, asking questions, thinking, discussion and disciplinary prowess found their counterparts in pressure, rote memorisation,
training without understanding, exam-taking and the instant discarding of knowledge acquired only for exams.

Traditional Chinese education included discussion and argumentation, with a balance between education by teachers and by parents. The high-pressure education system in China today has created strange phenomena such as ‘tiger mothers’ and ‘tiger fathers’.

Chinese and Western ideas on education differ greatly. When combined they can mutate into strange phenomena. Chinese educational traditions such as perseverance and high pressure allow students to focus on logical thought and mathematics. But they miss soft skills such as creativity. Western-educated students are more creative, more open-minded and better at art and design. But they often lack ability in mathematics etc. The problem of education is a very serious one.

Food

MH: “Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are.” This famous saying by Frenchman Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, one of the leading gourmets and philosophers of 19th century Europe, is the key to understanding a culture. In Europe, how to eat and how to value food in daily life contribute to the many different faces of Europe. The food-centric cultures of the South of Europe are in contrast to the more drink-oriented cultures of the North.

Using this matrix, China is definitely a ‘Southern’ culture. The struggle for life-sustaining food finally gave way to the struggle for the best you can possibly get from the raw materials found at the market. “Food is heaven for the people” – this famous quotation goes back to Sima Qian’s Book of History. Heaven can also be interpreted as the ultimate rule, the guiding principle of society. In a way, that is also true for food. Food is always an appropriate subject of conversation in China and almost everyone has something to say on the matter. The dinner table has a political function because the important relationships (guanxi) necessary for cooperation and social success are established there. Yi Zhongtian, a famous cultural scientist and TV celebrity, coined the phrase a “dined-out society” (chi chu lai de shehui). Family relationships are still the most important relationships in China, governed by ‘common blood.’ Only the dinner table can provide strangers with this ‘common blood’ cultivated by eating the same food from the same table.

YF: Confucius once said: “Food likes to be exquisite, meat likes to be fine”. Obviously, exquisite and fine food is considered a way of heaven or a way to heaven in Chinese culture.

The right balance between heaven and earth is the guiding principle of Chinese cuisine. Food maintained the connection between man and the gods and ancestors – from religious rituals to banquet rituals – the connection between above and below, the balance of the world. Dining is the appropriate way to entertain guests, build relations such as friendships and honour esteemed people, teachers and elders. Food is related to important festivals and is a symbol for luck and good wishes.

Of course, in the beginning food was about survival. A Chinese saying describes the seven things one must care about: firewood, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar and tea. They are all related to food. Of the four traditional essentials of life – clothing, food, shelter and transport – only food is truly necessary for life.

One could say much more about this – to me the way of food and dining that is part of Chinese culture is a kind of philosophy.

1  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sima_Qian
A multi-ethnic state, a multi-faceted culture?

MH: A multi-ethnic and multilingual Europe is a key concept of the European Union. Europe defines itself as a ‘Europe of regions’ and ethnic minorities enjoy special protection. Europe’s great qualities of regional and local diversity are also her greatest impediment: ‘Balkanisation’ was the most obvious recent manifestation of European disintegration. The smallest minorities are even granted the right to form their own state if they so choose. This, of course, endangers the process of creating cultural unity. In Europe the search for what is common – the Chinese call it datong – among the different regions of Europe is a formidable and incomplete task.

This kind of regional freedom or loose integration is the opposite of the old Chinese policy of Datong xiao yi – “Great Unity with Small Differences” – the guiding principle of the creation and governing of a central state that, throughout the course of Chinese history, was almost always a multi-ethnic state. Stability and integrity of China’s unity is the core issue of zhengzhi. China does everything to protect the state from those centrifugal powers that led to the end of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Minorities in China have special rights in areas of education, family policy and agricultural policy that often provide them with better opportunities than many rural Han Chinese. This is a form of “Small Differences”. On the other hand, the state emphasizes “Great Unity” (datong) by developing the entire country according to common rules and development ideals – whether it fits the regional culture or not. This part of datong thought is one of the biggest problems in the development of China, preventing minorities from deciding their own development in accordance with their own cultural backgrounds.

YF: Differences are as important as what is shared in common. Balance is still the issue: many ethnic groups represent many different cultures. When living together in one state, these small cultures form the bigger culture of the whole entity. Of course, in China, Han culture makes up the mainstream of cultural life. Han culture itself is composed of different cultures merged into one during the course of history. Minority cultures form little creeks or tributaries of the mainstream of Han culture. The vitality of China is formed through a process of diversification and a confluence of cultures.

The diverse cultures of the past fill books and museums; many details of cultural difference may even now be undiscovered. The danger of losing this cultural diversity is not just a Chinese, but also a worldwide, problem. In times of globalisation it becomes an issue of great importance, more than ever before.

FURTHER READING


Part II – Context Knowledge – China
One respected China-based economist recently pulled together statistical evidence to 'calculate' that one year in China is equivalent to three or four years in most Western countries. He was only half-joking. Over the past two decades China's economy and society have undergone a transformation on a scale and at a speed arguably unparalleled in human history. In the late 1980s, China was still largely a planned economy, dominated by huge, often unproductive state enterprises. Foreign investment had begun, but was limited to a few brave pioneers; the term 'private enterprise' remained virtually taboo. Yet by 2010, China had overtaken Japan as the world's second largest economy, and private businesses were generally acknowledged as the main engine of its growth. In the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008, foreign governments queued up to ask Beijing prop up their economies, by buying their treasury bonds and investing in their businesses; China's consumers, meanwhile, were seen as the saviours of global industries, from car manufacturing to retail.

It's easy to regard this as simply an economic 'miracle,' but China's transformation is also a human story. Economic success has been built on the willingness of hundreds of millions of rural citizens to move to urban areas to work in the factories and construction sites, restaurants and stores of the new economy. Urban residents have also experienced huge upheavals: cities have grown at startling speed – Shanghai, for example, went from 7 million people in 1985 to around 20 million by 2010 – with vast changes in most aspects of daily life: where and how people work, the kind of homes they live in, the information they can receive, even personal relationships and values.

Much of this social change was, perhaps ironically, more or less an unplanned side-effect of economic change. Economic reforms themselves were introduced grudgingly in the late 1970s, following the heavily politicised decades of the early Communist era, when businesses were nationalised and farmers forced to work on collective farms. Yet, in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), food output was flagging, and the government began to tolerate experiments where farmers were given small plots of land to farm individually; these quickly began to produce a surplus, and farmers were permitted to sell their extra produce in so-called 'free markets.' There was also a need to find jobs for demobilised soldiers and the millions of urban youth sent to work in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution, who were now returning to the cities; the authorities began permitting them to open small shops or restaurants, known euphemistically as 'individual units.' As the 1980s progressed, foreign investors were tentatively allowed to start up 'joint venture' companies with Chinese partners.

But it was in the 1990s that economic and social change gathered pace. Again, practical concerns provided the stimulus: In the years following '1989,' China saw a significant fall-off in foreign investment. State-run enterprises which had dominated China's economy were also facing new challenges from nascent private businesses and increasing imports. In an attempt to 'streamline' the state sector, and make the nation's businesses more competitive, sweeping reforms were introduced: many big state firms
were auctioned off to private investors, some even to foreigners; others were simply allowed to go bankrupt.

And, in a highly significant move, the government began to remove the burden of providing welfare from state enterprises. Since the 1949 revolution, state firms had provided their workers with housing, health care, education, even retirement benefits – an ‘iron rice bowl’, as it was known, ‘from cradle to grave’. But now, in its attempts to make such firms more viable, the government began to create separate welfare insurance schemes, administered by local governments, to which employees and employers would contribute. One result was the 1998 announcement that employers would no longer provide housing for staff. Instead, China’s citizens were encouraged to take out mortgages, and buy homes on the newly created commercial housing market (though a major sell-off of work-unit housing to occupants, at very low prices, helped cushion the blow in early years).

These reforms led to extraordinary social changes: for the first time since 1949, mass redundancies became part of Chinese life. Between 1995 and 2002, an estimated 40 million citizens lost their jobs in state enterprises, mostly heavy manufacturing companies in the cities. At the same time, the authorities were forced to become more dependent on new private firms to create jobs; by 2001, the Communist Party had taken the once unthinkable step of changing its constitution to welcome private business people as members.

Some people found it hard to adapt to these changes. Middle-aged people laid-off from jobs they had held for decades often found it hard to compete in the job market – particularly since many had missed out on education during the Cultural Revolution, when many schools closed temporarily, and teaching was heavily politicised. Now they faced competition from a better educated new generation and realised their children could often command higher salaries as soon as they left university. Other shocks were in store: the new welfare insurance schemes required most citizens to pay a significant part of hospital treatment costs. Universities and high schools, meanwhile, began to charge tuition fees. And house prices began to rise rapidly, leaving many ordinary people feeling excluded from the benefits of China’s economic boom.

Anxieties about such costs, and worries too about insufficient pensions, led many to be cautious about spending their savings – frustrating the government’s repeated attempts to boost domestic consumption in the late 1990s and into the new century. The government sought to reassure citizens by introducing subsidies for urban residents on low incomes; and there have been repeated reforms to social welfare and health insurance schemes. From around 2005, significant sums of money were also pledged to help rebuild life in rural China, where the dismantling of agricultural collectives in the mid-1980s had led to an end to the free, if basic, health care they once provided. And by the end of the decade, public dissatisfaction at soaring house prices in many Chinese cities – where homes had become as expensive as those in Western cities, with much lower average wages – forced the government to announce a major new programme of ‘affordable’ housing for poor citizens, with some 40 million homes due to be built between 2010 and 2015.

But there’s no doubt that China’s market-driven changes also offered new social freedoms for many. The new commercial housing market meant fresh choices of lifestyle for those who could afford it. Many families moved out of cramped accommodation, shared by several generations, into new apartments, townhouses, and even luxury villas...
in gated communities which sprang up around Chinese cities. As a result, many of today’s urban middle-class ‘only’ children have their own bedrooms, something unimaginable to most of their parents’ generation. The new interest in ‘lifestyle’ was highlighted by an emerging crop of magazines offering people advice on how to decorate and furnish their new homes, and the arrival in China of foreign furniture and DIY giants such as IKEA and B&Q; domestic chain-stores supplying home electronics also became some of China’s biggest businesses.

These changes went hand in hand with a wider transformation of the urban environment. Cities across China not only grew spectacularly (the urban population increasing from around 20% in 1982 to almost 50% by 2010), they also reinvented themselves: vast areas of old housing were demolished to make way for office towers, shopping centres, residential compounds and transport infrastructure. This undoubtedly brought better living conditions and greater convenience for many – but concerns have often been raised at the destruction of traditional communities, and loss of architectural heritage. And the relatively slow development of effective public transport networks in many cities also led to heavy dependence on private cars – by 2010, near gridlock in many major cities led to calls for drastic measures to restrict the numbers of cars on the roads. The pollution created by car use, and by continuous reconstruction and industrial development, was also a factor in growing public dissatisfaction with China’s urban environment.

Another significant loosening of social controls came in education: as the state-run economic sector declined in the 1990s, the government ended its traditional practice of simply allocating jobs to university graduates, and gave them the freedom to choose their own careers. A massive expansion of China’s higher education system also provided fresh opportunities: between 1999 and 2010, the annual intake of students in Chinese universities and colleges rose from 1.5 million to more than 6.5 million. There were attempts by Chinese schools and colleges to move away from the traditional, rigid model of rote learning, to a more stimulating approach to encourage students’ creativity, and equip them with skills in computing, new technology and foreign languages. Yet the continuing emphasis on China’s annual university entrance examination – seen as the key to a bright future – by parents and school alike, has made such changes hard to implement fully. Wealthier families, however, now have the alternative of sending their children abroad for school or university – though the growing number of graduates, and an increasingly competitive labour market, mean that a university degree is no longer the automatic ticket to a good job it was a few years ago.

There’s little doubt that all these changes have resulted in a reduction in the role of the state in most people’s daily lives. Employers have less power over staff, able to change jobs as they wish. The move away from work-unit housing has meant people no longer have to live alongside their colleagues. For many, used to being spied on and denounced by neighbours for the slightest irregularity in their personal lives during the Cultural Revolution, this has been something of a liberation. It’s perhaps no coincidence that the years of rapid economic reform have gone hand in hand with a fast growing sexual revolution in Chinese society. In the late 1990s it was rare for unmarried couples to live together – officially termed illegal cohabitation. Now the freedom to rent or buy one’s own home has made it much easier for young people to live together, or have relationships, before they marry. Similarly, local ‘neighbourhood committees,’ which traditionally kept watch on residents as well as providing welfare, now have a greatly reduced role.
All this has occurred in parallel with one of the biggest transformations of all – a dramatic increase in the ease of communication and access to information for ordinary Chinese citizens. A nation where few people had a telephone in the late 1980s had, by 2011, some 880 million mobile phone subscribers and 240 million landlines. Televisions are even more universal; and from a handful of television channels in the 1980s, most people can now watch several dozen from across China. Foreign television stations remain technically banned in homes, but a significant minority of the population has access to some, by cable or satellite, and they can be widely seen in hotels. The commercialisation of Chinese television and newspapers – now expected to pay their own way – has, meanwhile, led to a move away from the traditional propaganda model towards livelier reporting of social and cultural news. Some more daring publications, many based in the southern province of Guangdong, have promoted investigative journalism, reporting on miscarriages of justice and cases of corruption (at least at the local level). Editors of such newspapers have sometimes been sacked for going too far, and there remain significant areas which the media cannot normally touch – mostly those related to China’s foreign policy, sovereignty or political system – but government policy on, for example, social issues is widely debated.

The greatest space for debate and information-sharing is undoubtedly on the Internet. It’s hard to overstate the impact which the Internet has had on Chinese society: one academic, who helped introduce it in the 1990s, has likened it to a “nuclear bomb”. In a nation where travel and communication around the country were until recently so difficult, the Internet has made it possible for people from all over China to exchange ideas and information, and discuss a huge range of subjects, many previously taboo. Environmental campaigners, animal rights activists, single mothers, even mistresses demanding equal rights, have set up their own web forums; on China’s most popular chatrooms, internet users debate social problems and sometimes reveal cases of corruption. The government does step in to censor debate on the most sensitive subjects, and some foreign social networking websites have been blocked. But their Chinese equivalents have thrived, and many foreign news websites remain accessible to Chinese internet users. There have also been a number of cases where the government has backed down on policy decisions in the face of online criticism: indeed, officials now regularly stress that they value the Internet as a channel for soliciting and understanding public opinion. It’s a tacit recognition of the fact that China’s young generation, who have grown up with the Internet, tend to regard it as their personal space, and are highly critical of attempts to limit freedom of expression online.

Access to the Internet, along with increasing imports of foreign films, music and television programmes, has also contributed to young Chinese becoming increasingly critical, and demanding, consumers of culture. Their awareness of global trends and fashions has contributed to the opening up of the country’s cultural sphere, notably in the world of visual arts. In the early 1990s, the authorities regarded most contemporary art with suspicion; now official art museums hold exhibitions by cutting-edge foreign and Chinese artists. Pointed political and social criticism, such as that by the artist Ai Weiwei, who was detained in April 2011, is still seen as off-limits, but the government has accepted that modern art is big business. Chinese artists command some of the world’s highest prices, and Chinese collectors play an increasingly influential global role. Private galleries have sprung up, sometimes filling the gaps where official art museums do not dare to
tread; old industrial areas, such as the 798 factory compound in Beijing, and M50, its Shanghai equivalent, have been reinvented as creative zones, filled with galleries and design studios. With the authorities pledging a "glorious renaissance of the Chinese nation", there has been significant investment in cultural facilities, from theatres and opera houses to museums (an estimated one hundred have opened each year this century).

It all adds up to a far more diverse society – and a more complex one. Arguably, Chinese society has, over the past two decades, gone through many of the same changes which Western societies underwent in the half century after World War II – from urban renewal and industrial restructuring, to the consumer revolution, the sexual revolution, and the rise of youth culture. This has been accompanied by an ideological upheaval which many see as similar to that experienced by the citizens of Eastern Europe after 1989 – yet in China the transition to a largely capitalist economy has been accompanied by an official insistence that the country remains socialist. Not surprisingly, the values of individuals, and of society as a whole, have been affected. Many people have broadly embraced the changes, seeing them as leading to a stronger and wealthier China. Others feel left behind, or betrayed by the abandoning of the socialist ideals of their youth. For some, the pursuit of wealth and economic success has become a goal in itself – though there are others who criticize such attitudes.

Hardly surprising then, that China has seen something of a search for spiritual values in recent years. Organised religion, reinstated under official control after the Cultural Revolution (when it was completely banned), has grown rapidly – officials put the number of Buddhists, Taoists, Christians and Muslims at over 200 million, but many believe the true figure is far higher. There are signs that the authorities are tolerating religion in the belief that it at least imposes a moral framework on its followers; religions have also tentatively been allowed to resume a charitable role, to fill some of the gaps left by China’s welfare system reforms. Still, the government continues to oppose attempts to promote religion outside official places of worship. It has also sought to modernize the image of the Communist Party, and attract young, well-educated members – and to emphasize the party’s legitimacy through a ‘patriotic education’ campaign in schools.

It’s part of an ongoing attempt by the authorities to win over the ‘hearts and minds’ of the young generation. To some extent it has worked: many Chinese people’s view of history echoes the official line – particularly on issues such as China’s sovereignty over Tibet and Taiwan, and the nation’s unfair treatment by Western powers during and after the Opium Wars of the mid-19th century. Yet the tight security surrounding key events, such as the 2008 Olympics or the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai suggest that the authorities remain anxious about the potential for unrest in the new society they have created.

Public anger at inequality has been officially acknowledged as one of the biggest threats to social stability. China’s 12th Five Year Plan (2011–2015) calls for “inclusive growth”, and promises fairer distribution of wealth. But such changes will not be easy – and there are challenging issues to resolve, notably the question of the status of China’s more than 100 million rural migrant workers, whose registration as ‘rural’ citizens has denied them access to many of the welfare benefits enjoyed by permanent urban residents. Giving them urban status will be costly, but many experts say it is inevitable. The management of massive urbanisation, with over 200 million people predicted to move to towns and cities between 2010 and 2025, will also be a challenge on a unique scale. And steering a course
between public expectations of greater openness, and the government’s desire for social stability, will also be complex. What seems certain, however, is that China’s people will continue to display the striking capacity for flexibility and innovation which they have demonstrated over recent decades.

SOCIAL CHANGE IN CHINA – FURTHER READING

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Danwei – media and society: www.danwei.org
Caijing – business analysis: http://english.caijing.com.cn
Global Times English – official Chinese perspective news and analysis: http://www.globaltimes.cn

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Duncan Hewitt is a former BBC China correspondent who now writes for Newsweek and other publications from Shanghai. He first lived in China in 1986–87, while studying Chinese at Edinburgh University. His book, Getting Rich First – Life in a Changing China, looks at social change and its impact on ordinary people’s lives.
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

© Boom and Dust – Current Trends and the Future of Chinese Society

Christoph Daniel Jia

Viewed from Europe, the China of the past was a vast old country-continent, an ancient power, almost continuously united, mysterious, distant – and thus forgotten. Today, China is large, old, traditional, brand new, modern, sometimes even post-modern and avant-garde, no longer so mysterious because China enjoys the world's attention. China is both terribly poor and supremely rich: desperate, torn-apart while self-confidently optimistic about the future; hyper-fast, overtaking, yet seemingly immobilised by its backwards-orientation. The Chinese seem to act in both synchronised and infinitely differently ways.

Tomorrow China will be big, with yet more superlatives and many huge numbers. That just seems to be how China is.

Trends in China’s systems: interdependent impacts across societal groups
To better understand China’s future society, let’s look at some selected systemic and societal phenomena and developments (i.e. trends). These will increasingly impact on groups of people in Chinese society over the coming ten years.²

By nature these trends are interdependent: the system has an impact on people (whether rural, urban, poor, rich, coastal or inland Chinese societies); general (urban) society (including people of the rural, poorer areas) impacts on the lives of the urban upper middle classes; and their demands greatly impact on the systems of China – political, regulatory, environmental, etc.³

China’s systems⁴

- **Growing Wealth Gap:** China’s boom produces very unevenly distributed wealth. The urban upper classes see rapid income and asset growth while the majority are left behind, kept motivated by the political slogan “小康” (xiaokang) – a moderately wealthy decent middle class life for everyone within (potential!) reach.⁵
- **Made-in-China Identification:** China™ changes its global identity – brands are becoming established on the global stage, gradually leaving the ‘cheap’ image behind.
- **China’s Domestic Luxury Services & Products:** rapidly developing services target the needs of the wealthy, e.g. spas, luxury resorts, VIP fitness and yoga clubs, exclusive holi-

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² This article aims to highlight some developments in China and raise awareness of these trends; the keen reader can easily research further information to check these briefly descriptions. For Chinese readers, this analysis might also be of interest, since this is the selection and perspective of an external European observer, providing educated speculation on China’s future and societal developments.

³ For approximate sizes of the societal groups when we refer to “system”, “general society”, and “urban upper middle class”, see footnotes for the following three sub-headings.

⁴ “China’s Systems” refers to developments at macro-societal level, phenomena with an impact on general urban society and the urban upper classes. The five themes described are phenomena that will have a great impact on China’s future direction, e.g. sources of wealth creation driven and steered by Chinese mental models, political, regulatory and environmental factors.

⁵ 小康 (xiaokang): Prosperity, Period of Peace and Prosperity, including 小, which means small, moderate. This term can be seen as a political term to emphasize the government’s motivation for social stability through “moderate wealth for all” – and as signal that socialist China is neither willing nor able to pursue the Western stage of middle class society on a comparable high level of materialism.
days abroad. Products develop in response to demand and build their own brand, satisfying the needs of the affluent for luxurious experiences, refinement and exclusiveness. A typical ‘brand journey’ of Chinese products on its way to ‘luxury’: first, become a brand in China; second, go overseas; third, re-enter China as a global premium brand.

Top-down Environmentalism: typically any initiative is triggered by a top-down government edict and only gradually, pragmatically (if feasible!) is taken up by the people. For example, environmentalism is initiated top-down rather than demanded by citizens in China: in the past, there was low environmental consciousness and significant lack of constraint. Despite extremely heavy pollution, individual indifference persists, giving priority to economic progress. The consequences are indirect, through political and public demand for regulation, e.g. growth in individual car use vs. regulated auctions of limited car number plates in heavily polluted and congested major cities of Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing.

Doom-Boom: China’s 4th Way to Modernisation – doomed to be poor but not abandoned: in a paternalistic way, the Chinese government gives close attention to support of the lower income classes (cp. 小康), while the highest income class flourishes continuously. The Price of Rise seems as high as the rise itself.

Future trends of general (urban) Chinese society

A Prosperous Future: large parts of the Chinese middle class believe strongly in a bright, prosperous future for their country and themselves. High volatility and resulting inconveniences are tolerated in the short run.

Gigalomania – Exceeding the American ‘Big-is-Better’ Mentality: urban Chinese are hyper-technophile and neophile. The newest is almost too old. The current is definitely outdated. The biggest is almost too small. Users inform themselves on the go via mobile devices about latest trends abroad, check reviews/blogs by overseas Chinese, and make an online best-deal purchase with home delivery.

Desire for Visual Opulence: Chinese sensual perception is dominated by a superabundance of visual impressions.

Guanxi is Key: there is nothing but relationship. Chinese people reduce complexity and uncertainty mainly through social relations. Trust-building and personal relations are favoured over systems and formal (written) law. Family ties are as strong as ever. The Chinese are high users of SMS, cell phones, (Chinese) networks, chat rooms and internet-based exchange systems of consumers’ experiences, product quality and trader reliability checks. The Chinese internet services culture differs greatly from the West.

Trend Translators: latest Chinese consumer trends are fed by Asian (technology: Japan; young fashion: Korea/Taiwan/Japan/Hong Kong) and Western developments (design: American, European; sophisticated mature fashion, haute couture: Paris, Milan;
interiors: Scandinavian, English, American neo-Rococo Baroque mix), mixed with Chinese influences (i.e. fusion-styles).

- **Globalising Patriots:** a strong sense of Chinese identity, culture and achievements. Growing self-esteem is fuelled by economic progress and modernisation. However, in consumption, foreign products and brands – valued for superior performance and quality – are preferred in many markets and segments.

- **Disloyal Brand Consciousness:** Chinese consumers are increasingly brand-conscious while loyalty remains low due to little product experience, unmet expectations and infancy-stage markets. The Chinese are ‘spoilt for choice’, confronted with countless global brands. This will gradually change, through individual purchasing power, exposure to (domestic) alternatives and consumer experience.

- **Enchanted Life:** there is a return to pre-1949/1966 traditions of symbols, magic and superstition in everyday life, mostly among urban Southern Chinese. The sources are unbroken rural area traditions. Trendsetters are the continuous stream of first generation urban arrivals. The belief in beings, energies and forces beyond the sensual world is an omnipresent societal phenomenon in China – visible also through the Chinese obsession with luck and chance, numbers and dates, e.g. in gambling or business.

- **Little Emperor:** China’s young urban parents are predominantly an only-child generation. Their only child – already the second generation of the one-child society – becomes overfed by consumption and education, surrounded by towering expectations of adults. Today’s young couples suffer from pressure on all sides: some choosing the DINK lifestyle. However, compared to Western European countries, China is still far from an urban single-household society.

- **Jealous Hatred of the Rich:** 32 years after Deng’s slogan “Becoming rich is glorious” – there is a strong rise in public criticism of just getting rich. The public keeps an increasingly jealous eye on the rich. Philanthropic deeds are usually regarded as seeking legitimacy for being rich.

**Future trends of China’s upper urban classes**

- **Newly Rich and Luxury Lifestyles:** almost all the rich in China are newly rich. Due to lack of experience of wealth, everything expensive is still considered luxurious for the big group of typically style-inexperienced Nouveau Riche. On the other hand, young Chinese elites are becoming increasingly sophisticated about luxury. This is the new Chinese Style Elite, a trend-setting, jet-setting, very global-style-aware and influential group, who are catching up at an enormous speed. However, the size of this group is much smaller than the Nouveau Riche, albeit growing fast in influence.

- **Triple 2nd:** a large number of upper class families want more and more – and therefore invest in ‘2nd items’: a 2nd child, 2nd home, and/or a 2nd family in another city or another country. It might be a 2nd apartment in another Chinese city (or for the child to

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9 DINKs: household with double income, no kids.

10 The people described as “China’s Upper Urban Class” are the top 2.5% of the urban population, i.e. 15 million people, who enjoy an annual household income from a 300,000 RMB. From a mainland perspective, most of the Overseas Chinese (海外华人) also add to this group, around 50%. (15-30 million) They should be mentioned here, since they serve partly as role models, and have a great trend-setting impact on Mainland China. Note that this number, i.e. 30–45 million, exceeds the total population of the Benelux countries.

11 Some rich married men cultivate as a status symbol / sign of conspicuous consumption a second family, starting with a 2nd wife (二奶), whose status is increased by her own apartment, car, their own child, etc.
study abroad), 2nd academic degree (MBA), 2nd citizenship\textsuperscript{12}, 2nd investment/business abroad, 2nd holiday house abroad, etc.

- **Pink Collar Queens**: top middle class entrepreneurial women, with a solid financial background; these Pink Collar Queens increasingly exchange the workplace for the dining room. They don't do housework but instead manage business and family relations.

- **Another 2nd Life**: after earning their ‘first million', the newly rich work less and have more spare time. They reorient their lives towards social and individual self-marketing.

- **Immaterial Consumption**: the rich like to show off their wealth, but the competition changes from premium goods (tangibles) to a new currency: intangibles (premium services). This is one way rich people find meaning in their lives. But sociologists observe rich people who desperately search for meaning in life – and sometimes do not succeed.

- **In The Mood for Emptiness**: the luxury lives of some elites are exhausting – or become boring. They face huge pressures and can no longer find excitement in their lives, feeling unhappy, desperate, depressed and empty. There is a high and growing suicide rate among the rich. Owning everything but not knowing what to do next, some stay in bed until after noon thinking: "shall I get my 6th car – a Mercedes Benz AMG G55 – or shall I commit suicide today?"

- **Green Label**: products labelled green generate higher demand – especially among the wealthy, wanting to demonstrate their ecological concerns and supreme taste. A trend among the wealthy, while food quality is increasingly controlled top-down in China. The consumers of green products consist of a very small group, the committed sophisticated greens (including LOHAS\textsuperscript{13}), longing for a more authentic lifestyle. These trendsetters act as role models for the much larger group of so-called trendy mainstream greens, who purchase any products labelled green, firstly as status symbols (fresh, trendy intangibles) and secondly because it is political correct and follows government demand for more sustainability – although in a painless way since their mainstream consumer behaviour and mental models are barely challenged.

- **Simplification (aesthetics)**: rising stress from the avalanche of brands, trends, and products and a desire for relief. Decoration style and materials are elementary, simple, plain and reduced. Some design principles are borrowed from Western design schools, re-contextualised and merged eclectically with ancient Chinese elements into an innovative modern design fusion.

China’s (unknown) futures

In setting out these trends, there seems to be one obvious question: how will China’s society manage psychologically and financially the dynamics of rapid change? The Chinese need to finance their way of modernisation, even if wealth distribution mechanisms will not reverse growing disparities.

There might still be high-level economic growth during the next decade – *Future Fortune*. Some Chinese industries are extremely promising for earning the nation’s future wealth and have the power to establish new worldwide brands: home appliances, electronics, (e-auto-) mobility, renewable energy and internet services.

If economic growth does not continue and stabilise, what might happen? The Chi-

\textsuperscript{12} Among the phenomenon that Chinese like to acquire are foreign passports without becoming non-Chinese in terms of mentality. Another growing trend is, that women with means deliver their child abroad, e.g. in the USA, so that the baby has an American passport.

\textsuperscript{13} LOHAS: Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability
Chinese survived depressions in their long history through what can be called 'collective hibernation'. During glorious times, the Chinese tend to fill their store cupboards, preparing for and anticipating hibernation hardship times. This includes both financial (reserves and savings) and psycho-cultural survival mechanisms, i.e. pragmatic stabilising traditions of keeping expectations 'low enough' – just in case it gets tough again. Government systems and strategies for steering the macro-economy reflect a mentality and practice of frugality. Whereas the West builds up lending systems, the East is, in financial terms, the opposition player: the Chinese government is the biggest world donor to foreign (Western) nations through its currency reserves, while people in China have among the highest savings rates in the world. Indeed, without a universal public welfare system, you have to make provision for yourself and your family. Compared to Western industrialised countries on the path to modernisation, China first earns the means – gradually, step by step – before spending and consuming.

China's societies are currently undergoing a rapid process of differentiation in lifestyle and wealth distribution – never yet seen elsewhere. Globally, this is the largest redistribution of wealth in history – benefiting Chinese people materially every day. This process is unique – in size, impact and character. It will slowly lessen, balanced by a re-strengthening of China's vast reservoir of ancient traditional diversity.

Tomorrow China will be big, in size, numbers and impact. The world will become more Chinese. Tomorrow's China will be a mix, containing the main ingredients required for moderate sustainable modernity alongside ancient Chinese pragmatic stabilising traditions. Watch out for the superlatives and the many big numbers! It seems like that'll just be China.

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About the author:

Christoph Daniel Jia, born 1975, is a futurologist and entrepreneur and lives with his family in Shanghai. After a carpentry apprenticeship, he studied economics and business at Witten/Herdecke University in Germany. His studies and research took him to Africa, Russia and China. Before founding Linya International Strategic Foresight, he worked for the DaimlerChrysler AG at the future research think tank Society and Technology Research Group in Berlin. This article is based on Linya’s experience and daily project work.
Understanding How the Media Work in Mainland China

An interview with Dr Nicolai Volland

Nicolai Volland received his PhD in Modern Chinese Studies from the University of Heidelberg, Germany in 2004. His research interests include Chinese print culture, Chinese media and the Internet, Chinese film culture before 1949, and Chinese cultural engagement with the socialist world in the 1950s. Dr. Volland was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute of Literature and Philosophy, Academia Sinica, Taiwan. He is currently Assistant Professor at the Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore, where he teaches modern Chinese history and modern Chinese Culture. Dr Dagmar Lorenz asked Dr. Volland about the role of the media and journalism in China, working conditions and the implications for Sino-European cultural exchange.

Dr Dagmar Lorenz (DL): In Western society, media such as TV, radio, newspapers and the Internet are considered part of a public sphere characterised by a diversity of interests, opinions and structures. Acting as a community forum, they provide information, promote the free expression of diverse opinions and arguments and monitor politics and society as a kind of “watchdog”. What roles and functions are ascribed to the media in the People’s Republic of China?

Dr Nicolai Volland (NV): Firstly, China is a socialist nation governed by the CCP (Chinese Communist Party). The organisation of its political and public institutions was modelled sixty years ago on the Soviet Union. The internal logic of this system is therefore comparable to that of the former socialist states in Central and Eastern Europe. Even after thirty years of economic reforms, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rejects any calls to give up the ultimate authority to decide the direction of the country. For the media this means they are primarily tools in the hands of the Party. For the media this means they are primarily tools in the hands of the Party. During the Mao era, this meant propaganda – heavy and obvious agitation, with red flags, Chairman Mao quotations and model soldiers.

Today, the goals of the Party-state have diversified and so have the ways the media carry out their assigned tasks: celebrating the nation’s international ascent, promoting economic growth or enhancing social stability. The Chinese media today have more room than ever to decide what they want to print or show, and what means they want to use. What has changed very little, however, is that the media are forbidden to oppose the Party, or to voice different opinions. A small number of newspapers and TV stations try to ‘push the line’, bit by bit, but they must be very careful, and may provoke retaliation from the authorities. In short, as vibrant and colourful as the Chinese media appear today, their most fundamental function – to act as a tool of the ruling Party – has not changed much.

DL: How does censorship work in China?

NV: Just as the Party has retreated from media micromanagement, the limits for what is permitted to appear in print and on screen have blurred over the past three decades. The CCP knows it would be impossible to pre-approve every word in a vibrant media landscape. Instead, it has instituted a ‘responsibility system’, where decision-making is not the task of CCP-appointed censors, but rather that of the editors themselves. They are held personally responsible for every single ‘mistake’, every article or programme that violates
the Party line – or is accused of doing so – usually retrospectively. That puts editors constantly in the hot seat with a very stressful job. Fearful of losing their comfortable salaries and multiple bonuses – or even their jobs – most editors prefer to err on the safe side. Censorship before publication is the exception to the rule, practised only in a very few sensitive areas: biographies of Party leaders, for example, or topics like the Cultural Revolution. In sum, this system is much cheaper and more flexible than bureaucratic forms of full-blown censorship, and has served the CCP quite well in the long term.

**DL:** What does this mean for professional journalism?

**NV:** Journalists and editors in China are instinctively torn in different directions. As professionals, they are influenced by media practices elsewhere. In China, foreign media organisations are often accused of anti-China bias, but in fact they remain deeply admired. On the other hand, journalists need to earn salaries, provide for their families, and want to enjoy social prestige like everyone else. That means that most of them try to balance professional ideals with the best practices possible under the constraints of their work environment. While some individuals are willing to risk their livelihood for their ideals, most are not. That is reflected in the Chinese media on a daily basis.

**DL:** How do internet-based interactive platforms for exchanging views work?

**NV:** Over the past decade, the Internet has become a central part of the media landscape. This is no different in China. What makes the Internet interesting for Chinese users is that it provides a space for comment and feedback that barely existed before – in contrast to Western nations. Internet websites are handled by the state as a hybrid: half profit-oriented company, half media organisation. The Internet is thus subject to the same rules as newspapers and TV stations. Websites must appoint editors who constantly supervise comments and postings and delete everything that could be deemed to be in contradiction to state policies or the Party line. The logic closely follows that for other media.

**DL:** What are the Chinese equivalents of Facebook and other social networking sites? What are these and how do you assess their importance?

**NV:** Social networking has taken off in China, just as anywhere else. Due to a mixture of economic protection (the ambition to cultivate ‘national champion’ companies) and political restrictions (to prevent the erosion of the Communist Party’s power) most of the major foreign companies have been shut out of the China market. The ‘Great Firewall’ blocks Chinese users’ access to Facebook and Twitter; instead, Chinese companies have developed clones with very similar functions – the Chinese equivalent of Twitter is called Sina Weibo, the most popular social networking platform in China is Renren.com. Both companies are Chinese owned and base their servers in China, and therefore subject themselves to the censorship demands of the Chinese government and the Communist Party. In the wake of the revolutions in the Middle East, where social networking played a key role in the mobilisation and coordination of the uprising, the Chinese authorities have grown even warier of internet-based networking platforms.

**DL:** What else influences the media in China? How about economic and market conditions?

**NV:** Economic reforms reached the media sector only in the past fifteen years, much later than most other sectors of the economy – a reflection of the media’s special status as the Party’s propaganda tool. Economic factors now play a powerful role in the management of the media, and we witness management techniques that follow those of modern Western enterprise management. Ultimately, newspapers and TV stations must make a profit – otherwise they can be closed down and journalists lose their jobs, or with
insufficient revenue, their salaries and bonuses may stagnate. Interestingly, the increasing importance of economic factors has made the media not more independent, but rather more risk averse, and thus even more willing than before to follow the prescriptions of the Party-state. With more money flushing around the system, the risks of losing out have increased. The CCP understands this logic very well and has exploited it as fully as it can.

**DL: What does this mean for professional journalism?**

**NV:** Chinese journalists are under pressure to cater to audience demands more than ever before. That means mostly apolitical, mainstream entertainment. We see this on TV as well as in the press. What we would call serious professional journalism is restricted to a rather small number of media, while most cater to more popular preoccupations and sensationalism. Journalists often find themselves under pressure to deliver apolitical programme content that appeals to popular tastes. The rise of ‘soft journalism’ and tabloids in China follows development seen in the West over many decades.

**DL: Looking at the media landscape in China – what structures do we find? Can you give us a brief overview?**

**NV:** The Chinese media landscape is staggering in size – hundreds of TV stations, thousands of newspapers, and even more magazines and journals of all kinds. Very few of these reach national level audiences – only the most important, often directly controlled institutions such as CCTV, have an impact across the whole of Chinese society. The rest of the media market is highly fragmented, with regional markets that are difficult to penetrate. This is partly a result of the political power structure: The propaganda authorities supervise newspapers, TV stations and other media at national, provincial and local level. Province A does not want to see the media from province B have a major impact on its own turf, and therefore limits market access – not least to ensure it retains access to revenues. There are, however, exceptions. Satellite TV, for example, can be received across the nation. As a result some provincial stations, primarily Hunan Satellite, have made big profits by getting national audiences with its popular and sometimes racy shows.

**DL: In the past years, a few global media companies have invested in publishing houses in China. How is this business developing?**

**NV:** Because the Chinese media are technically speaking still propaganda tools in the hands of the Party-state, private ownership is illegal. No individual or private company may register or invest in a media company. This means that all media in China are either directly owned by the Party and government (central or local), or are subsidiaries of other state-owned entities and companies. Foreign investment is therefore out of bounds. There is a lot of pressure on the Chinese government to open up the media market to foreign companies but for political reasons the CCP has so far resisted. Only in very limited areas have foreign companies been allowed to set up exploratory ventures. The German publishing conglomerate Bertelsmann, for example, was allowed to set up a branch of its book clubs in China, but was barred from opening stores or entering the publishing industry. The advertising market has allowed some foreign companies to gain a foothold in China, and there are some joint ventures for fashion magazines where foreign companies provide a lot of visual content. In all these cases, however, Chinese partners remain in place as gatekeepers. The situation might change in coming years but the process is likely to be very slow, and the Chinese government will be careful to cultivate its own ‘national champions’ – as in many other industries – rather than hand over the field to foreign investors.
DL: This publication addresses cultural managers and stakeholders in cultural cooperation. What do they need to know about media coverage of culture projects?

NV: Since they are state-owned and operated, and have to bear in mind the tasks assigned to them by the Party-state, the Chinese media are likely to have a rather different perspective on cultural developments than most Western media. While state-sponsored cultural projects (art exhibitions, festivals, literature, music) feature prominently, independent (sometimes called underground) cultural production faces great difficulty attracting attention and getting approval for extensive coverage. Yet it is precisely these independent voices that represent the cutting edge, the most vibrant sphere of creative energy in China. Coverage of the latter is often limited to marginal newsletters and websites with circulation only to a group of insiders. In short, the Chinese mainstream media are generally a poor indicator of cultural trends, as the most interesting developments take place outside the realm of the state sector.

DL: What media should cultural practitioners use to get access to these developments? What role do social media play?

NV: The Internet offers a wide range of highly informative independent websites that provide points of access to recent cultural developments and allow for networking. Some of these, such as Danwei (formerly Danwei.org), China Digital Times, or Paperrepublic.org are based outside China, but are run by people with very deep knowledge and close ties to Chinese cultural communities. Others, such as Chinasmack or Shanghaiist are based within China, and are run by either Chinese with good English language skills, or by foreigners who are living in China (some of them with decades of China experience). The Internet thus allows unprecedented access to information and contacts within the Chinese cultural scene.

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About Dagmar Lorenz:
The interviewer, Dagmar Lorenz, is a publicist, radio journalist, Sinologist and academic in literary studies, teaching journalism and working in the field of Sino-European discourse. She is also the author of two articles in the Chinese version of the COMPASS publication: "Journalism, Art Criticism and the Role of the Media in European Societies" and "Developing Sensitivity to a Different Value System in Europe".
Value System with Chinese Characteristics

Gergely Salát

Chinese thought, culture and society is often said to be 'Confucian', although Confucianism is only one element of the ideas that influenced China in the past two millennia. Others are traditions formed in the prehistoric age (e.g. the cult of ancestors), different philosophical schools, religions and foreign influences. A mixture of different ideas determines the attitudes of the Chinese.

The same is true for their values. We cannot actually talk about a 'value system' here, as that implies something consistent. Chinese tradition lacks an Aristotelian logic, where 'A' and 'non-A' cannot be true at the same time. In Chinese thought, one thing and its opposite can be valid simultaneously. In the West, we tend to think in terms of correct reasoning and syllogisms, while the Chinese prefer to accept the co-existence of contradictory things, symbolised by the harmony between Yin and Yang – two principles that are opposite, but at the same time complementary.

Of course China is also a very varied and colourful nation. Cadres, peasants, artists, businessmen pursue different aims, as do members of different generations, inhabitants of different regions, people of different educational backgrounds. While these huge dissimilarities are normal for Europeans, we tend to think of China as a monolithic bloc with people like parts of a huge machine. The truth could not be further from this. And China is rapidly changing, so what is true today may not be tomorrow.

Therefore we cannot present a complete picture of the Chinese value system. We can, however, present some elements that influence how Chinese society works. But we should not forget that there are always exceptions. For example, the Chinese usually place their family above all, but there have always been extremely individualistic people; the Chinese tend to respect authority, but we can always find cynics and rebels.

Order and hierarchy

The most valuable thing in China is order, and basically all other social values derive from it. Anything that contributes to order is valuable; anything that endangers it is despised. The classical word for 'order' (zhì) is the same as that for 'governance'. Thus order can only be achieved through government, that is, by definition, hierarchical. If governance fails – which has happened several times in history – the worst thing of all ensues: chaos (luán). The most important task of the government is to maintain order – an extremely hard task in this huge country, and the legitimation of any Chinese government is based on its ability to maintain order.

Chinese society and Chinese notions of society have always been hierarchical. The need for hierarchy has never been questioned; the presence of those who lead and those who are led is seen as a natural phenomenon that secures order. This is not only true for state and society, but for all other organisations, including the family.

Society is a complex structure, where everyone has his or her designated position. Position, ideally, depends on virtue: the more virtuous one is, the higher the position. Someone in a high position should be respected, since their status theoretically reflects...
virtues, merits and abilities, not skills in acquiring power. This never meant that leaders were always the most virtuous men, but that is the ideal. The Chinese sometimes seem obsessed with position and rank; this is because the need for hierarchy is widely accepted and rank and virtue are thought to accompany it.

Every position in state, society, company, organisation, family, comes with a set of duties; how highly a person is valued depends on how well they fulfil their duties. The important thing is outward appearances. The inner qualities of a person do not really count, and their private life is rarely discussed. In fact, the Chinese have a completely different notion of sincerity and integrity: Westerners say a person is sincere if their words and deeds reflect their inner feelings; in China, sincerity means that a person's inner feelings are in accordance with their outward behaviour.

Family
Traditionally the basic units of society are families, the most important thing in the life of the Chinese. We should note that, firstly, Chinese families tend to be bigger than Western ones: they might incorporate distant relatives, sometimes hundreds of them. Secondly, Chinese families are more hierarchical than Western ones. The elders can guide or even give orders to younger members, while the young must obey and care for the elders. Thirdly, families do not comprise only living members, but also dead ancestors and future generations. Fourthly, families in the West are associated with feelings such as love and intimacy; in China, family is more a source of duty, and fulfilment of these duties is seen as the real meaning of life.

Family imposes limits on one's freedom, as everyone is expected to work and live for their family, obey the pater familias, and contribute to the welfare of relatives. On the other hand, family provides security: relatives should use their influence and money to support family members. If I am in trouble, relatives will help; if they are in trouble, I am expected to help. Family is an extremely important institution in a country with no real social security system.

The Chinese are often said to be community-oriented, rather than individualistic. This is only true as regards the family: the Chinese feel their most important duty in life is to promote the prestige, wealth and influence of their family. However, outside the family, the Chinese are just as individualistic and competitive as Westerners, or even more so. Unlike the Japanese, Chinese people from different families do not co-operate well with each other in a company, since fundamental loyalty is with family, not company. Family enterprises are very effective, but those run by non-relatives face many problems due to lack of trust.

Family is also at the centre of religious life. The cult of the ancestors is a family cult, but other religions are also seen as vehicles for promoting the good of the family. While Christians basically strive for personal salvation, the Chinese pray for a son, business success, passing an exam, etc.

State and civil society
Traditionally the Chinese state was modelled on the family. The emperor was the head of the family, the ministers the elders, with the people as ordinary members. Local officials have been called popularly “father and mother officials”. As in a family, inferiors had to feed and obey their superiors, while superiors had to guide and care benevolently for
subordinates. We must, however, remember this was the Chinese family model, based more on duty than passion: in Chinese families the elders could punish, or even kill, junior members. Individuals had no rights, such as private property, within the family and in the same manner people had no rights towards the state. The present Chinese government seems to follow the example of the benevolent and autocratic imperial state.

Traditionally, there was nothing between families and the family-like state: China lacked middle-level institutions and organisations representing the interests of a particular group. The notion of civil society in Europe differs from that in China. Although China has been inspired by European ideas since the early 20th century, Confucian philosophy still provides the underlying framework for China’s societal value system. Some communities existed, such as village organisations or guilds, but these did not have the same function than their counterparts in western societies.

Though the notion of civil society is now rapidly changing, it is still true that most Chinese civil organisations are founded by the state to transmit the will of the political leadership to sectors of society. Trades unions, women’s federations, academies are all organised and controlled from above, rather than initiated from below. This fundamental difference between China and the West should be kept in mind in contacts with Chinese ‘civil’ organisations.

Since the 1990s an ongoing discourse on civil society and on the application of this concept has arisen among Chinese intellectuals. This debate is strongly interlinked with the discussion on the causes of the decay of the former Soviet Union, China’s further political development, and the issue of establishing a new framework for state-society relations. Whereas in the early 1990s many academics wanted to “learn” from this “Western concept”, meanwhile the focus has shifted to whether the concept is applicable to China’s conditions and if so how to implement it.14

A distinct set of Chinese values
As we have seen, family is traditionally near omnipotent regarding individuals, and the state is near omnipotent over everybody. Chinese society is still bound together by a set of duties, and under such conditions freedom, rights, individuality, personal sovereignty are naturally not considered as values. On the other hand, a series of values emerge that the Chinese are very proud of.

Respect for the elders is one. While we in the West worship a cult of the young, in China old people are respected and are to be cared for. Actually the Chinese look down on Westerners who do not take care of their aging parents.

Another value is responsibility. People who contribute greatly to the welfare of their community are widely respected; those who think only of themselves are despised.

A third group is diligence, conscientiousness, love of study, high saving rates, etc. These values come from the fact that the Chinese do not work only for themselves, and their aim is not to seek pleasure. They study and work for their families and their child: they seem content with a lower living standard if they can save money for their child’s studies, so that the next generation has better living conditions.

Keeping face can also be considered a value. ‘Face’ (mianzi) means dignity, image, prestige, reputation, how someone is seen by others. Since a person’s value is judged by

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their role in the community, it is strictly forbidden to question that role: humiliating or offending someone is something like a crime. For this reason, the Chinese try to save face in all circumstances, one’s own and others. Open conflicts and debates, natural as they are in the West, are quite rare in China.

Personal relations (guanxi) are valued highly. Since other ways of promoting one’s interests are limited, the Chinese get things done through their informal personal networks: relatives, friends, old schoolmates, fellow countrymen. This guanxi network, based on trust and mutual favours, is essential for survival in China. While Westerners trust institutions, the Chinese place their trust in people they know personally.

Practical considerations
When we co-operate with Chinese people or organisations, the most important thing is to respect them, their traditions and values. The Chinese have heated discussions on the compatibility of Chinese values and the modern world, but outsiders should not intervene. While many Chinese are unsure whether their traditions, such as autocratic control, fit the modern world, they are still very proud of them. We should not question them.

Hierarchy must also be respected. Chinese organisations – including cultural ones – are much more hierarchical than many Western ones. In working with a Chinese organisation, it is not a good idea to pick those individuals who seem most appropriate for us. We should not try to bypass the leader of that organisation, even if he doesn’t seem an ideal partner. Chinese leaders tend to be men in their 50s or 60s, with less flexibility and language skills than their subordinates, but circumventing them would mean loss of face. Chinese partners expect us to be hierarchical and we should adapt to them: directors should talk to – and take photos with – directors, vice-directors with vice-directors etc.

We should not be surprised if bureaucracy gets involved. State and party are theoretically omnipotent and omnipresent in China. If a party secretary is present at a negotiation on, say, a joint exhibition, this may mean censorship to us, but is a sign of official attention and affirmation for our Chinese partners. This is much more important for the Chinese than for us, even in cultural matters. An artist’s value is judged by the community, which is represented by officials. We may smile at state prizes and evaluations, but they are very important for the Chinese.

Both in personal and official communications we should try to preserve our and our partners’ face. We should not bring our own conflicts to China, since the lack of a clear and unified will makes us ridiculous. Open debate is a value in the West, but a fault in China. We should also avoid offending our partners: for example, if they break a promise or do not tell the truth, we should not admonish them openly, as they would lose face; instead, we should circumscribe the situation very politely. They will understand.

If we have long-term plans with China, it is essential to form our own relationship network. No institutional contact can be as effective as personal relations. Trust is one of the highest values for the Chinese and, if we can win their trust, everything is possible. For that, however, we must be open, tolerant, understanding and respectful. And, of course, we should never lose our sense of humour.

Part II – Context Knowledge – China
FURTHER READING

About the author
Gergely Salát PhD is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Chinese Studies, Faculty of Humanities, ELTE (Eötvös Loránd University), Budapest, Hungary and head of the Center for Modern Chinese Studies at ELTE Confucius Institute. He has lived in Beijing for four years, and taught Chinese history, culture and language at different institutions in Hungary for over ten years.
The Impact of Western Rights Concepts on Contemporary Society in China and Europe

An Interview with Chinese academic Yu Hai

Yu Hai is a Professor at the School of Social Development and Public Policy at Fudan University. His book History of Western Social Thought was awarded First Prize at the National Textbook Awards. Major recent publications include SARS, Globalisation and China, Urban Sociology, Social Trust: Morality, Personality and Institutions, and Discourses on the Concept of Social Space. COMPASS advisor Dr Shen Qilan talked to Professor Yu about the history of Western social thought and its impact on contemporary society. This text is one of four articles in Part II – Background Knowledge – EUROPE in the Chinese version of the COMPASS. The editors decided to include in the English version one of the articles targeted at Chinese readers. The intention is not to offer European readers a history lecture on Europe but to let them know what their Chinese counterparts want to know about Europe and how they compare major aspects with China.

Shen: Could you first tell us about the origins of Western social thought, and how these various thought systems exerted an influence on Western society?

Yu: The wellsprings of Western social thought were Greece and Rome. Ancient Greece was a tiny society, confined literally to the conceptual scale of a City State. So the sociology of the City State was equivalent to what was to become the politics of our day, its central principle being involvement in public life, arguably the earliest social thought in the West. A Greek could not be considered a full-fledged man if he was denied the opportunity of participating in public life, listening to others’ speeches and offering his own arguments. In Greek culture, the core concept of ‘man’ was the faculty of speech, namely to articulate one’s opinion in public life. The public spaces designated for this were the citizens’ assembly, public theatres and the Olympic stadium. People took part in politics by participating in these public activities, through which human potential was released. By this very process of cultivation, man then became ennobled. Opposed to this public life was private life, namely the family and the kitchen. Private life was termed ‘economy’, and originally this meant housekeeping, which was supposed to fulfil man’s animal, physical needs. Public life, therefore, was to satisfy man’s spiritual needs and help a man cultivate various virtues. Only in public life could man fully realise his potential. Without public life there would be no ‘man’. Thus Aristotle said, “man is by nature a political animal”. This political concept refers to public life.

The world inhabited by the Greeks was divided into two spheres: the private sphere and the public sphere. Every day they made the transition from the former to the latter, from the uncultured to the cultured. A section of the Greek population, such as women and slaves, were confined to the private sphere forever. The public life of the City State was where humanity was realized. The concepts permeating Western thought such as public, participation and public good, all found their roots in ancient Greece.

15 The other articles in the Chinese COMPASS version in the chapter Context Knowledge – EUROPE are by Prof. Qin Mingrui from Renmin University Beijing: Basic parameters on Europe; Prof. Steven Vertovec: Transnationalism and super-diversity – a new European spirit; Dr. Dagmar Lorenz: The main characteristics and traditions influencing European culture, and Western understanding of media culture, journalism & art criticism; and Prof. Zhang Weiwei: The Rise of a Civilisation-State.
Shen: Then what about the Roman times?

Yu: Rome received its philosophical and artistic inheritance from the Greeks. Yet the social thought engendered in the City States of the Hellenic times did not necessarily fit the following civilisation, that of Rome. Rome was in fact an imperial concept, and by extension universal. The concept of a universal citizen superseded that of a city state citizen.

The Romans invented imperialism. The Roman Empire covered all the areas conquered by the Roman legions. We can safely argue that, at a basic level, today's United States of America inherited this Roman version of imperialism.

The major contributions of the Romans are in the realms of law and military affairs. The Romans invented the concepts of the contract and a legal person. The latter implies that a natural person and a state are equal before the law. They are both independent legal persons. A Roman citizen could sue the Empire. The universalism of such law was founded in Rome, and has never been superseded. Much of what now constitutes the backbone of the continental law system (i.e. civil law) can be found in Roman law.

Another significant Roman contribution is architecture. Their achievements in urban planning were extraordinarily impressive.

In addition, the Romans promoted the concept of 'humanity'. The Greeks were mired in the concept of 'man' within the confines of the City State, and divided human beings into citizens and non-citizens, Greeks and non-Greeks. The Romans subverted this concept, when they championed the idea that everyone under the sun is a brother. This is a universalist concept of human nature as well as a universalist concept of humanity.

Shen: Then the Roman Empire collapsed.

Yu: Yes, the next phase was the Middle Ages: in Europe, this was mainly one of Christianity. In this phase, theology took precedence over politics, or indeed over any other discipline. In the eyes of Christian thinkers, all other social organisations and relations lost their relevance and only a faith-based community could be a perfect one. The relationship between man and society was temporarily sidelined by the relationship between man and God. All social and political thinking had to conform to the highest doctrine, that of salvation and redemption, which constituted the highest goal of human life. Everything must be correlated to this goal to be meaningful.

Christianity in a sense created the concept of 'the individual'. In terms of the significance of salvation, the individual was created – we were all equal before God. This is what Paul termed *sola fide*, by faith alone. He emphasized what was to become the most important spiritual doctrine of Christianity – individuality. Regardless of one's birth, race or fortune, salvation is considered an individual matter.

Yet this doctrine did not come to full fruition until the Middle Ages were over. The early Church decided that salvation was only possible by joining the Church. This obviously was a principle of a community nature. There was of a principle of individuality, yet the Church decided to go with that of community and became installed as God's representative on earth. Through monopoly over such spiritual authority, the Church was able to become the largest land-owning feudal lord in the world. Precisely because the Church commanded both spiritual and secular authority, it became susceptible to the temptation of worldly power and hence corruption. So, when Martin Luther started the Reformation, he was also reviving the spiritual doctrines of St Augustine, those of an individualist nature. Luther was to offer to the social development of the upcoming phase the most powerful engine: the individual.
Shen: That would be the Protestant Reformation in history.

Yu: The Protestant Reformation was one of the major sources of modern individualism. When Christianity created ‘the individual’, it also formed, by implication, a ‘mass society’. The latter is comprised of the former. A mass could start the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution or the Chinese Revolution.

This is something crucial that Christianity contributed to social thought.

In addition, Christian culture also created ‘true enemies’, those distinguished by their faiths. Historically, for Christianity, heathens were their real enemies. All crusades were battles against heathens. After the 9/11 attacks, President Bush said, “This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while,” a line freighted with Christian influences. So I think Christianity also created the concept of ‘the enemy’ in modern politics.

Christianity also created a culture of its own. The theories of salvation, of morality, all originated from Judaism and The Old Testament. Judaic-Hebrew culture supplied the paths to salvation, to ethics, an entire set of ultimate values regarding the world, the reconciliation with the meaning of life and transcendental truth. Western culture finds its origins in two sources, one being the Classical world of ancient Greece (Hellas) and Rome and the other being the Hebraic world. Therefore we could term this ‘the civilisation of the two “Hs”’.

Shen: Then what happened in the modern era?

Yu: The modern era started in the 17th century. Eastern expansion had already started in the 16th century and contributed to the discovery of the New World. Since the Black Death plague, continental Europe faced pressures from a decreasing population and environmental issues, as well as shifts of military geopolitics, namely the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire in 1453. From then on the Mediterranean economy was in steady decline. Previously Western civilisation had been synonymous with the Mediterranean civilisation circle. Now people had to find a way out of the Mediterranean.

A key concept in the history of modern Western social thought is that of rights. The concept of rights differs from that of power, which dated back to Rome. By the 17th century, the concept of rights emerged whereby, in the ideal society in modern political theory, everyone is equal and has equal rights. Such rights were granted to all by Heaven. So, since the 17th century, such theories as ius naturale, ‘natural law’ and ‘state of nature’ have proliferated in anticipation of an era which would have the market as its core organising principle.

The theory of natural law as founded by John Locke claims that everyone in the world was born as equal individuals endowed with equal rights. The state exists to protect their property and safety. Locke heralded the beginning of Western liberalism.

Shen: Is it safe to say that these people were the single most important influence on the fundamental principles that constitute contemporary Western society?

Yu: Yes, it is. One of the origins of Western social thought is individualism, which posits as its core components safety of life, security of property and the freedom to pursue happiness, which varies with each individual in its definition. So individualism is pluralist in terms of value and no value is necessarily higher than another.

Liberalism came into its own in the 17th century, when the free economy finally managed to break loose from the shackles of the feudal economy of the Middle Ages. The technological revolution ushered in the age of Industrial Revolution and capitalism. Since
modern liberalism and individualism were able to find their historical agents, unlike the liberalism of the Greek sophists, they were able to avoid being crushed.

It is impossible to have a contest of values within liberalism, whereby all values are equal. Anyone can pursue his or her own set of values as long as it is not done at the expense of others. Machiavelli, the founding father of modern political philosophy, also expounded this, even though he supplied the techniques of politics without any principles to back them up.

Locke and Rousseau, however, provided principles too. Locke opened up a school of individualism based on rights: “I have freedom from tyranny and oppression. I have the freedom to pursue my own happiness.” Such freedom cannot be imposed on others. Rulers cannot impose it on their subjects. Freedom, or liberty, can be further divided into two categories, negative liberty and positive liberty. The government’s aim should be to protect the right of its citizens to freely pursue happiness, rather than to give them positive liberty. Imperialism is all about imposing its own value systems on others, something found in both Roman and Christian civilisations.

**Shen:** Today’s liberalism faces a lot of problems.

**Yu:** The contemporary experience is very complicated. There is neo-liberalism in today’s economics, against which stands communitarianism. Communitarianism has not done away with the concept of rights or the principle of private ownership, yet it considers it absurd to take the individual as the atomic ontological starting point of politics. Communitarianism holds that an individual capable of making contributions to society at large must find himself in a community with a rich civic culture where he may realize his potential through collaboration with others and through an understanding of rights, responsibilities and duties, as well as of his relations with others. Communitarianism is different from what we know as collectivism, which denies individuals their rights and liberties. Communitarianism, by contrast, affirms individual rights and liberties, yet does not consider the individual to be self-sufficient as a political entity. It holds that the individual is a very complex process of socialisation and requires involvement in social life. Communitarianism opposes the supremacy of rights and not the concept of rights itself.

One of the critical issues of the West is placing liberalism at its apex. This may have detrimental consequences, one of which would be the impossibility of cutting welfare spending in many Western countries. They need to constantly seek the support of their electorate, to meet their demands, which is an irreversible process. These rights are increasingly physical and materialistic in nature. Therefore their debt will multiply, with a heavier burden on governments. It is not easy to solve this problem. Tax rises and welfare cuts can be extremely difficult to implement. Such rights have become a heavy burden on society at large. The supremacy of rights will necessarily mean value systems that cannot be shared; hence the prevalence of relativism. Such rights do not have corresponding duties or responsibilities.

**Shen:** Then what are the duties or responsibilities corresponding to such rights?

**Yu:** The duties should be that these rights may be revoked if abused and that these rights need to be held in check. Communitarianism does not oppose the value of freedom and rights. Yet it underscores the value of communities and the public good, and aims to hold to account unlimited individual rights and liberties.

**Shen:** This is possible in ethics but not in the philosophy of law.

**Yu:** Now it is going to be realized in legal philosophy. The entire edifice of the West
was founded upon individualism. Democracy has since become a political game, so now in the West there are new movements. Now people are pursuing the concept of ‘good governance,’ which has as its natural corollaries the direct participation of civic groups in decision-making and social progress. Politics needs fewer hierarchies. We need to make politics more flat.

**Shen:** Is there any idea or concept of Western social thought that has an impact on the Chinese?

**Yu:** The most important are the two Western concepts of individualism and rights. The May Fourth Movement\(^\text{16}\) saw the birth of the concept of the individual in China. Women walked out of their familial shackles and advocated the freedom to marry. These were all manifestations of the concept of the individual. Confucius talked of a concept of moral individual, which does not have the attendant concept of the individual with rights. In China everybody is subsumed under an organisation. Identity is never individual but by blood: father, son, brother or husband. All other identities and relationships are mere extensions or imitations of these blood relationships. Friends are like brothers, subordinates are like sons, and so are students, since teachers are considered similar to fathers, despite the absence of any blood relationship.

There are boundaries to the rights of individuals in the West. Westerners do not really think for others, yet they don’t tend to interfere in each other’s affairs. It is quite the opposite in China, where people easily think for others and interfere in their affairs. This is because the Chinese never start with the concept of rights. Instead they make decisions based on kinship or proximity. When someone counts as ‘one of our own,’ he would be taken care of. But, if someone is considered a stranger, with no relationship to him, then he would be totally neglected.

**Shen:** The concept of subject also finds its philosophical roots in the West.

**Yu:** Correct. In philosophy, the concept of subject dates back to Descartes: *Cogito ergo sum.* This is a principle of thinking as well as subjectivity.

When the Chinese talk about the subject, they mean a spiritual subject rather than a legal subject with inviolable rights to his property. Such legal subjects are protected through legal rights. There has never been a concept of legal subject in Chinese history. The legal subject stems from the thinking of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, the latter being the most important founding father of liberalism and the theory of natural legal rights.

**Shen:** In the context of globalisation, can we ascribe the conflicts in contemporary China to the conflict between the thirty-year-old concept of rights, centuries-old individualism and the under-developed social environment?

**Yu:** Rights violations are rife in China. All the rights activists are pioneers who work against this power distribution system that smacks of highway robbery. Three decades of reforms and opening up have seen a small bunch of people reaping huge benefits from a power monopoly. Such governance is more or less exploitative. The main politics have become concerned with how to spend money, how to distribute and redistribute.

For in the institutions and traditions of China, officials have a paternalistic role. No parents would let their children run amok. Such paternalism is reflected at every level of Chinese politics. For parents of course there is no concept of rights. They impose things on you with benign intentions.

But one should also not be entirely optimistic about China. Two decades ago, for instance, when people faced evacuation and relocation, they had no choice but to go where they were told by the State, the rationale being the individual should contribute to the development of the country. No negotiation was possible. Now there is compensation available and the process is becoming more transparent and quantifiable, which makes public estimates possible. This is already a huge improvement. The discourse has also changed. So the realisation of rights has to involve rights practices.

**Shen:** *Then is it true that the Western concept of rights has a positive impact on Chinese society?*

**Yu:** Definitely. Now, China has returned the right to pursue happiness back to the individual, but not the right to dispense with the fruits of their labour. China has liberated the dynamism of man, yet left intact the monopoly over the fruits of labour. So, new mechanisms should be developed to make public finances more transparent and accountable.

**Shen:** *Which ideas in contemporary Western society are most vibrant and appealing?*

**Yu:** The intelligentsia of the West can easily relate to young people. The West is characterised by multiple centres of authority. Nowhere in the history of the West was there ever one single centre of authority. There are many civil society organisations in the West. Politics is just one of many centres. These civic organisations are also decentralised. In a society with multiple centres of authority, some of these centres are not within the reach of political power or capital. Scholarship, for example, is one such centre.

In Europe right now there are many critical forces. Many political organisations are opening up new access points to political involvement, which will in turn give rise to new, dynamic waves of social thinking. I believe therein lies the force that will transform European society yet again.
A CHINESE ANALYSIS OF CHINA

The Rise of a Civilisation-State

An Interview with Prof. Zhang Weiwei, author of China Shock

Dr. Zhang Weiwei is Professor of International Relations at the Geneva School of Diplomacy and Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Asian Studies, Geneva. He worked as a senior English interpreter for Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders in the mid-1980s. He has travelled to over 100 countries. His publications include Ideology and Economic Reform under Deng Xiaoping (Kegan Paul, London, 1996), Transforming China: Economic Reform and its Political Implications (Macmillan, London and St. Martins, New York, 2000) and Zhongguo Chudong Guanqiu (China Touches the World) (Xinhua Press, Beijing, 2008).

His China Shock – The Rise of a Civilisation-State, published in 2011, has generated many heated discussions in China. China’s culture policies towards the external world are by definition closely tied up with the ruling elite’s self-identification. China Shock offers an inroad into understanding such self-identification. Professor Zhang Weiwei’s decision to publish this book was a brave one, for he faces as much questioning as critical acclaim. He is dubbed the “staunchest supporter and theoretical researcher of the Chinese model”. He has been unstinting in his efforts to attract more critical attention both at home and abroad to the legitimacy of China’s development. Whether for those convinced of the rise of a superpower or those putting democracy above everything else, the perspective and methodology of this book cannot be ignored. This book and the critical resonances it has aroused can answer some important questions: What are the intellectuals of 21st century China thinking about? What do they make of China and, by extension, the destinies they identify themselves with?

Shen Qilan: Prof Zhang, thank you for accepting my invitation for an interview. Could you please briefly tell us about your book?

Zhang: The last three decades have witnessed high-speed developments in China. Many parts of the world are in for a shock when they feel that China is rising. New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman visited Beijing and Shanghai and claimed that New York bore more resemblances to the Third World. I have been to New York many, many times and also feel that there is not much improvement. Our airports and ports have overtaken New York’s. Our life expectancies, infant mortality and social security are way better. China’s developed section has already caused much shock in the West, as this section in question is by no means small. Quite the contrary. Behind this section lies the rise of the Chinese model.

Our model has a lot to be desired, for sure. But for those non-Western countries adopting the Western model, I cannot identify a single success. From Greece, where democracy originated, to the USA, the origin of the ongoing financial crisis, everywhere they face political and financial issues. Interestingly enough, many scholars are still joining in the chorus of the Chinese model in decline. I am of the view that the rise of China is not that of an ordinary nation, but the rise of a civilisation-state. People who are convinced of China’s imminent implosion do not understand this, which is where they got it all wrong.

Of all the four ancient civilisations, the Chinese civilisation has been the only one
to continuously exist over the last five millennia, before realising modernisation. The overlap of an ancient civilisation with historical roots and a modern nation-state is for me a civilisation-state. China has eight distinguishing features, including ‘four superlatives’ and ‘four distinctions’. The former are namely a super-large population, a super-large territory, a super-ancient historical tradition, and super-deep cultural heritage. The key is ‘super’, not just better than others, it is ‘super’.

Under the four superlatives, China has over the millennia developed its four distinctions: a characteristic language of its own, a distinct polity, a distinct society, and a distinct economy. So the larger trend of the development of Chinese politics would not be the replication of Western political models. The political legitimacy passed down through generations in China is based on public opinion and the appointment of talents to positions in government. The biggest crisis faced by the Western political edifice is the absence of the concept of ‘talent’. As long as the procedure is legitimate, then anyone is eligible for office. Whereas in China, rulers must possess talent; so, we have successfully combined elections with cultivation of the cadre. But in the West there is just an election system.

The future trends of our society will not be characterised by the struggle between civil society and the state, as promoted by some Western intellectuals. Such a model exists in the West only. I believe more in the model characterised by large-scale interactions between civil society and the state.

Much the same goes for the economy, which is distinct. The ideal model is a mix under the influence of both the visible hand and the invisible hand. A vision as large as this is determined by the genetics of a civilisation-state. The mixed economy is crucial to the success of the Chinese model.

Shen: You mentioned in your book the shock that China has brought about to the world, as well as the social transformation of both itself and the world.

Zhang: The fact that such an ancient civilisation as China is rising so quickly as a modernised nation is unprecedented in human history. China is both a civilisation-state and the aggregate of hundreds of nations. Historically we came into existence by merging hundreds of nations. Under the guidance of the Chinese model, I have just mentioned the four superlatives, population, territory, history and culture, all of them our biggest advantages. We have the most abundant human resources, and the biggest market, geopolitical advantages unrivalled in other nations, and our own historical traditions, a distinct system of thought, the most abundant cultural resources. On the contrary, if we give up the Chinese model and copy the Western one, the four superlatives will turn against us within a split second. The aggregate of hundreds of nations would turn into the pandemonium of hundreds of nations. The population would be the fuel to unrest. The aggregated territory would fragment and disintegrate. The traditions of the integrated hundreds of nations would be deployed against one another as excuses for unrest. And the cultures of the aggregated hundreds of nations would form the root cause of their conflicts.

This is not to say that the Chinese model is faultless, but to accept it as a given. It is crucial to offer an objective analysis of the pros and cons of this model. The rise of a civilisation-state as China will prove to be the most spectacular scene in the history of human modernisation. The rise of such a state will have an unprecedented impact on China in terms of the depth, breadth and potency. For one, our huge population creates an economy of scale. Take, for instance, the figures of automotive sales and production. All
the main car makers of the world are studying what cars the Chinese prefer. Likewise, our urbanisation process is top in the world. All the first class and second class architectural firms have a presence here in order to study what kind of housing preferences the Chinese people have.

**Shen:** *What is the relationship between the civilisation-state and the nation-state?*

**Zhang:** The so-called nation-state means the country is home to one nation only, as evidenced in the formation of France, Germany and Italy. In Western discourse, nation-state and ‘modern state’ have already become synonymous. In China, however, the formation of the nation-state dated back to 1840, when the Chinese started to realize that traditional states like China were so disunited that it lacked the adhesion and mobilising power of the nation-states in the West. And the efforts to construct a nation-state were completed around 1949. More importantly, today’s China is not a mere nation-state. We have a civilisation whose development has been uninterrupted in the past five millennia, which sets our country apart from all others. We are a civilisation-state that combines an ancient civilisation with a modern state.

**Shen:** *Which distinct and beneficial factors has the five millennia old civilisation brought to China’s development today?*

**Zhang:** The most important quality of the Chinese is our super-great ability to learn. If China hadn’t closed its doors after Zheng He’s
ten maritime adventures, and continued to open up to the rest of the world, the industrial revolution would not have been a missed opportunity for China. Now that we are opened up again to the rest of the world and ready to learn from every country, then the country has been enjoying a very quick rise in its fortunes. The Chinese civilisation is focused on practical reason. Western philosophical traditions are focused on the concept of ‘to be’, whereas in China the concept of ‘to do’ is the key. Due to the huge gaps in philosophical positions, Western-dominated reforms start with amendments to the constitution, then go on to change the laws before finally implement them. In China it’s the other way around. We start with ‘experiments’, reforms limited to a small scale, before promoting the success elsewhere, and write it into the law or even the constitution. Deng Xiaoping’s ‘Trial and Error’ approach also drew upon the traditional wisdom of China’s ancient civilisation. As long as China keeps its position open to the rest of the world, then it will outperform others as well as itself, eventually.

**Shen:** *Then, would the West look at the rise of China with an attitude of ‘overcoming its own rigid discourse and finally accepting our discourse’?*

**Zhang:** With the rise of China, more thoughtful Westerners start to mull over the problems inherent to the Western model and its discourse. The West should welcome the rise of the Chinese discourse, since the Western discourse alone is not enough to solve any global problem. The process of the rise of China is concurrent with that of the rise of the Chinese discourse. Western countries acknowledge real power only, so when China finally rises, the West will find every way possible to understand and explain its success story.

**Shen:** *So what are the problems that China needs to deal with right now? How do we face up to the fragility and defects of our own system? Can these defects be solved within the larger framework of the Chinese model?*

**Zhang:** The issues of corruption, medical care and education are waiting to be solved. We are encountering problems that have not been encountered by other nations at a similar

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stage of development. For example, the issue of highway tolls have not been encountered by countries where highways are not even built. We are dealing with the education of migrant workers’ children, yet there are no such people as migrant workers in many developing countries since they have yet to undergo urbanisation. The key is that these problems can all be solved, since China's comprehensive power has been stronger than ever.

Our high-speed development has not been marked by large-scale unrests. Europe, by contrast, has gone through over 100 wars of different scales, many of them fought outside their own territories. Back then Europe was riven with social conflict, but it was able to export conflict. Britain sent the unemployed to Africa, and criminals to Australia, and political dissidents to America. Back then Britain had a population of only 10 million. That was how they completed their modernisation, a process soaked in blood. After the 1789 French Revolution, France underwent over 170 years of chaos, until after the 1962 Algerian war, counting five civil governments, three royal regimes and two empires as well as one fascist regime, all of which were overthrown by violence. At the time of the French Revolution, France's population was only around 20 million. The system went through so many upheavals before finally stabilising. China, with its 1.4 billion population, cannot follow their footsteps. I am pretty eager to publish my book, because I want to convey an idea, which is the "de-radicalisation of China".

In this sense, the rise of China is not an easy feat. For the last three decades we were developing in the domestic domain. The next three decades we will be developing mainly outside our territories, and to obtain resources beyond our national borders, there is no other way than hegemony. If you want to develop an alternative path that is not hegemonic or imperial, the kind of clash is difficult to imagine.

Shen: There is the worry in our country that since the decision-maker is the government, if it gets it right then we develop, if it gets it all wrong, then we will be in a period of regression. What do you think?

Zhang: It remains hypothetical. Our system dictates that those entering the nation's highest decision making body must have completed two terms as head of a ministry or a province. So you will need over thirty years of experience as a high-level executive, and your words and deeds are carefully scrutinised. You will have to perform to be selected for the leading ranks. Right now it is collective leadership, with one of the collective slightly more important than others. So the 9-person structure ensures that there is a lower probability of the majority making a wrong decision.

Shen: You once said that the point of writing this book was to form one's own discourse.

Zhang: Yes, this is something extremely important that we need to do now. I offer you just one example. We have done so many good things in Africa, but the West can smear us, claiming that we are dealing with regimes with horrendous human rights records. Our official line of response is that China never interferes with any other country's domestic affairs. This is also a kind of discourse, but so far has produced little impact. Whether in Chinese culture or Western culture, discourse claiming the moral high ground is always in a stronger position than others.

So we can say, according to Chinese thinking, the eradication of poverty is promoting human rights, and it is the single most important human right. So when China is helping Africa alleviate poverty, China is also helping Africa improve human rights. No country can prevent others helping Africa eradicate poverty, no matter what excuse it resorts to. Such a discourse has a much stronger position.
Shen: You were once the interpreter for Deng Xiaoping. What impact did that experience have on your opinion today? What is your impression of Deng? What impact did that stint as his interpreter have on your research in international relations?

Zhang: I worked as an interpreter for Deng Xiaoping for three years. It has had a lasting impact on me. It helped me understand the thinking and approaches of the highest leadership of China. Initially such an understanding remained literal, and it started to crystallise after I got more experience and reflected more on this.

Deng Xiaoping impressed me most with his extremely long-term strategic vision. When I worked for him as an interpreter he was already in his eighties. But what he talked about was how China should develop in the coming decades, the first step, the second step, the third step, etc., all things that he would not see in his lifetime. But when he talked about these future goals, he projected a confidence, pertinacity, as if he were still in his thirties or forties. This was what impressed me most. He had a century-long vision for China, until it became a modernised nation in the real sense of the word. Today we can't find any politician with such a long vision. Western politicians always talk about what's going to happen in a hundred days, etc., whereas Deng was talking about "in a hundred years we will do this and that". China is still on the course designated by him. Confucius said, “If a man takes no thought about what is distant, he will find sorrow near at hand.” If we have already set the long-term orientation and strategies, it will be easier to solve more short-term issues.

A quick look at all the developing countries bloc: one of the biggest problems facing those countries adopting a Western model is what Myrdal, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics, termed "the soft state". "The soft state" has very weak executive power. The government is hijacked by all sorts of vested interests. Politicians are engaged in an endless tug-of-war, sometimes unable to reach an agreement over building a road. There is little improvement in people's living standards, let alone catching up with the developed nations. Each country has to work on its own path of development that takes account of its own circumstances.

Shen: You have been living in the West for the last couple of years. So according to you, what are the major recent changes in the Western views on China?

Zhang: A decade ago, only a few people were talking about the rise of China. But one day, they woke up to find they could no longer do without China. Their business partners, their competitors, are all Chinese. Now what worries the West most is actually not the rise of the Chinese economy, but the rise of the Chinese model, which they feel has mounted a challenge to the West's monopoly on discourse. Now China's neighbours are all more or less learning from the Chinese model, including some African countries, even Obama is learning from the Chinese approach and encouraging production and export and long-term governmental planning and high-speed railways, etc. These were all done under the influence of the Chinese model. So in future we should maintain an open stance and continue to compete internationally. Through comparison and competition we can move gradually to perfection.

Shen: What do you think is the main breakthrough in the next phase of China's development?

Zhang: Economic development and restructuring economic structure remain crucial, along with social reforms, in areas such as education and medical care. I am quite optimistic about China's future. The urbanisation of China has just begun. Each year
from now, two to three million people will become urban residents. This implies many opportunities for development. As long as China is able to maintain political stability, speedy development can continue for another 15 to 20 years. During this period, development opportunities in China will be greater in number than those in all developed countries combined.

In the 20th century, we Chinese were mainly applying Western theories and methodology to challenges posed by the West. We adopted democracy and established the Republic of China in fulfilment of our objective to establish a nation. We then embraced Communism and established the People’s Republic of China and set the goals of building a strong nation. Now we embrace market economy and have basically reached the goals of building a rich nation. So far, we have solved the basic problems and challenges in terms of a nation’s independent sustenance and development. When you have solved some of the most crucial problems of China with Western models, naturally you gravitate towards your Chinese origins. The concept of the civilisation-state is a crucial one in our reflections on the country’s future positioning and course of development.

*With thanks to Ms Cai Xin, Editor of China Shock for her support*

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**About Shen Qilan:**

Dr Shen Qilan is a columnist. She obtained her PhD in Sociology of Religion and Philosophy at Muenster University, after receiving a Master’s degree in Philosophy at Fudan University. She has been a keen observer of Chinese contemporary art. Dr Shen currently teaches at Shanghai Institute of Visual Art at Fudan University and serves as Director of the Editorial Department for Art World.
### Part III – Cultural Sector Framework – China

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Cultural Sector Framework – China

* Articles in the Chinese COMPASS version in the chapter CULTURAL SECTOR FRAMEWORK – EUROPE are by: Mary Ann DeVlieg, Director of IETM – International European Network for Contemporary Performing Arts: Cultural networks: a particularly European phenomenon; Prof. Klaus Siebenhaar, Institute of Arts and Culture Management, FU Berlin: Cultural sector and cultural management in Western Europe; Guoling Feng from the Institute of European Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences: A Chinese perspective on European cultural policy; Achim Mueller, Head of Center for Audience Studies, Institute of Arts and Culture Management, FU Berlin: European audiences for culture; Xavier Troussard, European Commission: EU-China Cultural Policy; and by Hanno Ratuerberg, Editor, DIE ZEIT: A reflection on the role of the arts in the 21st century.
Chinese Cultural Policy

An interview with Dong Junxin from the Chinese Ministry of Culture

Dong Junxin is a Bureau Chief in the Chinese Ministry of Culture. COMPASS editor Yi Wen talked to him about Chinese cultural policy, particularly in relation to Europe. They also discussed the aims for cultural exchange policy and programmes and their role in improving knowledge about China, its people and culture abroad.

Yi Wen (Yi): What is the status of foreign cultural policy within the overall framework of China’s development policy? What do you see for its future?

Dong Junxin (Dong): Cultural relations are a necessary component of national relations. Cultural relations have a positive effect on the stable development of relations between nations. China emphasizes the distinctive role culture plays in international relations, and supports exchange and interaction between different cultures. We make great efforts to increase the breadth and depth of our cultural exchange with other countries. Internationally, we actively promote a balanced view of culture and endeavour to bridge the gap between cultures. We strive to respect and understand the differences between cultures, ethnic groups and countries in order to create a favourable external environment for the peaceful development of China.

Through dialogue and an exchange of ideas, the goal of China’s foreign cultural exchange is to increase mutual understanding, trust and friendship. And it is precisely understanding and trust which create the foundation for improvement of relations between nations. China participates in a wide range of international affairs and while it strives for its own growth, it also shares its own opportunities and advantages with others, as well as accepting international responsibilities. If one sees a China with an international image of independence, peaceful development and friendly openness, then it is fair to say that cultural exchange has played an important role in creating this image. While continuing to promote the excellence of traditional Chinese culture, China still studies, references and draws from the great cultures of the world. This is both to maintain the vitality of Chinese culture and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the world. This leads to a balanced intermingling of Chinese and other cultures.

Yi: What is your opinion of China’s cultural policy towards Europe?

Dong: When Premier Wen Jiabao gave a speech at the EU-China Cultural Summit in October 2010, he indicated that we need to treat cultural exchange between China and Europe from a more strategic perspective and with a more open mind. We need an exchange of ideas and culture that is more extensive, in-depth and enduring, promoting interaction between their cultural institutions and encouraging cooperation in cultural industries and related products and services.

I believe that strengthening cultural exchange between Europe and China has deep significance. China and Europe, being the cradles of Eastern and Western civilisation, have made huge contributions to the progress of human civilisation. Cultural exchange between China and Europe is not merely a cultural exchange between China and the various EU nations. Indeed, it signifies a globally meaningful cultural exchange and dialogue between Eastern and Western civilisations.

China and Europe currently see eye-to-eye on many issues regarding world order. Both support international multilateralism and are promoters of cultural diversity and share many of the same points of view on cultural issues. The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted in 2005 at the 33rd session of the General Conference of UNESCO, was initiated, sponsored and pushed forward by the combined efforts of China, the EU and its member nations. Increasing cultural exchange and cooperation between China and Europe promotes exchange and dialogue between different civilisations and cultures, strengthening the communication of ideas and culture between different nations. Only after the seeds of mutual understanding, appreciation and learning have been sown and taken root in the hearts of the people, will the foundations be established for political trust and mutually beneficial economic cooperation. Only then can we create relations of respect, equality and mutual benefit and establish a global order of universal progress, prosperity, and sustained peace.

**Yi:** Are there any general guidelines for China’s cultural exchange with Europe? How can the most effective transmission of culture be achieved?

**Dong:** There are several notable features to China’s foreign cultural exchange. Firstly, China emphasizes cultural integration, both welcoming and adept at absorbing the best of other cultures. We learn and borrow from others in order to promote China’s cultural industries and satisfy the growing spiritual and cultural needs of the Chinese. Secondly, China combines a commitment to cultural autonomy with a respect for cultural diversity. While actively spreading Chinese culture, China strives to protect cultural diversity. China respects the differences of every nation’s culture and promotes fair and equal dialogue between different cultures and civilisations. Thirdly, China believes in communicating with others using universal human sentiments. We believe that culture can be used to make people better and strengthen emotional bonds. China brings together the desire of the Chinese to understand others with the desire of others to understand China. This leads to a better understanding of others, stronger friendships and gives everyone a better impression of one another.

Cultural exchange is a type of cultural dialogue. It is a basic function of human beings. Mainly it is the communication of emotions and ideas between people, and its effect is inevitably indirect and long-term, requiring time to take effect. For cultural exchange to reach its desired ends, for the people of the world to be able to understand China in an unbiased way, China must be willing to spend the time and energy needed to understand the audience to whom we are introducing Chinese culture. We must analyse their cultural background and how they go about understanding issues. Then we must tailor our message in the most effective way possible, making it both fun and easy to understand. At the same time, we will refute any misunderstandings or political points of view that result from prejudices. We will use facts to stay on top of public opinion and ethical discussions.

**Yi:** Can you give us some examples of foreign cultural exchange.

**Dong:** In the last few years China and Europe have held a series of important cultural events and activities, for example: the Sino-French Culture Year (2003–2005); Spanish Culture Year (2007); Greek Culture Year (2008); “Germany and China – Moving Ahead Together” (2007–2010); China as the Guest of Honour country at the international arts festival Europalia (2009–2010); Sino-Italian Culture Years (2006 & 2010); Switzerland’s Culturescapes festival with China as the Guest of Honour country (2010); and the various European pavilions and the first EU pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo.
In October 2010, co-sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and the EU Commission, the first EU-China Cultural Summit was held at the EU headquarters in Brussels. China and Western nations created an institutional platform for the communication of ideas and culture. Premier Wen Jiabao personally attended the opening ceremony and made an important speech. He pointed out that the Summit represented an important new stage in the history of Sino-European cultural exchange. It also showed that Sino-European relations had made significant progress. The Summit was well received by all parties and acclaimed in the international media. It had a positive effect on promoting understanding of each other's thinking and culture, and on the gradual improvement of how China is seen by Europeans. Through these events and activities, many cultural organisations on both sides have had the opportunity to work together. These relationships have not just ended with the completion of those events; rather, they have become an effective platform for future cooperation between Europe and China.

Yi: What problems or shortcomings are there in current Sino-European relations? How should they be approached?

Dong: With the increase in Sino-European cultural exchange and cooperation in the last few years, European understanding of China and Chinese understanding of Europe have both improved. That said, overall, there is still a clear knowledge imbalance. The Chinese have a far greater and more unprejudiced understanding of Europe than the people of Europe have of China. Naturally, because China's economic reforms only began 30 years ago, the imperfect or lack of understanding of China by the outside world is mainly due to objectively existing reasons. But nevertheless, insufficient, incomplete or intentionally misleading reporting by some Western media about China is also a major factor. So, we must try harder to spread unbiased information about Chinese culture. China must let Europeans gain a thorough understanding of today's reformed and peaceful China. This requires us, first to stay up-to-date and provide immediate feedback on international issues and important questions that people care about. Next, we must create an efficient network and platform for spreading information about China, and cultivate people who can do it effectively. The international voice of China must be heard. And finally, China must be introduced in a way and using language that is acceptable to non-Chinese. We have to understand what our audience is interested in while at the same time actively creating the message. We should introduce a well-rounded view of China and Chinese culture using cultural exchange.

At present exchanges of art and culture between Europe and China are quite common, whereas there is a certain lack of intellectual exchange or vigorous debate. China and Europe have both given birth to important civilisations and produced many great thinkers who have influenced the course of history. For this reason, there is an even greater need for China and Europe to deepen cultural exchange and cooperation for the improvement of Sino-European relations. What must be made clear is that China's desire to introduce its culture abroad is not to export its own ideology or value system. We only want others to understand China better. China is not trying to get into an argument about whose culture is more worthwhile. We merely hope for cultural exchange and mutual learning and appreciation.

Yi: What are your hopes for China's cultural policy towards Europe? What specific projects are planned for the next five years?

Dong: In October 2010 at the Sino-European Cultural Summit, Premier Wen and
President Barroso of the European Commission gave important speeches. The two leaders confirmed that 2011 would be the EU-China Year of Youth and 2012 would be the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue. They then went on to sign an action plan for the EU-China Year of Youth. These actions highlight the mutual desire of both leaders for continued cooperation between China and Europe. This set out a roadmap for the future of Sino-European cultural exchange and dialogue. It also created a platform for the widespread participation of Chinese and European organisations and the people of both China and Europe in this cultural exchange.

In 2012, the Year of China will be held in Germany. The cultural calendar will include exhibitions, performances (music, dance, drama, acrobatics, etc.), film, literature, publishing and other content. Moreover, 2012 will be the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue and, with culture as its main theme, this will highlight intellectual dialogue and cultural cooperation between Europe and China.

I believe that the successful completion of the cultural exchanges discussed above will provide an opportunity for people to gain an objective understanding of China. They will also serve to promote cooperation in every area and the healthy and sustained development of bilateral relations.

In an era of globalisation, no culture can remain isolated. So that the world can better understand China, we want to introduce those outstanding aspects of our culture to the world. To enrich the spiritual lives of today’s Chinese people, China is also willing to incorporate aspects of other cultures into its own. This interaction of Chinese culture with other cultures is how China participates in the balanced and natural development of world culture.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Chinese Ministry of Culture of the People’s Republic of China:
http://www.ccnt.gov.cn/English/index.html
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China:
http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/
For an informed view on current issues and developments in EU-China cultural policy, the COMPASS interviewed Xavier Troussard, Head of Cultural Policy Unit at the European Commission’s DG Education & Culture\(^2\) (DGEAC). For Troussard, there are many promising developments for culture in the Strategic Partnership between the EU and China. He concludes that we are at the beginning of a process where better understanding is required on both sides of the contexts and structuring of the cultural sectors in Europe and China.

Europe-China Compass (ECC): How do you characterise cultural policy and the issues for cultural exchange between the EU and China?

Xavier Troussard (XT): Since 1975, China and the EU have progressively developed a strategic partnership that reflects the development of their economic and political ties as well as their role in global governance. The EU is China’s biggest trading partner, while China is the EU’s largest source of imports and second largest two-way trading partner. To reflect the depth and breadth of their Strategic Partnership, the EU and China decided in 2010 to upgrade their bilateral relations on foreign affairs, security matters and global challenges such as climate change, the recovery of the global economy, etc. This partnership is fed by regular political (including human rights) and economic dialogues and many more sectoral policy dialogues.

The EU and China are also building on respective ancient, rich and diverse cultures. They are both Party to the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. However, it is only recently that the cultural dimension has started to develop within the Strategic Partnership. A specific policy dialogue on culture between the European Commission and the Chinese Ministry of Culture was launched in 2009, based on a joint declaration in 2007. Three main areas of common interest have been identified: cultural diversity, cultural and creative industries and the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.

Over recent years, the need to strengthen and expand people-to-people contacts, intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding and long-term cultural cooperation has taken a more prominent place in EU-China relations. Beyond a few concrete initiatives, the most striking evolution is the wish to upgrade people-to-people contacts and intercultural dialogue as a so-called third pillar of the partnership, next to the political and economical ones.

ECC: What kind of actions does the EU focus on in its current cultural relations with China?

XT: So far, the EU has had limited instruments or programmes to support cultural cooperation between the EU and China. In 2007, a special action under the EU Culture Programme\(^3\) allowed the support of ten cooperation projects\(^4\) between Chinese and European cultural actors and institutions. It gave an indication of the level of demand for such cooperation but the limited resources of the Programme did not allow us to make it sustainable.

\(^2\) [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index_en.htm)


In the cinema and audiovisual sector, under the preparatory action MEDIA International 2010, a project involving a partner from Hong Kong is being funded. Beyond 2011, the new MEDIA Mundus Programme (2011–12) might select one or more projects involving Chinese audiovisual professionals.

The first edition of the EU-China Cultural Summit in October 2010 illustrated the need to establish a dialogue on concepts and values to facilitate mutual understanding between European cultures and Chinese culture. It has also shown that such a dialogue can contribute to broaden the scope of the exchange and to link philosophical approaches and more concrete policy areas. The 2011 edition of the Forum will, for example, concentrate on urbanism, cities and the environment.

**ECC:** In 2012 the EU plans the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

**XT:** We are of course still working with our Chinese and European partners on the preparation of the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the detailed concept of which will be agreed at the next EU China Summit in Beijing October 2011. The main objectives of the Year should be to establish and develop long-term relations between cultural institutions and/or organisations in China and the EU, to establish a sustainable policy dialogue on issues of common interest, to promote and strengthen intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding between the EU and China through cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts and to contribute to consolidate EU-China strategic partnerships.

The scope of the Year should therefore cover a very broad range of fields, such as the various cultural sectors (visual, written and performing arts, music, audiovisual and new media, cultural heritage, translation and publishing…), but also link into related fields which contribute to mutual understanding, in particular education, language and youth.

There will be no dedicated funding for this Year and we will therefore have to rely on existing EU instruments as well as on the capacity of our partners, institutions and independent organisations, to develop projects and initiatives contributing to enhance mutual understanding between the EU and China in the spirit of the Year. The Year shall also be an occasion to reflect and dialogue with our Chinese counterparts on how we could build a better environment for sustainable cultural cooperation and exchanges between the EU and China.

**ECC:** What do you see as the challenges and opportunities of cultural cooperation and exchange with China?

**XT:** The culture sectors in Europe and China are very differently structured and it is difficult on both sides to fully understand each other’s contexts. The perspectives on cultural policies are also very different. We share a commitment to cultural diversity through the 2005 UNESCO Convention and the upgrading of cultural cooperation and exchanges in the EU China Partnership is a major opportunity to engage in better implementing it.

**ECC:** How do you see the future of cultural relations with China?

**XT:** We still have a long way to go to fully map the real expectations, the concrete possibilities but also the limits on both sides. We also have to get all interested partners on board. We are therefore at the beginning of a process that shall lead to the emergence of a vision for Europe-China cultural cooperation.

**FURTHER READING**

Part V provides further references and links on EU-China relations

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How the Cultural Sector Works in China

Tobias Zuser

The West is complaining. European countries struggle with their bond credit rating and, after the recent financial crisis, the latest trend has become reducing non-essential expenses. But among all the bad news about bankrupt states and rising unemployment, just one thing seems stable: China's annual GDP growth rate.

With the arts so dependent on public (Europe) or private (US) support, they are always among the first to suffer from recession or financial restructuring. Even well-known institutions like state operas need to make substantial efficiency improvements, as they manage on standstill grants with no allowance for inflation and rising costs. Then we read about another splendid new theatre in a little-known 2nd or 3rd tier city in China. But what's the real value of the arts in the PRC and where does the money come from?

With funding as the main focus, this article also looks at related political and administrative frameworks and the key players in China's cultural sector.

Policy framework

Article 22 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China says: “The state promotes the development of literature and art, the press, broadcasting and television undertakings, publishing and distribution services, libraries, museums, cultural centres and other cultural undertakings, that serve the people and socialism, and sponsors mass cultural activities.”

At first sight this might sound similar to the cultural policy of some European countries. But in reality China's cultural landscape has changed significantly over recent years. The reform started with directions in the 11th Five Year Plan (2006–2010), summarized in a speech by Sun Jiazheng, then Minister of Culture. These guidelines were the start of a new era in which cultural industry itself should contribute to annual GDP growth, something that could only be achieved if the current public institutes and performing arts companies became self-managed organisations driven by the market rather than by the state. For this reason, the Ministry of Culture reduced public subsidies to stimulate commercial development. Over the following years, state-owned performing arts companies and institutions have been transformed from inefficient public organisations into market-oriented and competitive businesses.

Soon after, the state media announced the full success of this reform, backed up by information on growing revenues, rising salaries and increasing numbers of performing arts companies and theatres. A first conclusion might be that China is setting out to create a commercialised sector, similar to the system in the US. However, one shouldn't ignore one important fact: although new regulations encouraged private companies onto the market, the transformation of national organisations is not the same as privatisation. The new market-oriented cultural giants are still owned by the state, in a similar way to the restructuring of public theatres in Austria and Germany, which were transferred to limited companies.

This reform in China is not yet over. Recently the current Cultural Minister Cai Wu,
who succeeded Sun Jiazheng in 2008, was quoted by Xinhua that all state-owned cultural institutions should become market-oriented enterprises by 2012.6

Players at government level
The Ministry of Culture reports directly to the State Council and is responsible for the development of China’s cultural policy and protection of cultural heritage. In addition, it directs China’s most prestigious art faculties, museums, theatres and performing arts groups, even if they have already become regular enterprises, and cooperates closely with the Ministry of Education. It also holds a supervisory function for the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television and the General Administration of Press and Publishing of PRC. Foreign artists coming to China usually need prior approval from the Ministry of Culture.7

Another key player is the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), in charge of trade and foreign investment policy, also closely related to intellectual property rights. The current head of MOFCOM is Chen Deming, formerly an official in Suzhou and Shaanxi.

Some important cultural industry events are jointly hosted by the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Commerce. For example, the annual International Cultural Industries Fair (ICIF) in Shenzhen, first held in 2004, which has become one of the most important events in China.

However, arts administrators and businesspeople will rarely deal with these high-ranking officials and decision makers. It is the duty of the provincial and local governments to implement, execute and monitor China’s cultural policies. At this level the responsible entity is either a Cultural Bureau (e.g. Guangzhou) or can be linked to other departments such as the Information Office in Shanghai.

Companies – the new players
Large cultural projects are no longer directly executed by governmental organisations but instead by large state-owned companies. One of the key players is the Beijing Gehua Cultural Development Group, founded in 1997, which consists of Gehua Culture Centre, Gehua Media Centre and Gehua Science & Technology Centre. The Culture Centre owns the China Millennium Monument in Haidian and recently opened the Shijitan Contemporary Art Center, an impressive new artspace west of Beijing's second ring road. Gehua usually focuses on intercultural projects, including exhibitions, entertainment shows, visual arts, performance etc. The group was also responsible for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Games.

For outsiders the structure of Gehua is often confusing, as it is divided into different limited companies that are part of the Culture Centre. For meaningful and long-term cultural business, it is difficult to avoid Gehua. One current example would be the Bob Dylan concert, finally approved by the Ministry of Culture and promoted by Gehua-LiveNation, a joint venture between Beijing based Gehua and the American concert organiser LiveNation.

6 http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-05/14/content_9852078.htm
7 Foreign artists need to get so called ‘performance permissions’ (yan chu zheng). Generally speaking only venues (e.g. theatres, museums), organisations, universities or Chinese agencies can apply for these. Normally embassies and foreign cultural centres cannot apply directly for these permissions. Agencies must have government certification to be eligible to apply for approval, but before they can apply for licence, they need a certain level of experience in the market. Information to be included in the application: list of artists with all personal details, set list, and where foreign texts are used (e.g. songs or other) they must be translated into Chinese. Normally the artist will be granted a 30-day visa (an F-visa for cultural exchange). Performance permission is required for each individual event. Often an approval is necessary from the Ministry of Culture as well as from the local/district office in charge.
Another organisation, probably even more powerful, is the famous Poly Group. This state-owned enterprise is one of the 123 large-scale companies supervised by SASAC (State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission), directly under the State Council. Poly Group’s business fields are diverse: military products, real estate and the arts. Poly Culture Group manages the arts and runs various theatres in East and South China including Beijing Poly Theater, Beijing Forbidden City Concert Hall, Shanghai Oriental Arts Center, Chongqing Grand Theater, Qingdao Grand Theater (Shandong), Wuhan Qintai Grand Theater (Hubei) and Shenzhen Poly Theater (Guangdong).

Academic institutes and think tanks
For some intercultural exchange projects, it is often appropriate to cooperate with public organisations such as reputable Chinese research institutes or universities, in particular Tsinghua University, Peking University, Central Conservatory, China Conservatory, Shanghai Theatre Academy, Tongji University, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts and Nanjing Arts Institute. The China Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing is said to be the only arts university still directly under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, whereas the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, known as the most prestigious arts university in China and formerly directed by the Ministry of Education, is now directly under the Ministry of Culture and Zhejiang Provincial Government. However, CAFA should not be confused with the Chinese National Academy of Arts, the highest cultural research institute in Beijing, which also reports to the Ministry of Culture.

Financing structures
Despite the fact that there are still so many state-owned key players, financing is dependent on different factors and channels. For any country or political system, basic arts management theory sets out three ways of funding cultural projects:

- Public means (direct and indirect subsidies)
- Private means (sponsorship, fundraising)
- Own means (capital, ticket sales)

Public means
According to the Ministry of Finance, the budget for culture and the arts increased steadily in recent years, with annual growth rates of between 10 and 20%. In 2010 the Ministry spent approximately 30 billion RMB, far less than the top European nations such as Germany or the UK (approximately 85 billion RMB). Considering that China is still a developing country, this amount seems reasonable. However, any international comparison should be based on a per capita cultural expenditure, which would immediately move China right down the list.

The distribution of public subsidies is determined by the internal political structure. Central government is responsible for less than one tenth of the total cultural budget, with the rest distributed by smaller entities such as provinces, directly-governed cities, municipalities, special economic zones, villages and districts. For 1st tier cities like Beijing, district governments can take a particularly important role in decision-making processes. While little public funding for cultural projects is based on direct subsidy, the normally

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8 All quoted figures are based on the author’s interpretation and analysis of official publications by the Ministry of Finance PRC
9 More details: ERICarts (European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research) Compendium www.culturalpolicies.net
low tax rates could be counted as a form of indirect support. With current VAT for the service industry of about 6% and rather low tax on profits, there are no discussions in China about the need for tax relief for the cultural industries.

Two of the largest public subsidy funds are run by state-owned foundations: the BCDF (Beijing Cultural Development Foundation) and SCDF (Shanghai Cultural Development Foundation). Both can only be accessed by individuals and organisations registered in the respective cities. The subsidy can be either a direct financial payment or a loan (credit-worthiness is checked in advance).

For most arts-related projects, there is little available public funding from the Chinese side (at least for a foreign project partner). However, many reputable events are organised by state-owned companies, e.g. Gehua Culture Group runs the annual Beijing Design Week, or are hosted by public organisations such as universities or research institutes. For intercultural projects, any public subsidies often come from the budget for bilateral cultural cooperation in the European home country, or directly from the specific cultural attaché or European cultural centre in China.

**Private means**
Fundraising and sponsorship do not play a significant role in China and are more reliant on personal relationships (guanxi). Chinese brands are rarely linked to the arts, since the arts are not seen as a worthy image-creator. Even large cultural projects are more likely to have one public sponsor (city, organisation, university etc.), rather than a handful of commercial brands.

Exceptions are made for prestigious venues like the National Center for Performing Arts (NCPA) in Beijing that – naturally – can easily acquire long-term partnerships. Currently, the NCPA is sponsored by Mercedes Benz, Bank of China, Rolex and Grand China (Hainan Airlines).

The Chinese ice cream brand Baxy has sponsored the Poly Theatre Group's well-known children's summer programme ("opening the door to art"). But, sometimes, foreign brands seem to be more active than local ones. The Today Art Museum in Beijing, the first privately-owned museum in China officially given non-profit status, was supported by companies like Mont Blanc, Credit Suisse and J.P. Morgan in recent years.

Nevertheless, in daily business life, improvements are needed to develop enthusiasm for sponsorship. Given the low tax rates and a difficult taxation system, the monetary incentive for private companies in China is rather low. In return for financial support, companies usually request a Chinese receipt (fapiao) for a tax-deductible service (depending on the industry). However, this type of receipt (which comes with an ID number and password) can only be issued by another legal person registered in China, and never by a foreign organisation (unless it has a legal entity in China). Much more common and easily found are in-kind sponsorship deals from transport and food and beverage companies.

In recent years there has been a remarkable increase in the importance of private foundations in China. Legal conditions and requirements were improved, but also the rapidly increasing divisions in society encouraged a willingness to donate and commit to corporate social responsibility (CSR) principles. The China CSR map currently lists about 500 organisations with such activities. Despite this, one should not conclude that cultural foundations are set to expand in the near future, as this trend seems to be mainly focused on social affairs.
Prominent private foundations are therefore rare and, where they do exist, are usually focused on the visual arts. One such is the Minsheng Art Fund founded by Minsheng Bank, the first non-public joint-stock commercial bank in China. The fund gives awards to outstanding contemporary artists and sponsors their exhibitions around the world. After a first cooperation with the well-known UCCA (Ullens Center for Contemporary Art) in Beijing, Minsheng opened its own art museum in Shanghai in 2010. In addition, the Minsheng Contemporary Art Research Center funds and promotes academic research and publications.

Other well-known organisations based on collections are the Modern Chinese Art Foundation, which has Belgian roots and was founded in 2000 by Frank Uytterhaegen and Pascale Geulleaume, as well as the Guy and Miriam Ullens Foundation that established the UCCA in Beijing’s 798 Art District. Also worth mentioning is the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation that features both creative arts education programmes and artistic development for musicians, writers and painters in Hong Kong and mainland China.

**Own means**

Although subject to an alarming rate of inflation, the arts in China are still affordable and, as the 11th Five Year Plan points out, they should remain affordable for common people. Depending on the art form and the city, ticket prices have a wide range, for example:

- Classical concert (30–700 RMB)
- Cinema (cultural events: 15–30 RMB, regular: 60–120 RMB)
- Local rock concerts (30–100 RMB)
- International rock concerts (130–800 RMB)
- Music festival (80–240 RMB)
- Acrobats and Beijing Opera (100–280 RMB)

In recent years Chinese 1st and 2nd tier cities have many cultural programmes and enjoy numerous free events. For intercultural projects, ticket sales won’t make a large contribution to income, but they can be useful as compensation or incentive for a Chinese partner (agency). Sometimes ticket sale revenues go direct to the venue or event host.

Other ways of generating self-earned income are licensing merchandise, food and drink sales, renting space or membership programmes.

**Perspectives**

There is no doubt that China has become one of the most promising cultural industry markets and this should be sufficient incentive for the West to participate actively. This requires knowledge and understanding of the legal and cultural frameworks. Despite China’s opening up, foreign investment still faces restrictions in many areas, which makes strategic joint cooperation and partnership both important and necessary.\(^{11}\)

With a growing middle class and rising incomes, there’s also a higher demand for art and culture, a sector now recovered from the blank pages era of the 1970s due to the Cultural Revolution. Nowadays, China defines its own cultural policy. Built on the foundations of socialism, the state remains present in all areas, whether visible or invisible. At the same time, commercialisation and efficiency are systematically promoted to keep annual growth rates at a level comparable with nowhere else in the world, and

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11 An example of a strategic cooperation is the partnership between the city of Beijing and the city of Vienna in the project “Heaven creation”: [http://twoheavens-creation.com/](http://twoheavens-creation.com/)
strengthening China’s position as key global player. That’s why this exciting and unique market needs our full attention.

For detailed information and sources see the author’s research paper Kulturpolitik und -finanzierung in der Volksrepublik China im internationalen Vergleich (Kufstein Congress on Sports and Culture 2009. Sustainable Event Management / Lessons Learnt & Prospects. ISBN 978-3-8391-7506-4)

FURTHER READING
● LINKS
Ministry of Culture PRC: http://www.mcprc.gov.cn/
Gehua: http://www.gehua.com/
Poly: http://www.polytheatre.com/
NCPA: http://www.chncpa.org
Minsheng Art Museum: http://www.minshengart.com/
Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation: http://www.rhfamilyfoundation.org/
Today Art Museum: http://www.todayartmuseum.com/
Beijing Culture Development Foundation (BCDF): http://www.bcdf.org.cn/

About the author:
Tobias Zuser studied arts management in Austria, Germany and Hong Kong. Before coming to China, he worked for different cultural institutions in Europe, such as Komische Oper Berlin. He was International Coordinator of the 29th World Conference for Music Education in Beijing, taking care of more than 1,000 artists and organising China tours for well-known ensembles like the Sydney Children’s Choir. He is currently working for H!TANG & China Creative Connections, an arts consultancy based in Beijing. His academic paper Kulturpolitik und -finanzierung in der Volksrepublik China im internationalen Vergleich (Cultural Policy and – financing in the PR China in an international comparison) was first published for the Kufstein Congress on Sports and Culture 2009.
As insiders are acutely aware, art and media projects in China are usually highly complex and have unpredictable outcomes. The market entry thresholds and the restrictions on creative and cultural businesses are more strict and harder to meet than in an average industrial project such as setting up a factory or a construction project. At the same time, the spirit of discovery, the blending of styles and ideas, or simply the promise of rich economic rewards, have created a draw that has players from the cultural world, both established and aspiring talents, congregate in China, just as they do in the more mundane industries.

This chapter aims to give readers an overview of the legal basics for most types of projects or engagements in the cultural sphere in China. By cultural sphere, we mean here diverse activities such as exhibitions, cultural exchange projects, licensing media content or a tour of stand-up comedians through expat pubs. For reference, the chapter includes a list of some of the more common types of services or businesses that are considered cultural activities.

We distinguish here between the direct provision of cultural goods or services by a European (or any overseas) person or entity to Chinese businesses, consumers or institutions (in WTO-speak – “cross-border supply”), and setting up a company or another form of fixed presence in China (referred to as “commercial presence” or “physical residence”). These two modes of doing business with or working within China are subject to separate rules and restrictions.

**Toeing the line: censorship and self-examination**

Although culture and creative industries figures prominently in the development plans of many Chinese cities, this sector is regarded as politically sensitive, especially if foreign artists or cultural promoters are involved, whose use of artistic freedom might be more daring.

The production and dissemination of creative content through print media, radio, television and the internet is under the tight supervision of various departments and agencies under China’s State Council (the national government) and their counterparts at provincial and local government level. The most important national bodies are: the State Council Information Office (SCIO), the General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP), the State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT) and the newly created State Internet Information Office (SIIO).

The Ministry of Information Industry and Technology (MITT) and the Ministry of Culture (MoC) and their provincial level subdivisions also wield significant influence by administering the licensing of commercial and non-profit websites. The Ministry of Public Security is in charge of the “Golden Shield Project”, China’s high tech system of filtering the Internet of content that is not compatible with its laws or official policies.

However, the most effective way of ensuring that media and creative people remain within the line is the requirement to practise restraint and self-examination and the rewards that come with such restraints.
Forbidden content
Mainland China has a huge collection of laws, regulations and official notices that restrict the creation and distribution of so-called “illegal content” and apply to all media and forms of cultural production. These laws provide broad definitions of what constitutes illegal content, which usually contain the following attributes:
- undermining national unity
- divulging state secrets (which has a wide definition)
- advocating cults or superstition
- spreading rumours and disrupting public order and social stability
- disrupting social harmony
- endangering the excellent cultural traditions of the nation
- being pornographic or vulgar
- harming social morality

In addition, content that touches on so-called ‘significant topics’, such as the Cultural Revolution or other “major historical themes”, while not always forbidden, must be pre-approved by the competent authorities.

With such vague and extensive language, it is basically at the discretion of the authorities to determine whether a news story, feature film, theatre play, or indeed any kind of cultural production, violates the law. The authorities show no restraint in applying these provisions in an illiberal way, suppressing anything which is deemed politically or morally unsuitable.

As readers may suspect, the reason for heightened government vigilance in the arts and culture sector is the power of the arts and media to transport ideas, opinions and emotions. It is therefore seen as necessary to control and, wherever possible, steer the creation of ideas and opinions through every step of the process. The focus of this effort is mainly the media in various forms but also other forms of creative expression such as music and art.

The government and the Chinese Communist Party (the Party) provide guidance and exercise censorship in various ways.

Print media
According to the law, publishers of books, newspapers and magazines must “stick to the leadership of the Party” and adhere to the “correct public opinion orientation”. All media organisations have to introduce the so-called “editor responsibility system”, under which designated individuals are accountable with regard to monitoring the content of publications. Chief Editors and other senior staff of newspapers and periodicals must have “firm political standing”, a “relatively good theoretical knowledge of Marxism” and meet other standards of professional qualification and political propriety. They are appointed and removed with the approval of the local press and publication authority as well as the corresponding Party committee. To ensure that editorial content is always in line with Party ideology and official views on certain issues, the Party’s Central Propaganda Department issues directives and regularly sends out lists of forbidden topics which TV stations, newspapers or news sites should not report on or which should be covered only by carrying the reports from the official news agency Xinhua.

Television and films
Film makers must go through a rigorous examination system with an upfront review of the screenplay by SARFT officials before the first shooting takes place, up to the vetting
of the completed film. The censorship guidelines reflect a conservative view of modern society, for example by requiring to avoid, or to eliminate, content which is “mingled with pornographic or vulgar elements” or which might “give publicity to a negative or decadent outlook on life.”

The Internet
Website and network operators have to ensure that they will monitor their online space and immediately remove content found to be in violation of laws. Providers of cultural content are subject to extremely onerous licensing requirements that are designed to shut out small, independent operators which are more difficult to police.

Internet websites for uploading and sharing videos or music such as YouTube must obtain operational permits issued by SARFT which must be renewed every three years. Service providers are requested to encourage the spread of socialist advanced culture and promote social harmony and have an obligation to monitor uploaded content for violations of the law within the very broad sense of the term used in all media legislation. Very similar rules apply to online game operators.

It is widely reported that at least 30,000 people are employed by various departments to police popular websites, micro blogs, bulletin board systems etc. in order to spot and help remove news stories or postings that are critical of high-ranking authorities, espouse ideas that could harm social stability, propagate obscenity etc.

The Chinese Communist Party also takes a proactive approach in forming public opinion through the internet by deploying an army of freelance commentators to post their “personal views” about sensitive issues in support of the Party line. It was widely reported that the Party or its affiliated organisations have been paying about five jiao for each message board or blog post (ten jiao make up one Chinese Yuan), earning these online activists the nickname ‘50-Cent Army’.

Fine arts
Art exhibitions are subject to the same content control as mass media offerings. This means that art that is considered to be “endangering public ethics, the fine folk cultural traditions or the unity of the nation”, or that is deemed obscene or a threat to social stability, may not be shown. However, control is somewhat less strict than for mass media, probably because of its limited reach. No advance approval is required except for exhibitions that include works from overseas.

Performing arts
The organisers of music, theatre and other performances must likewise ensure that performances are free from illegal content. The staging of any performance is subject to the prior approval by the cultural affairs authorities at the county or city district level. The police are required to do selective on-the-spot checks and individual citizens are encouraged by law to report harmful content by phone or SMS to special hotlines.

Advertising
Advertising agencies that produce films or copy for advertisements published in the media, including outdoor media, are subject to the same catalogue of forbidden subjects as the media outlets themselves. However, advertising agencies are mainly resellers of
advertising space and they peddle a commercial message and are therefore not the main targets of the government’s supervision efforts.

Despite the stifling heavy-handedness of some of the restrictions on the media and on cultural production, the system does allow some freedom of expression and even criticism of government institutions. State-run CCTV carries critical or investigative programmes that uncover insider stock trading, environmental pollution and similar incidents. Stories about some form of injustice or abuse of official powers can spread through electronic bulletin boards and cause national outrage. Hunan Television used to have the raciest shows even by Western standards. The government has been allowing all this, more than at any other time in past decades, because this form of managed freedom offers a way to release pressure and to cultivate an image of plurality. It is tolerated as long as it appears manageable and does not cross critical boundaries, such as criticism of Party elites.

Nevertheless, the most fundamental reason for the system to work so smoothly is simply that the participants develop a keen understanding of what will be tolerated and what might incite the ire of the regulators, and adjust their writing, filmmaking, art or other creative expression to what it is deemed possible to express in public. Overseas artists or media professionals tend to see censorship as the lesser evil as opposed to staying away completely.

Providing cultural goods and services to China (cross-border supply)
Cross-border supply is the most common form by which overseas artists, media companies, cultural institutions, or other producers of cultural or artistic works, provide “cultural goods or services” to China. This supply mode includes high culture such as big art exhibitions agreed between Chinese and overseas museums, a philharmonic orchestra performing in Guangzhou’s new opera house, or the design of that opera house by a foreign architect. But the forms of cultural export to China that have the biggest impact are probably Western pop music, Hollywood films, TV shows (such as the format for a dating show) and the licensed editions of glossy international magazines, in particular fashion titles and car magazines.

This form of cultural trade or exchange requires a Chinese party to import the cultural goods or services from overseas. There must be a domestic company or individual that:

- imports goods or hosts performances and exhibitions,
- acquires the licence to use creative content owned by overseas parties, and
- is in charge of securing the necessary approvals.

Responsibility for the conforming of the imported goods (e.g. an art work, architectural design, TV police drama etc.) with the “content rules” is mainly with the Chinese side.

Publications, films, online content
Print publications can only be imported by designated state-owned enterprises and after GAPP approval. Some publications, as designated by GAPP, must be distributed to organisations and individuals through a real-name subscription process. Although China was ordered under a 2009 WTO ruling to lift import channel restriction, the steps taken thus far do not appear to fully satisfy the commitments it agreed to upon its accession to the WTO.

Under the so-called copyright cooperation, an overseas magazine publisher can license its rights in the name and content of its magazine to a Chinese publisher for pub-
lication of a Chinese edition. However, there are restrictions as to the foreign branding that may be used. The Chinese publishing entity must retain full editorial control, although in practice foreign publishing houses use various contractual arrangements to have a say in the editorial content of the publication.

Foreign films must be vetted by the State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT) and are currently imported and distributed through only two state controlled corporations. The import of foreign motion pictures is limited to twenty pictures per year (the minimum under the WTO accession agreement). Chinese and foreign film studios or production companies may, subject to case-by-case approval, team up for joint production of movies and TV films on the mainland, in which case SARFT will review the script in several stages of the production as with domestic productions. Films produced under such a cooperation arrangement do not count towards the twenty-picture quota.

The import of so-called internet cultural products, which refers to music, online shows and plays, games and works of art, is subject to approval by the Ministry of Culture. Imported online content must be clearly marked as such.

Art exhibitions
When it comes to art exhibitions and stage performances with overseas performers, the situation is more complex than the mere importing of goods or licensing of overseas creative content.

In order to hold an art exhibition that includes works by overseas artists or created overseas, the organiser must obtain approval to import the art works from the cultural affairs authority at the provincial level. If the exhibition includes more than 120 pieces from overseas, the application must be filed with the Ministry of Culture in Beijing.

The applicant needs to submit a complete documentation regarding the planned exhibition, including the place, lease agreement, introduction to the art works and the artists and any other material that the authorities deem necessary. The host should demonstrate that the art on show will not violate the content rules explained above.

Performing arts
For a concert or theatre tour, the organiser (a licensed booking agency or a Chinese performance group) is responsible for the security and compliance of the entire tour programme with the applicable regulations. This includes filing applications many months before the first tour date in China with cultural affairs bureaus at the provincial level, who will vet applications and in most cases forward them to the Ministry of Culture in Beijing. In addition, organisers need to make sure that the invited artists follow the rules of conduct while in China.

In turn, foreign performers need to work with the domestic organiser in preparing application materials and, if necessary, making changes so as to adapt the programme to Chinese requirements. The actors or musicians are requested to sign written commitments that they will participate in an approved performance and observe Chinese law. While this may sound simple in theory, the practicalities of strictly following regulations can be daunting because performers or the organiser may want to change the programme along the way. This triggers the need to repeat the application process in respect of the changed items.
Starting a business in the cultural sector (commercial presence)

An increasingly relaxed foreign investment environment since the early years of the century has set the stage for large media companies as well as young creative talents to invest money and labour to start up companies. These investments follow the traditional forms, as prescribed by law, of representative offices, joint venture companies with Chinese partners and wholly foreign-owned enterprises (WFOEs, commonly referred to as WOFE in business circles) and are primarily of a commercial nature. Examples are commercial galleries, advertising and creative agencies, PR and event companies, the representative offices of Hollywood studios, professional photographers, or joint venture cinemas. However, China strictly limits foreign investment in companies that produce media content. TV stations, publishing houses, record companies and online entertainment providers are all off limits for foreign investment.

However, some of the well known online portals and social media sites (sina.com, sohu.com etc.) – while technically 100% domestically owned – are controlled through contractual arrangements with offshore companies, listed on the NASDAQ stock exchange.

Non-profit cultural institutions with an overseas background are almost non-existent. The Chinese government does not favour the establishment of such institutions as they are seen as potential vehicles for influencing public opinion in ways that are not compatible with the guiding thoughts of the Party. Some cultural exchange work is done by overseas foundations that have received permission to open representative offices in China. These outposts are sometimes involved in social and cultural research and exchange projects.

Many countries have set up branches of their overseas cultural organisations. Some of these are opened on the basis of bilateral treaties between the respective governments, others as branches of their country’s consular offices.

Establishing a company

Setting up a company in China is a fairly straightforward process, as long as its business does not belong to a sector under tight government control. Unfortunately, as indicated above, foreign involvement in the creative and cultural industries is subject to many restrictions and multiple layers of control by various government agencies. Some of these are shown in Table A.

The establishment of a company with foreign investment is subject to approval by the competent commerce authority, often the local commerce authority in the place where the registered office of the company will be situated. The most common vehicle used is a limited liability company, either in the form of a wholly foreign-owned enterprise (WFOE) or a joint venture company. Companies with foreign capital investment are usually referred to as “foreign-invested enterprises” (FIEs).

The basic prerequisites for the establishment of a FIE are:

- articles of association
- a feasibility study report (actually more like a simple business plan)
- a lease agreement for the premises to be used by the company
- sufficient registered capital to fund the operation in accordance with the feasibility study report and the debt quota rules. However, the requirements may be higher according to the rules for a particular sector (e.g. wholesale periodical distribution).
Sector-specific restrictions and conditions
Table A provides an overview of the specific restrictions and conditions for foreign investment in various sectors.

Working in the cultural sector
Foreign employees, professionals or independent artists wishing to work in China must be employed by a company, an academic institution or other legal organisation within China. The domestic organisation must apply for a working permit to the local labour authority. The decision to issue a working permit is based on several criteria, among which are the qualifications of the prospective employee and whether there is an objective need to employ a foreigner instead of a Chinese citizen. In most cases, the needs test is applied quite liberally.

A foreign artist or other self-employed person working in the arts or cultural field cannot obtain a working permit for themselves, unless they start their own business. Some independent professionals choose to brave the initial investment and open their own consulting company, usually in the form of a WFOE.

Intellectual property protection system
Artists, media companies and other participants in the production of culture have more incentive to create and innovate if they have an exclusive right to obtain the fruits from the sale or use of their work. Hence the consensus that effective protection of intellectual property is necessary for the development of the creative industries. China has a well developed system of intellectual property rights (IPR) that includes copyrights, trademarks and design patents, very similar to the legal framework found in European countries. In practice, compliance with legal statutes remains weak. Piracy of cultural products, be it music, fashion or architectural designs, is rampant. The main reasons are the lack of effective deterrents and a general culture of acceptance that some use of other people’s intellectual or artistic work is appropriate, given China’s current stage of economic development. Chinese courts are generally reluctant to enforce rights and often seek ways to reject actions on formal grounds.

Violations of copyrights and trademarks are very common with regard to DVDs, software products, books, branded clothing and luxury goods, but also in relation to architectural designs. However, many of the problems will seem familiar to readers, such as the controversy over online music sharing. Despite the obvious shortcomings, protection and awareness appear to be gradually improving.

The copyright of a work of fine art, literature, music etc. is vested in the author, unless otherwise agreed in a contract, for example in an agreement to commission a certain work. The existence of a copyright does not require any form of registration or official validation. However, the National Copyright Administration operates a voluntary system for the registration of copyrights. The main advantage of registering the copyright of a work is that it creates a presumption of ownership and priority, which any third party who claimed to be the real author would need to contest.

The copyright of the author is recognised regardless of his or her nationality or the place where the work was created.

Chinese law also protects the personal rights of individuals, namely the name and image of a person, which cannot be used without permission.
**Licensing**

An author can grant permission to a company (e.g. a record company or publishing house) or individual to use the work for publication, display or performance, as the case maybe, by entering into a licence agreement. The licence can be with or without charge (licence fee). No one has the right to use a work that is protected by copyright without the author’s permission.

Authors of literary, musical or film works can become members of collective copyright administration organisations that exercise their members’ rights and collect licence fees from users. For instance, the Music Copyright Society of China represents the recording industry and individual artists against the owners of KTV clubs. The government is promoting the establishment of copyright exchanges, a form of organised trade in copyrights, but the real impact of such platforms is uncertain.

Overseas copyright owners may enter into licence agreements with Chinese companies, e.g. broadcasters or publishers, and vice versa. If the foreign licensor earns royalties from licensing content to Chinese entities, such income is subject to withholding taxes – about 16% of the gross amount of royalties. The major part of these taxes can usually be credited against domestic income taxes in the country of the licensor.

Many European hit TV programmes, such as "Britain's Got Talent” or “Dating in the Dark” (Daten het Donken) now have their local franchise with a Chinese television station. The production companies behind such shows actively promote their programme formats to Chinese media companies, mostly the monopoly stations owned by the provincial governments. The foreign firms license certain content and help the Chinese side master the concepts and techniques to develop local versions that will connect with Chinese audiences. In recent years, it has been mainly British and Dutch TV firms that have landed license deals for their talent, dating or family shows.

There has been some unease among European producers, often independent British or Dutch production houses, that their programmes might simply be copied by Chinese stations or that they might be forced to accept unfavourable license terms. However, the idea or concept for a TV show is not eligible for copyright protection in itself and thus can serve as inspiration or guidance for anyone to create a new show. Chinese (and international) copyright law affords protection only to those elements of a programme that are artistic or intellectual works in their own right, such as the story line of a TV drama. Moreover, foreign TV producers can apply for trademark registration of names or logos used in connection with a show which can then be licensed to local companies.

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**About the author:**

Philip Lazare is a partner with the international law firm Luther and works in the firm’s Shanghai office. He has more than ten years of practice in China. He regularly advises on foreign direct investment, acquisitions, corporate and individual taxes as well as IP and media law. In the past, Philip has worked for a number of public service organisations, such as the Goethe-Institut and the Triennale di Milano.
### Table A: Foreign direct investment in the cultural sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Authority in charge</th>
<th>Conditions and restrictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Architecture</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Architectural or urban planning firm in China</td>
<td>Construction/urban planning authority at provincial level  Commerce authority at city district or county level.</td>
<td>Open to WFOEs. High minimum requirements: minimum registered capital of (CNY 0.8 to 6 million) and engagement of a prescribed number of local and overseas architects and engineers with university degrees and qualification certificates (depending on the type of projects)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting company providing design support and consultancy in relation to urban planning or construction projects</td>
<td>Commerce authority at city district or county level</td>
<td>Open to WFOEs, but the structure may be seen as an illegal way to avoid regulation. Construction designs must be vetted by a fully licensed construction design firm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commercial performances</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company operating a performance venue (theatre, concert hall etc.)</td>
<td>Ministry of Culture  Commerce authority at provincial level</td>
<td>Limited to joint ventures; overseas equity limited to 49%. Board or management must be presided over by a Chinese national; decision-making power must be with the Chinese side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance agency company (i.e. a firm in the business of organising concerts, theatre performances and other cultural events and booking performing artists)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting services</td>
<td>Consulting company</td>
<td>No restriction on investment ratio (WFOEs possible).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fine arts / exhibitions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial galleries</td>
<td>Commerce authority at provincial level</td>
<td>Open to WFOEs. RMB 3 million minimum capital required for engaging in the import and export of art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Museums</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(operated by an overseas museum, foundation etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>May be allowed in the form of a commercial company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Print, Audio, Visual, Internet</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale and retail distribution of print publications and electronic publications in electronic form</td>
<td>PAPP  Commerce authority at provincial level or Ministry of Commerce</td>
<td>Distribution of books, newspapers, magazines. However, FIEs may not handle the import (or export) of print publications. Open to WFOEs. Minimum registered capital: General distribution: RMB 20 million; Whole-sale: RMB 5 million; Retail: no specific requirement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Abbreviations:**

AIC Local Administration of Industry and Commerce (maintains the enterprise register)  
FIE Foreign-invested enterprise  
GAPP General Administration of Press and Publications  
MoC Ministry of Culture
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Authority in charge</th>
<th>Conditions and restrictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distribution of audio and/or video products</strong> (e.g. DVDs)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wholesale</td>
<td>Ministry of Culture</td>
<td>Only joint ventures. Overseas equity ratio capped at 49%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commerce authority at provincial level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Cultural affairs authority at provincial level</td>
<td>Limitation is inconsistent with China’s WTO commitments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commerce authority at provincial level</td>
<td>Import only through licensed import entity (normally a state-owned company).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet content provider  (for profit, e.g.: entertainment news,</td>
<td>Ministry of Information Industry and Technology</td>
<td>Foreign investment is prohibited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social networking site; online games</td>
<td>Ministry of Commerce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Culture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New State Internet Information Office</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NDRC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet content provider not for profit</td>
<td>Telecommunications authority at provincial level</td>
<td>Registration required. Provider must display telecommunications record filing number (ICP number) on its website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(incl. websites of commercial companies or cultural organisations</td>
<td>Cultural affairs authority at provincial level</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>that do not charge for their online offering)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising agency</td>
<td>SAIC</td>
<td>Open to WFOEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Commerce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Film and Television</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation of foreign individuals (producers, actors etc.)</td>
<td>SARFT</td>
<td>Limited to 1/3 of the actors in the production; Provisions for the Administration of the Participation by Foreigners in the Production of Radio, Film and TV Programs (ref. Guang Fa Wai Zi [1999] No.269).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Commerce</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio or TV stations</td>
<td>SARFT</td>
<td>Foreign investment prohibited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Commerce</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film and TV production company</td>
<td>SARFT</td>
<td>No longer allowed. Until 2007: foreign investment allowed in the form of joint ventures; foreign equity stake capped at 49%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Commerce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film post-production company</td>
<td>SARFT</td>
<td>Only joint ventures with the equity held by the overseas party capped at 49% (may be exceeded in certain cases). Minimum registered capital: RMB 5 million.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Commerce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinemas</td>
<td></td>
<td>Only joint ventures with the equity held by the overseas party capped at 49% (70% in certain cities). JVs may not own cinema chains; however, revenue sharing models are allowed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NDRC National Development and Reform Commission  
PAPP Provincial-level authority for press and publications  
SAIC State Administration of Industry and Commerce  
SARFT State Administration of Radio, Film and Television  
WFOE Wholly foreign-owned enterprise
A Fast-Growing Young Creative Industry in China

Qiuzao Zhang

The past decade has seen the take off of a robust creative industry sector in China, from the largest ever TV business, to an explosion of online gaming. It is very hard to imagine that, before 2000, the concept ‘cultural industry’ or ‘creative industry’ simply did not exist in the Chinese official language. This article considers the definition, development and features of the young Chinese creative industries, with some pointers for potential foreign investors.

The article is mainly based on desk research and incorporates the views of two experts: Chen Zhe, Deputy Director of the Institute of Cultural Industry International Cooperation Center, under National Development and Reform Commission of China, and Professor Dr. Klaus Siebenhaar, founder and director of the (KUMA) Center for Culture Management in China at the Institute for Arts and Media Management. Siebenhaar’s ideas presented here are mainly taken from his article for the Chinese version of COMPASS, and his book Culture Management in China: a German Perspective on Chinese Practice with a Feedback by Young Chinese Cultural Managers.

The political wind turned favourable
In October 2000, at the 5th plenum of the 15th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the concept of “cultural industry” was formally adopted as part of the proposal for the “Tenth Five-Year Plan of National Economic and Social Development Plan”12. Later, in 2004, the idea of “cultural productivity” was raised by the 4th Plenum of the 16th Central Committee of the CPC on strengthening the Party’s decision-making ability in governance and capacity-building. Then in November 2006, CPC’s General Secretary Hu Jintao proposed “enhancing the nation’s soft power,” a term repeatedly used in official discourse since then.

All three occasions were widely hailed by many in the media as milestones in the development of China’s cultural industry and contributed to lifting the subject to its highest ever profile level. Finally, on July 22 2009, the Chinese government officially promulgated plans for “Cultural Industry Revitalisation”13, calling for “efforts to support cultural and creative industries, video production, publishing, printing and reproduction, advertising, performing arts and entertainment, cultural exhibitions, digital content and animation production to be stepped up, and policies enabling such support to be improved so as to achieve a leapfrogging pace of development”.

In other actions, from 2009 to 2013 the state exempted a range of cultural enterprises from VAT, business tax and import tariffs. In March 2010, the Ministry of Culture and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) signed an agreement of cooperation “in support of the strategic development of the cultural industry”. Banks, insurance firms and other financial services institutions have since followed ICBC’s lead and signed simi-

12 A series of development plans of high significance for China’s central government initiated by the Communist Party of China on plenary sessions of its Central Committee meetings.
13 For more information about the Cultural Industry Revitalisation Plan, please see http://info.e-to-china.com/investment_guide/62081.html
lar agreements with provincial and local governments. Subject to local conditions, funds have been allocated to promote development of various cultural enterprises.

These political statements and moves almost certainly revealed the Chinese central government’s determination to unleash the potential of creative industries in China. However, one cannot help wondering how far things have come in the real market. What is the current state of China’s creative industry?

*Definition: culture and creativity and elements of soft power strategy*

To understand the definition of creative industry in China, one can start by examining its equivalent in Continental Europe, where the industry enjoys a longer history. According to Siebenhaar, the European classification of creative industries is based on the entities’ economic status. Creative industry means the commercial for-profit private cultural sector, as opposed to the non-profit cultural sectors. He says: “The Continental European – especially the German – conception of creative industries distinguishes industries and segments according to economic criteria. In Germany, the creative industries encompass cultural industries, creative industries and businesses, which are for-profit and concerned with the creation, production, distribution or promotion of cultural and creative goods and services. They cover the whole private sector of creative production, including the film industry, the arts market, publishing and media houses, private broadcasting, music business, architecture, design and fashion, advertisement, games developers as well as part of the IT sector.”

In terms of the segments of the creative industry (which has also become a synonym for cultural industry in China), it seems that Chinese industrial sectors classified under the term are similar to the European classification, except that the state officially defines three levels within the industry14.

However, the differences between European and Chinese definitions of the cultural industry go deeper. In brief, the cultural industry in China mirrors its starting point: as a key economic sector embedded in the country’s pursuit of soft power strategies. As Chen says, “In China, the development of cultural and creative industries is tied to the nation’s development on the macro level. The state called for converting the cultural industry into a form of ‘soft power.’”

Siebenhaar elaborates further: “The Chinese idea of creative industries is first a policy mechanism of stimulating and developing city or regional areas – it is a model adopted from the West and includes all kinds of corporations within the entertainment or art sectors. The coordinates of this common Chinese understanding of culture and creative industries are a distinct market or business positioning and a resulting economisation of the culture and education sectors. Cultural and creative industries, as special ‘industries,’ are subject to a macro-societal perspective of party and government. Their specific value creation does not differentiate between material and immaterial or ideational, but instead focuses on social welfare. This results in the unity of cultural and economic policies, of the cultural and the economic spheres of value.”

The strong soft power ideology can be seen repeatedly in China’s creative industry discourse. “Turning the industry into soft power is a challenge we face and we’re still in the exploratory stages,” says Chen.

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14 According to National Bureau of Statistics of China’s Cultural Industry Classification Standards, the Culture Industry’s “core level” includes news services, publishing and copyright services, radio, film and television services and cultural arts services. The “peripheral level” includes the Internet-based information sector, tourism, entertainment-oriented cultural and recreational services, advertising, exhibition, business agent-oriented cultural services and other services. The “related level” includes cultural goods, equipment and related cultural production and sales activities.
A hot sunrise industry

With the favourable political wind, the creative industry in China has grown "by leaps and bounds", according to the second national economic census in 2008. Research by UK Trade & Investment and the China-Britain Business Council (UKTI-CBBC) revealed that the creative industry GDP increased at an annual average of 22% from 2004 to 2008, higher than national GDP. In 2009, the creative industry already accounted for 2.5% of national GDP. This rate of increase has already surpassed the electronic information industry, considered a hot ‘sunrise industry’ in China.

In 2010, the total creative industry in China comprised more than 50,000 enterprises, 8,000 of these owned by the state. As one can imagine, industry sectors are not expanding at equal speeds. According to the UKTI-CBBC report, the National Statistics Bureau of China reported in 2008 that “advertising, IT services, tourism, indoor entertainment, cable TV service and publishing” are the “most profitable sectors” within the creative industry, then accounting for 66% of profits.

TV stands out as a striking income-generating area, from equipment to production, transmission to broadcasting and advertising. China now has the largest TV coverage in the world, with TV broadcasting reaching 97.2% of its population (UKTI-CBBC report) and a majority, if not all, channels operate on for-profit basis. It is generally expected that this huge sector will see even faster growth, as officials and businesses have already taken action to support the network and technologies required for cable TV, digital TV, HDTV and even IPTV.

Another area worth mentioning is online gaming. With increased spending power among the fun-seeking, internet-savvy younger generation, online gaming witnessed an explosion in the past decade, overtaking traditional independent and mobile games. This specific industry sector increased 73.5%, 61.5%, 76.6% and 39.4% respectively from 2006 to 2009, with a slower but still robust 26.3% increase in 2010.

Features and problems of a young industry

The picture looks promising. However, a note of caution always accompanies explosive development rates. Though fast-growing, China’s creative industry is still at an early stage with special features and specific problems, especially compared to the West. Some issues identified are:

The convergence of ‘high and low’

Dr. Siebenhaar identifies “fluidity” as a differentiating feature between the Chinese creative market and that of Europe: "In today's China the separation between the traditional cultural and entertainment industries is much more fluid, because mass and popular culture are highly regarded. Mainly due to the strong influence of Anglo-American pop culture, there has been a convergence between non-profit high culture and full-for-profit pop and consumption culture. On the other hand, in France, Spain or the German speaking countries, a strict separation between 'high culture' and entertainment still marks public debates and the collective consciousness.” Potential investors should pay attention to this convergence in the market.

15 For the full report of UK Trade & Investment and the China-Britain Business Council please see Further Reading
Concentration in big cities and coastal area

There is a strong regional concentration within the cultural industry in China. Big cities, especially Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, stand out as centres for industrial growth. Among the 219 creative clusters in China in 2009, 75 are in Shanghai (34.25%) and 21 in Beijing (9.59%). In terms of GDP, Beijing emerged as No.1 in 2009\textsuperscript{16}.

In a brief analysis of China’s digital and design market for potential investors, International Visual Communications Association wrote: “For most of the creative industries, opportunities will arise in the well-developed big cities or rich coastal areas. TV, films, corporate communications, performing arts, publishing and music opportunities are concentrated in Beijing and Shanghai, with additional opportunities in Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Opportunities for direct corporate partnerships are mainly in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen\textsuperscript{17}.”

Lack of innovation under top-down control

“In the European tradition, creativity needs freedom – political, cultural, and organisational,” says Dr. Siebenhaar. Nevertheless, the creative industry is seen by the Chinese state as an instrument for its soft power strategy. Chen says: “Unlike in China, development of cultural industries in Europe and the US is not bound by ideology. There are fewer limitations and more freedom not seen in China.”

Specifically, in China the state retains a critical role for the industry in terms of both content control and organisation. Cultural products such as films and books have to undergo inspection by official bureaus such as the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) before release. The state also appoints government officials in key management positions of industrial players to keep their operations under control.

This top-down political and organisational control has direct results for cultural industries: lack of innovation, as mentioned in Chen’s interview. “At present, the level of innovation in the cultural industry development is not high. When you visit a tourist attraction, the souvenirs are very similar even in as many as ten provinces. This reflects the lack of innovation.”

The reason for this is manifold. Firstly, creative workers are not allowed to fully use their potential, as a result of conscious exclusion of a large number of politically “sensitive issues”, which currently hampers content creation. The tendency to see the creative industry as a soft power strategy means an overstated stress on economic value, rather than the value of innovation. Successful cultural products (souvenirs, games, IT products etc.) are simply replicated by many profit-seeking companies. As Dr. Siebenhaar says: “Culture and creativity therefore are basic elements of a comprehensive soft power strategy: the generation of economic creation of value through creativity on the basis of replication, recombinining and exploitation instead of productive exploration and innovation.”

Operational vacuum: lack of regulations, finance and management talents

“There is a dearth of rules and laws to regulate it.” Chen’s point is very valid. Many rising areas within the industry still operate in a vacuum of regulations. Examples include IPR, online production and gaming.

Money is also a problem, though financing channels have been opened up by banks
such as ICBC, and larger state-owned players are competitively better off. "Most of the cultural industry enterprises are still small and medium-size private enterprises. As with other private enterprises, they lack funding and need financial support," says Chen.

However, beyond regulations and money, what the Chinese creative industry probably most lacks right now is talent, not just creative minds, but also business talents trained in up-do-date management skills. This is especially true for companies currently relying heavily on enthusiastic young creators and technicians in areas such as animation and gaming. Business operation specialists are needed to turn their creation into actual value.

Chen says: “Currently, we're looking into an in-depth reform of the cultural industry system, while some of the cultural enterprises are becoming more market-oriented. The biggest demand by far is that for talent. There's no shortage of scholars in our country, but what we lack is the kind of talent that knows how to make an industry out of culture.”

Dr. Siebenhaar raised a similar point: “While the Western approach to cultural management is more holistic in thought, transdisciplinary and follows the behavioural paradigm of leadership and management, China is dominated by a technological-instrumental paradigm of (cultural) management. Rather than planning and executing processes one focuses on input-throughput-output-models. System-environment-relations, which are very important in terms of values, are neglected, a general perception of societal developments and transformations as well as systematic but creative marketing are lacking.”

*Reflections on Sino-foreign cooperation*

We can try to draw some conclusions for Sino-foreign cooperation in the creative industry. Firstly, we should recognise the huge potential for collaboration in the fast-growing Chinese market with increasing awareness as well as demands of consumption, especially in TV, film, music, publishing and gaming sectors.

The areas of heaviest industrial concentration are Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and the richer coastal area, where direct partnership and financing opportunities should be sought.

Models of collaboration may differ from place to place and sector to sector. In some circumstances direct financing is possible. Alternatively, projects or longer initiatives based on contracts are another option, already common in the architectural and public communication areas. In addition, talent exchange is possible, both creative experts (especially where outside inspiration is desired due to lack of innovation) and management talents.

Meanwhile, educating arts management specialists on the basis of outsourcing or partnership may open up promising grounds for intellectual cooperation.

On the other hand, however, risks also abound in China. All future partners/investors should first be patient for long-term returns. The initial phase where Chinese and foreign partners try to understand each other and establish effective communications can really take a long time. As Dr. Siebenhaar suggests: "(In China) the education and edification of man through the arts and cultural production are at the core of this notion of culture: economic and value creating aspects are secondary. The relationship between artists, the state and society is traditionally distanced. Harmony, which plays an important role in the cultural discourse in China, is questionable for modern and contemporary Western
culture. These basically opposing attitudes have to be taken into account – otherwise we will witness misunderstandings and conflicts.”

On top of cognitive differences, there are also other pitfalls. The lack of regulation, for example, means consulting local law experts is almost a necessity before entering into contracts, and partner selection should also be a careful, lengthy process\textsuperscript{18}. Similarly, rampant replication and piracy requires extra efforts for creators to safeguard their core ideas and develop more unique growth points to be competitive.

All in all, exploring opportunities with creative businesses in China is a promising venture that requires special care and calculation and this article cannot provide the full picture. Check the following resources.

**FURTHER READING**


A research report of the features, classification and performance of creative industries in China


A comprehensive report by UK Trade & Investment and the China-Britain Business Council, focused on business opportunity analysis with information on the major players


Summary of an analytical report of China’s digital and design industries by Claydon Gescher Associates


A brief report from International Visual Communications Association with a special focus on Sino-foreign cooperation opportunities in different creative industry sectors


A collection of updated research articles on specific topics


A 2009 – 2010 annual research report on the development and analysis of China’s creative industries – in Chinese

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**About the author:**

Qiuzao Zhang received a BA in China and a MA in Media and Cultural Analysis in the UK. With a strong interest in cross-cultural studies, she currently works in Beijing as a freelance translator and writer for magazines and online publications.
Mapping the Cultural and Creative Sectors in the EU and China

An Interview with Yolanda Smits

As part of the EU-China Project on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights [IPR2]19, the European Union supported the elaboration of a Working Paper Mapping the Cultural and Creative Sectors in the EU and China, published in January 2011. It was prepared by the Brussels-based consultancy KEA and is intended as a first step in the development of an EU-China Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) platform. We talked to Yolanda Smits, KEA’s Director of International Business Development and co-author of the Working Paper.

Katja Hellkötter (KH): What were your main findings? What is the picture of the cultural and creative sectors in China compared to Europe?

Yolanda Smits (YS): Very few economic sectors have revealed as much economic potential in China and the EU as the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in recent years. China leads Asia in the development of a creative economy. Its cultural sector records €50.32 billion value added, contributes 2.45% of Chinese GDP, registering growth 6.4% higher than the growth rate of the general economy. European CCIs are worth 2.6% of the EU’s GDP and generate a turnover of more than €654 billion (2003), far more than is generated by the car manufacturing industry (€271 billion in 2001) and ICT manufacturers (€541 billion in 2003).

The CCIs are also important drivers of innovation in other industries and societies. They contribute to tourism and the development of the ICT sector, which is hungry for content. Culture also contributes to social cohesion. The development of cultural industries and creativity is intrinsically linked with brand strategies. Today, competitiveness rests on the ability to create emotional ties with consumers that go beyond the price or the functionality of products. Aesthetics, meaning, social significance are key aspects of the experience economy. Culture, creative industries and intellectual property are key drivers of this intangible economy.

KH: How do you access the potential and opportunities for collaboration between Europe and China in the field of creative industries?

YS: The Chinese manufacturing industry is transforming from the former low tech, low value brand “Made in China” to a “Created in China” identity. “Created in China” is the new strategy direction that will shape its industry. In the next ten years we will see an explosive growth of the CCIs in China. They are becoming one of the most dynamic and promising sectors of the economy and key service providers for China’s new industrial strategy.

International competition has put China under pressure to develop its own technologies and brand names. Design and creativity are now the new skills that China will need to develop its economic clout.

Massive investments are directed at state, regional, district and municipal levels to this effect. Shanghai and Shenzhen estimate that around 7% of the city GDP stems from the CCIs. Beijing put this figure at 12%, but with a wider definition of CCIs including sport, tourism and business software. Clusters and parks are being developed in former

19 IPR2 is a partnership project between the European Union and the People’s Republic of China on the protection of intellectual property rights in China. For further information see www.ipr2.org
factory sites. Shanghai already has 80 parks, two thirds of them based in such sites. In Beijing there are 30 parks and its famous and influential 798 Art Zone is based in a former state-run electronic factory complex. The concept of transforming old industrial sites into modern, trendy centres for the CCIs has been taken from Europe. China is a market ripe for European creative skills in architecture, design (industrial and fashion design), new media (games, web services), performing arts, art and culture management.

**KH: What are the challenges?**

**YS:** China lacks the infrastructure and know-how for how to best manage its heritage, to encourage creative entrepreneurship and nurture small creative enterprises. It is also looking at the best ways to create and train new talent. At policy level it has yet to establish an environment conducive to creativity and freedom of creation. It is lacking a true cultural policy that goes beyond bureaucratic control to embrace access to culture for all citizens, heritage preservation, nurturing local and minority diversities.

Cultural strategies at local level look patchy and often do not go beyond supporting economic ends. Culture is rarely perceived in its other dimension: a resource for knowledge, a tool for social innovation and cohesion, a stimulus to imagination and creativity as the pillar of a creative economy. Much needs to be done to improve trade relationships between Europe and China. Firstly, the European Commission needs to recognise the economic importance of the CCIs. Secondly, there is a lack of understanding that IP could be used as a tool to foster trade transactions. Finally, the EU needs to support its CCIs in China.

**KH: What are your recommendations for future cooperation in this sector?**

**YS:** KEA’s 2006 study *The Economy of Culture in Europe*[^20] attracted the attention of Chinese authorities and in particular the Ministry of Commerce. We have since been working to alert the EU authorities of the opportunity to engage with China in a sector in which Europe is competitive. The aim is to incentivise collaboration between the EU and China at business and policy levels, to encourage joint ventures, increase trade and cultural exchanges between two ancient civilisations and to promote IP licensing to stimulate IP enforcement through Chinese creative companies.

The infrastructure enabling cultural exchanges through trade remains to be established. KEA has recommended setting up an EU-China CCIs stakeholders’ platform to exchange information and experiences on the EU and Chinese markets including legislation and policies.

We wish to bring more European companies in the fields of new media, design, communication, architecture and art management together with Chinese counterparts. In particular we would like to assist in building partnerships between the creative cities of Europe and partner cities in China.

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**About Yolanda Smits:**

Yolanda Smits has over 20 years experience dealing with European affairs and international trade. She is specialised in copyright, trade and development issues affecting the CCIs. Yolanda has an extensive expertise in running public affairs campaigns as well as carrying out cooperation programmes and studies funded by the EU. Yolanda worked over ten years for the music industry (IFPI) in Brussels as their international trade expert.

The Role of Artists & the Arts

Conversations with independent art critic and curator, Carol Yinghua Lu and Lee Ambrozy, editor of Artforum’s Chinese site

Firstly, COMPASS editor Katja Hellkötter talked with Carol Yinghua Lu, an influential and experienced contemporary visual arts critic, editor and commentator, on the role and status of the artist and trends in the art world in China. Lu stresses the importance of looking at the artistic practice of individual artists in China, and deplores the market-led approach with its collective, investment-oriented overview of Chinese contemporary art. She hopes that art criticism writing will improve in China and be taken seriously as a profession, with a better understanding of its role.

Carol Yinghua Lu was born in Guangdong and studied English Literature at the Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou from 1995 to 1999, graduating in Critical Studies from Malmo Art Academy, Sweden (2004–2005). She was the China researcher for the Asia Art Archive (2005–2007). She is the contributing editor for Frieze and the co-editor of Contemporary Art & Investment magazine as well as a frequent contributor to a number of international art journals such as e-flux. Her texts on contemporary art have appeared in many art catalogues, books and magazines.

Katja Hellkötter (KH): Carol, what is the role of the artist in China today? What do you see as the challenges and emerging trends?

Lu: There are many challenges for many of us working in the context in China. On a general level, too much focus has been placed on Chinese contemporary art as a collective concept when it’s really a notion that was created based on market consumption and international political interests. We can almost say that Chinese contemporary art is more of a political concept than a term that makes any sense artistically. In the past few years, there have been many presentations to introduce contemporary art from China as a cultural export, which gave artists and practitioners in China the possibility of being seen internationally, yet at the same time, this collective presentation has often disguised the nuanced work of individual artists, critics, curators and intellectuals.

The recent decline of market interest in contemporary art from China confuses many practitioners in the field. Many individual artists, curators and critics suffer from this phenomenon of being seen as part of a collective image, simplified and emptied by superficial cultural exchanges. Now many are confused and suffer from a sense of anxiety in terms of how to position their own work and place. There has been an over-simplified value system in place based on market and political consumption against which art historic narratives and practices have developed and been evaluated. There is still lacking a system of diversified value judgments and role models which younger artists and practitioners can emulate and aspire to.

Talking about trends would again simplify the discussion and render artistic practice into a collective process when in fact, like elsewhere in the world, there are many different models of practice and lines of thinking that co-exist at the same time. It’s more important now to give recognition and visibility to varied individual practices than to group them into themes and trends that tend to be more marketable.

Without being an internationalist, I would like to say that many Chinese contemporary artists are concerned about the same things as their peers elsewhere in the world.
It’s important to recognise that the parallels exist in the practices of artists in China and internationally. After all, we live in a globalised world where what happens in Norway concerns us as much as it does the rest of the world.

KH: In your blog you present discussions of art historian Hans Belting in Chinese and apply them to what is happening in the art world in China. Tell us about your reflections.

Lu: This is a project where I’ve been collaborating with a young Chinese scholar Su Wei in the form of a monthly column in *Contemporary Art & Investment* – a Chinese art publication that actually has nothing to do with investment. I won’t go into an explanation of the complicated publishing situation in China which resulted in such a magazine title, but this magazine, which I co-founded in 2007, is only about practice and art theory.

With the consent of Hans Belting, every month we’ve translated into Chinese a chapter of his book *Art History after Modernism* and, at the same time, Su Wei writes an article analysing the theoretical discussions in philosophy that are relevant to Belting’s reflection on art. I write a commentary linking Belting’s reflection and discussion to the real context of art practice, institutional practice in China. For us, it’s very important to establish this link between Belting’s thinking back in the 1990s and up till today to our conditions, which are all very relevant. I want to establish a model of referring to ideas and intellectual work from elsewhere, not simply by translating them but by applying their thinking to our local contexts, bringing new conditions to Belting’s original discussion but also expanding the scope and vision of understanding art and the art system in China.

KH: How do you reflect on the maturity of art criticism in China?

Lu: There is still a long way to go. The independence of art criticism needs to be established and recognised. With more and more online and printed journals, the situation is changing but needs time. Art critics still need to realise that art criticism writing is a serious and promising form of artistic creativity and be committed to it. There need to be more role models so that people don’t see art critics as just a type of practice hired by galleries to write complimentary texts about artists. It’s also much more than a power role – people give too much emphasis to this – without understanding what kind of work and commitment this position of power entails.

KH: What do you think about the state of artistic education in China?

Lu: Like the general condition of education in China, artistic education is rarely about opening one’s mind and expanding one’s horizon. Often the stress is placed on technical proficiency and the horizon is limited to market success. Again, the issue is back to the existence of just one value system in the whole of the art industry, which is dominated by market preferences and success. There is a need to return art practice to the basics of thinking and discussion about art, to understand art-making not as a money-making tool or just a technical process. Certain individuals, artists that teach in the academy have tried to make an effort to create a space of independent thinking and encourage individual positions but they are in a minority.

KH: How do you see the role of art museums and art fairs in China?

Lu: In a system over-dominated by monetary value, where everything is up for sale, credibility can only be a desirable thing. Everyone complains that there is no credibility in any role of the industry, not the museums that base their programmes on a space rental service, or the publications that sell their pages and covers. As a result, anything good is random rather than consistent. There is no trust in the museums, which only re-
main relevant on a symbolic level. It’s no use to build more and more museums when no museum can create an interesting curatorial programme. The problem lies in the fact that museums are mostly understood as places of power and defined by their technical details such as their scale, number of works in collection and so on. Yet no one considers the museum as a platform for artistic and knowledge production. There is no creativity but rather administration in these places. None of them generate any interest or discussion as a result. Art fairs are just as badly produced and cannot generate any substantial influence.

KH: What parallels and differences do you see between trends in the art world in China and in Europe?

Lu: As I said before, it’s problematic to talk about art in collective terms and to compare two very different settings. If you look at the practices of individual artists and critics, it really matters less where they are but it’s the intensity of their work that counts. In “Little Movements: Self-practice in Contemporary Art”, a research, discussion and exhibition project I am co-curating with Liu Ding, we look at individual practices in art history writing, art education, publishing, curating and art criticism from all over the world and place them together to show a lot of parallel thinking and sensibilities. The first chapter of this research is entitled “Anxiety of Self-definition”, which we see characterises practitioners in China, Europe, America and certain parts of Asia. In a globalised context, we are all facing the new challenge of how to define ourselves historically, contemporarily, artistically and politically. We present different attempts to try to address this anxiety, from Hans Belting’s research on Global Art and Museum to They, a literature journal edited by Han Dong, a Chinese writer. We don’t differentiate these practitioners based on their nationalities and historical moments but really place them in relevance to each other based on the power of their artistic thinking and practice.

FURTHER READING


More about Carol Yinghua Lu:

Carol Yinghua Lu was a fellow of the ZKM Summer Seminar 2009: Contemporary Art and the Global Age led by Hans Belting. She acted as the international advisor for Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, Japan (CAMK) from 2009 to 2010. She was on the selection jury for Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council, for the programme "China 2008–2010”. She was a jury member for Geisai #11 in Tokyo and has moderated a discussion panel at Frieze Art Fair in London.

Lu is currently working on an exhibition at OCAT, Shenzhen entitled “Little Movements: Self-practice in Contemporary Art”, a one-year research, round-table discussion, writing, publishing and exhibition project in collaboration with Liu Ding. She served on the jury for the Golden Lion Award in 2011 Venice Biennale and is a Joint Artistic Director for the 2012 Gwangju Biennale.

http://www.camk.or.jp/english/information/internationaladviser/index.html
Secondly, Hannah Douglas, Senior Communications Manager at the British Council, Beijing and He Meijing from the British Council, Beijing sought another insight into the role of the arts and artists in China in an interview with Lee Ambrozy, an American art history student based in Beijing, involved in arts projects focused on China.

Lee Ambrozy, an American art-history graduate with a social science background, has immersed herself in contemporary Chinese culture since moving to Beijing in 2004. On graduating from Oberlin college in the US, Ms Ambrozy moved to China and has been studying at CAFA (China Central Academy of Fine Arts)21 while getting involved in an impressive and varied array of China-focused arts projects. She has worked closely with Ai Weiwei to translate his blog into a new book, translated Chinese texts for MoMA in New York and the China pavilion at the Venice Biennial. She now oversees Artnet’s Chinese language website and writes her own blog, Sinopop.org, which explores Beijing’s art scene for Chinese and English readers.

British Council (BC): Lee, what do you see as the role and challenges for artists and the arts in China today?

Lee: It's more complex here in China, I mean, how do you define an artist? If the question is whether there is much artistic input in China's contemporary scene, then yes, on a popular cultural level, they make a significant contribution. Political influence is different and limited of course. But in terms of visual art, graphic design, restaurant design, architecture, and by this I mean the functional role of artists, then there are a lot of artists with a lot to say in the world. They create the world around us here in China. As for the main challenges, the market is not very well developed and this alone has a huge impact on the role of arts in society. The artists we know of are probably only a small percentage of all artists. As I said, there is a large volume of design work in the China art scene and yet the China Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), with a clear focus on design, has poor resources for developing design as a practical art. This is probably one of the greatest challenges.

BC: What trends do you see emerging in the Chinese art world?

Lee: The most significant trend for people to be aware of is that there is a nascent economy of contemporary arts in China based on the value system of locals, i.e. Chinese people who buy Chinese art. For most Westerners who come to China, the majority of galleries will tell them most of their clients are foreigners. The general impression is that most China artwork is purchased by foreign collectors, but there is a growing range of local collectors, with their own aesthetic taste and style. This exists already, and will continue to grow and be an increasingly important aspect of the Chinese art world.

BC: You’ve spent several years studying art history, how much do you think tradition matters in contemporary art?

Lee: I don’t think it matters as much to some people as to others. Some are obviously heavily influenced; others prefer to avoid it so as not to be packaged as Chinese artists. It depends on the artist. You can say that Chinese contemporary artists represent a global culture but all Chinese artists, by nature of being Chinese, have a reflection of ‘Chinese-ness’ that is very interesting. I wouldn’t want Chinese artists to give up who they are and pursue some 21st century thing that blocks all of that out, it will always be present in the artwork but in a sophisticated and subtle way according to the artist’s influences.

21 http://www.cafa.edu.cn/aboutcafa/lan/?c=1101
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China_Central_Academy_of_Fine_Arts
**KH:** Can you tell us more about your sinopop blog?

**Lee:** The main purpose of the blog was to create something completely independent; people were interested in popular culture in China and it was a great way to share an access that I had through living here that others couldn’t experience. The motivation was to capture important news from Beijing’s art world and contribute to readers’ broader and better understanding of visual culture and arts on the mainland.

**BC:** How do you reflect on the maturity of art criticism in China?

**Lee:** One of my main drivers creating the blog was to explore the idea of an independent view of art criticism in China, within China, in the Chinese language and to see how that relates immediately to the coverage and spread of Chinese media. They like us to see it in one way and not have it represented in another way. I like to present the range.

A lack of an independent viewpoint is detrimental to the health of the art scene and the way that ‘foreigners’ perceive it. Two separate but linked problems would be what we can refer to as the ‘blackout’ which is not due to a lack of thinkers or critics, and also not because the market had polluted it. I guess it is a combination. There is media censorship – a challenge, of course – which links in directly to a perceived lack of independent art critics. A lot of interesting themes really can’t be discussed in the media, even though they may seem tame, as tides are always changing, they’re unpredictable. This immediately stifles conversation; it has been going on for so long it becomes a self censorship issue.

**BC:** What do you think of the state of artistic education in China?

**Lee:** Having just graduated from the China Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), I am in a privileged inside position to comment. There are lots of problems re independent thinking or experimentation, but looking at this within a larger framework, most higher education is like a revolving door. Chinese educators are not evolving in the sense that they do not nurture independent thought. Depending on your personal view on education, that may or may not be a good thing. Many foreign people come to China to study for the educational rigour; they want that style of learning. If we talk of how academies influence art production, they create their own market. In the contemporary art world in China today, many refer to the academies as “useless”. But only a few famous artists were not a ‘product’ of CAFA, National Arts Academy, Sichuan Academy or other big academies. We could say that arts academies dominate the Chinese contemporary art scene. The academies do their job in the way they can and they change at the slow snail’s pace at which all institutions in China are changing.

**BC:** How do you see the role of arts museums and art fairs in China?

**Lee:** There are two major kinds of museum here in China, private and public: public being official, government-run e.g. Guangdong Art Museum or National Arts Museum of China. These institutions face a completely different set of problems not unlike those the media face. An example is Fan Di’an, an ambitious man trying to save the system and bring in new exciting artists, but how much can one individual do before they are told to stop by the powers that be – whether they are above them or their own peers. Public organisations find the environment restricting and private ones find they have no support. You know the word ‘museum’ (bowuguan 博物馆) in Chinese doesn’t quite translate into English, the concept is very different and I think that in itself I think contributes to the problems. Is ‘museum’ even the right word, when what we find over here seems more like an exhibition hall, or even an art shop? However you package it, it still does not really
equate to the concept of ‘museum’ in English. Art fairs on the other hand are doing their job, but I’m not in the business of selling art so I can’t really comment.

**BC:** You’ve had a busy few years since moving to Beijing in 2004, what’s next for you here?

**Lee:** I’ll be leading a class at CAFA later this year on how the West has interacted with the Chinese art scene, which should prove a really interesting project to be involved in! It’s funny, when I initially said I wanted to come to graduate school in China, my friends and family all advised me against it, they considered it a waste of time saying “Why would you want to study art over there!” Now I am hearing the opposite: “Wow, what an insight you have into how things work!” In a very small timeframe, it shows the changing attitudes of the outside world. My experience of the outside world is to see a set of values, and I am more and more interested in this country as I see how those values evolve. What’s next? I’d like to find the time to work on an idea for a book translation project I have, so let’s just wait and see.

**FURTHER READING**


n recent years, as China has continued to develop, its performing arts sector has also taken off with impressive speed. Yet in such a vast country of immense geographical and ethnic diversity the level of the sector’s development, as well as people’s tastes and preferences, naturally differ greatly across the territory. Based on the author’s work experience over the past few years in Shanghai – one of the most developed cultural cities in China – this article aims to offer a glimpse into the current state of the performing arts industry in China in terms of venues and audiences. However, given the complexity and diversity mentioned above, more extensive research is required into the different levels of social and economic development in other locations.

Performing arts venues
Despite the diversity in China, the Chinese people have always been keen on the performing arts: traditional Chinese operas, comedy duos, magic shows, acrobatics and song and dance shows are among their favourites. Also, in larger cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, local audiences have been familiar with Western music and art since the early 20th century. Therefore, although venues for performing arts have long existed in different regions of the country, they vary in scale and quality: ranging from one-off open-air stages for traditional Chinese operas, to massive sports stadiums for pop concerts and elegant, historic halls for western classical music, such as the Lyceum Theatre in Shanghai and the Shanghai Concert Hall (SCH).

The country may never have been short of venues, but as recently as ten years ago, with a performing arts scene still far from international even in the more developed cities, the venues were not up to modern, professional standards in terms of their acoustics, facilities etc. Thanks to the country’s opening-up policy and its booming economic development, numerous brand-new ‘modern’ theatres and arts centres have been built all over China in recent years. Although a few still have problematic physical structures, the majority are good enough for most types of Eastern and Western programmes. Indeed, their programming is much more internationally oriented, focusing on performances by prestigious artists and companies, compared to the older, established venues.

These new-built venues are often visually stunning, serving as ostentatious local landmarks, yet most of them lack operational expertise, let alone production capability. Outside the Tier 1 cities, the practice of programming in ‘seasons’ is rarely heard of; therefore, throughout the year, instead of presenting a steady flow of pre-planned and varied programmes, these grand venues are often dark and underused, apart from a few evening concerts or gala performances. But as the country has increased its interaction with the

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23 As the historic entry port to China Guangzhou has been familiar with Western music and art since the early 20th Century. With interested audiences and attractive new venues the city’s culture and art scene today is bustling. The city now boasts for example a new Opera House (by Zaha Hadid), which can be ranked second after the National Center for Performing Arts in Beijing. To look closer at the cultural landscape of individual cities in China would be a next step, which goes beyond the scope of this COMPASS.
rest of the world, this has begun to change. More and more theatres and art centres in China are talking to and learning from their more experienced counterparts in mature markets, especially those in Europe and America, in an effort to bridge the gap and develop their own strengths.

In response to the needs on the Chinese side, some of the venues’ international colleagues have proposed that ‘squad teams’ of professional experts be sent to China to help fix quickly any structural, technical or operational problems; while others say a project-based ‘learning through doing’ approach would be more effective. Theatres and arts centres in Europe, America and elsewhere should form concrete artistic partnerships with their Chinese peers and help them develop to international standards through the co-production and joint presentation of world-class programmes.

Whichever way is chosen, such exchange and collaboration will be beneficial to both parties – as long as both adopt a proactive attitude and engage in critical thinking to solve these problems. Through interaction, the capacity level on the Chinese side will gradually improve, and experienced specialists from mature markets can benefit by gaining perspective and knowledge about China and its performing arts industry. This also applies to the exchange of training for general staff, managers and technicians and must therefore not be neglected in the drafting of collaboration/training proposals.

The development of performing arts venues in China still has a long way to go. Nevertheless, with exchange and support from their international counterparts, they have the prospect of becoming essential hubs for creativity and great gathering places for arts lovers.

**Audiences**

In China, audience groups vividly reflect the country’s own diversity. Even in one specific region/city there is much heterogeneity of audience demographics. The following categories are quite typical in bigger cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, where arts and culture flourish:

**Music/arts enthusiasts**

These people are not necessarily the wealthiest, but they are very knowledgeable about (Western and for historic reasons Russian in particular) music and art – either from reading, travel, listening to recordings or through years of attending performances, and in many cases through all of these. They keep well informed about upcoming performances and can become quite heated expressing their artistic opinions, either publicly or within their own circles. Notable types within this group include art critics – most of whom are affiliated to various types of media and often have free access to concerts or other types of performances; hi-fi enthusiasts – mostly better-off than others, they enjoy setting up home hi-fi systems, but from time to time go to the theatre in order to compare the sound of a live performance with that produced by their systems; and ordinary music/art lovers – usually middle-aged or elderly, careful with their money, but quite willing to spend on quality performances.

**Government officials**

Currently, some government officials have fine taste and judgement about music/art, and enjoy spending a few pleasant hours in performing arts venues, but the majority attend
performances simply because they are given free tickets. This is more often the case in
Beijing than in other cities where the ratio of complimentary ticket holders to ticket-
buyers is reversed.

New money
The hard-working and/or lucky ones who have made huge fortunes in recent years are
more interested in spending money on things such as villas, yachts, fancy cars, golf and
polo games, which can help to mark their social status more overtly. But they do enjoy
going to theatres occasionally, for the fun of dressing up and socialising with friends in
a unique and elegant atmosphere – which, to a certain extent, is also quite identity en-
hancing.

Emerging middle class
These people are less well off than the new money but follow a more bourgeois lifestyle
and usually take a more intellectual attitude toward life. As parents, in most cases they
want their children to have a decent and well-rounded education so, apart from regular
music training, they also regularly offer their children the chance to watch performances
in theatres, and are willing to spend money on this.

Young professionals
Contrary to popular belief, not all these frequently well-educated young people prefer
Longine watches or Louis Vuitton bags to good music and high art. But since the pressure
of urban living is fierce, they actually make fewer theatre visits than the other groups
mentioned, and are usually more likely to buy less expensive tickets when they do go.

Students
Young students today are quite curious and open-minded when it comes to music and art
and, since many of them learned to play an instrument from an early age, they would make
an ideal audience but for the fact that most cannot afford expensive tickets. Nevertheless,
they embrace arts education programmes with open arms, and are often quite active in
theatre outreach programmes.

The indifferent
These are usually middle-aged, not very well-educated people with a limited income. It
is not that they truly do not care for or enjoy live performances but, given their circum-
stances, they have to be more budget-conscious. Therefore they usually seek alternative
artistic enjoyment, like staying at home and listening to CDs or watching DVDs or danc-
ing in the park with friends.

The list could go on, but these are the most common types. And, compared with
Western audiences, there are certain common traits for most, if not all, Chinese audiences.
They have accumulated knowledge and developed taste for Western art, and yet, apart
from a few true connoisseurs, most of them are still pretty clueless, if not completely igno-
rant. Their understanding of traditional Chinese art is no better and often lacks depth and
insight. Unlike the more experienced audiences in mature markets, they still pay much
more attention to story and plot, rather than seeking more innovative or experimental
presentations.
This said, it would also be unwise to underestimate these audiences in China. Since there has been a fine tradition of attending performances in the country, and as people are gaining knowledge and experience through China's opening-up and exchange with the rest of the world, it is now more often the case that audiences, with their artistic sensitivity and imagination, can accommodate and assimilate the tension, momentum, resonance and meaning of high-quality performances. Therefore it would be unwise to lower expectations or treat such audiences with contempt.

Democratisation of music and art is essential for social enlightenment especially in China, where society is alienated from its fine heritage by a disproportionately high interest in economic development. Enabling more people to appreciate music and art helps to maintain or restore habits of critical thinking and rationality – which is conducive to peace, harmony and development. Key to this task is engaging and educating audiences. Programming performances accompanied by free educational lectures or interactive events has been a popular practice in recent years, and has proved to be quite effective. Through this, the audiences gain not only artistic enjoyment but also the chance to enhance their music/art literacy, which is certainly beneficial to the sustainability of the performing arts industry. For Western performing arts organisations, such projects can be designed and carried out in collaboration with their Chinese counterparts, who have local knowledge and better understanding of the audiences.

**About the author:**

Emilie Wang has worked with the Shanghai Grand Theatre Arts Group as Director of the International Cooperation Department for four years, responsible for the Group's international communication and development. Prior to this, she worked at the Foreign Affairs Office of Shanghai Municipality for six years as an interpreter for the Mayor and other top city officials. She has a BA in English Language and Literature from Shanghai International Studies University and an MA in Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics from Beijing Foreign Studies University. She is currently based in London, studying at LSE (London School of Economics) for an MSc in Social and Public Communication, while continuing her work for the Shanghai Grand Theatre Arts Group. For her dissertation she is researching the “Challenges of the Cross-Cultural and Inter-Language Communication in East-West Opera Collaboration”.
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Project Process: How to cooperate

项目运作：如何合作
Introduction

In this chapter we look at the HOW of the intercultural project cooperation. We look closely at the potential challenges, and share the lessons of experienced practitioners in Europe-China cooperation. This is not intended as a ready-made training manual, but a sharing of experience that provides orientation and practical support.

The analysis is based on sixty-five qualitative interviews with cultural practitioners.\(^1\) The COMPASS team comprised five interviewers, three Europeans and two Chinese. Our methodology in selecting interview candidates was to seek a good range from different sectors, cultural disciplines and countries. We came to realise that an established, trusting relationship, or even better a friendship, was one parameter for a rich interview\(^2\) and balanced the more extensive interviews with comments from other important voices in the field. Ten selected case stories that were produced from the interviews are presented in full length and with credits to the case story partners; further experiences, stories and quotes from other interviewees (most of whom wished to be anonymous) were integrated into the project cycle analysis.

When Joanna Burke, Director of the British Council China, who has many years of experience in Europe-China cooperation, was asked if there was a programme she really wanted to realise in future, she said:

“For me it is not the content of the programmes themselves but the increased trust and understanding that we are able to build through the experience of cultural collaboration. So a programme which would take all our combined learning through working together on projects and enable us to step up from there, so that globally we see not just more and better but also easier cultural collaboration. [...] New programmes should focus on training the capacity to WORK TOGETHER, to train intercultural team capacity.”

Our interviews with cultural practitioners revealed a wide range of approaches to project implementation, the majority of which had worked well for their particular project. They range from consciously avoiding any strategy to a clear, systematic approach. Obviously, there is no right or wrong way, and the nature of a project, its context and stakeholders determine the approach. Smaller projects may be less strategic, while a large cooperation needs more systematic management.

Two of our interviewees talked about two quite different approaches:

“I believe knowing where you want to go helps you manage this change and take advantage of opportunities strategically.”

\(^1\) Please find a list of all interview partners at the back of chapter IV.

\(^2\) For the analysis we used Otto Scharmer’s ‘Jam Session’ method (Otto Scharmer, Theory U, Chapter 12 ‘Conversational Actions’), and later clustered issues according to their frequency, matched them with key topics based on our own experience. The writing of this chapter again was a collective team process.
“Because we did not plan it, we did not really have expectations. It just started and rolled along on its own momentum, driven by desire and a curiosity to explore. It was never really a strategic project but a purely intuitive and artistic process. […] If you think too much about an idea, it can become heavy and burdensome. […] We had a dream and an ambition that we let guide us through this adventure and avoided a rigid strategic approach. Strategy is about being too aware of what others may think and trying to prove it to them. Between these two it is easy to lose sight of who you are and what you really want to say!”

Klaus Siebenhaar, author of the book *Culture Management in China*, advocates a common sense approach to management and sees some universally applicable and valid cultural management skills, tools and concepts:

“Cultural management everywhere in the world can be viewed as a system of interrelated elements. […] Whether in China or in Germany, a leader of a cultural institution can make use of four basic managerial instruments (objectives, leadership, organisation, cost control) to direct a theatre, a museum, a dance company, a concert hall or any other cultural institution. Instruments may be preferred or prioritized differently, but knowing them is essential regardless of the location. Chinese and German cultural managers must be able to handle these instruments on the level of strategic planning as well as on the operational level of management processes.”
Basic principles for setting up China-Europe projects

Before going into the individual phases of a project, the following gives some basic guiding principles for intercultural cooperation.

Moving beyond clichés and updating preconceptions

Since we have experienced a certain socialisation process, we all carry an underlying set of values and beliefs which we use to assess situations. Sociologists\(^3\) have shown that, throughout history, cultures have evolved different rules that govern interaction in groups and conduct our everyday social lives. It is natural to make assumptions about what Chinese or Europeans are like, or to size up somebody or something before we know them. The role of preconceptions and stereotypes can serve to reduce the threat of the unknown by making the world predictable. They do, however, interfere with our efforts to perceive the other person’s reality\(^4\). The aim is to maintain adaptable opinions that can be updated in the light of new information or real experience with people from the unfamiliar culture.

“My preconceptions about China were mainly about bureaucracy and control, constructed from a British ‘old school’ education on/about Chinese culture and government practice, underpinned by Western media stereotypes. My orientation and research blew these away as did my direct experience.”

Western views of China have changed over history, though many can still seem to resonate today. The history of contacts between China and the West is documented through accounts by travellers and missionaries, novels, poems, periodicals, newspapers and films. One key theme is that often the West has viewed China in terms of its own needs, desires and fears, rather than through making a genuine attempt to understand China as it really is. Today, views of China are full of complexity. Europeans (and Westerners in general) relate to China with a wide range of emotions: from great fear – experiencing China as a threat, to great enthusiasm faced by the huge ‘opportunities’. Both these emotions are extremes, resulting in misunderstanding.

Stereotypes in Europe can be related to Euro-centrism, just as in China they can derive from Sino-centrism. COMPASS advisor and author Katelijn Verstraete says:

“My images of China were almost a blank piece of paper in 1987, at my last year of high school. Our history lessons did not talk about Asian history – it was all concentrated on Europe. My interest in China and the images formed were more related to philosophy and history – reading books about Buddhism and seeing exhibitions at high school made it clear to me that this ancient civilization was rather remote from western civilization.”

\(^3\) E.g. Norbert Elias, who has called this the “civilizing process that can be traced back to many centuries throughout our history” or Erving Goffman, who has shown “how the evolution of cultural rules and pattern expectations shapes our interactions with various audiences of our work and life, the way we construct, present, and enact our selves and our roles in a face-to-face group situations.”

Another said:

“In Western movies – from James Bond to Lara Croft […] – the Chinese have always been the bad guys. Even today, German journalists tend to show China as the ‘yellow peril’ and as an intolerant state with censorship and human rights problems. On the other hand, the Chinese consider Germany as the engineering country with hard-working people who do not enjoy life.”

Typical current European preconceptions about China are that it is a “very bureaucratic” country, therefore “very complicated” to work in, with “a lot of censorship” and a “language barrier”.

Perception studies have been conducted by Europeans and Chinese on how the Chinese view Europe and the EU. Some typical preconceptions emerge. With China’s open door policy in the 1980s, the Chinese formed certain images about Europe. In general, the words Europe and the Occident triggered ideas of very cultured, colourful and diverse places. But even now, in the ‘information age’, many Chinese still associate European history and culture with catch phrases such as ‘renaissance’ and ‘secularisation’, found in all the school textbooks. Even though many Chinese consume European and Western entertainment, and are exposed to Western business culture and lifestyle on a daily basis, the image of Europe remains dominated by rather touristy associations: old buildings, designer labels, fashionable-looking and modern-thinking people, pop culture, good shopping.

A Chinese government officer responsible for Europe-China relations we interviewed told us:

“My earlier images about Europe all came from Grimm’s Fairy Tales and Princess Sissi movies, full of palace, castles and romance.”

The following report from one of our European interviewees illustrates all the above, taking us from perceptions of “strangeness” to “fascination”, the anticipation of a culture shock that did not materialise, and the realisation of how much intensive research was needed to understand China:

“As a child I went to a Chinese restaurant in my hometown, the food being the overly Europeanised mixture of everything within a sticky sauce – I absolutely detested it and found China a strange place with people who enjoy food like that. But the country also had a fascination, with stories heard about my grandfather who went there as a sailor. Later, after my second year of University, I went on my first trip to China and saw it as a great challenge. I believed the country would be a shock to me, large, with a language I still didn’t master at all, cultural influences that were beyond my imagination. Somehow it felt more like something I have to master now, not really appealing. Obviously that changed rapidly, my first trip there already left me with the urgent wish to return.”

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5 See Europe in the eyes of the Dragon: How China views Europe by Dora A. E. Martins and The EU through the Eyes of Asia, a study by the Asia-Europe Foundation, also includes data on China’s perception of the EU, http://esia.asef.org/documents/ESIA2ndInterimReport.PDF
People-to-people contact is very important in getting rid of stereotypes and generalisations. The media also plays an important role in this process. Research is done in China and Europe to try and change perceptions in both continents.

Assuming positive outcomes definitely contributes to a good start in intercultural co-operation. However, we have observed that overly enthusiastic ideas about China can lead to certain blind spots that are not helpful to the process, either. The overall goal has to be to reduce fear, to enhance one’s capacity to look at things realistically and not get carried away by over-stimulation and self-delusion, and of course to free one’s self from predefined images about China – or Europe.

Cultural differences: become aware, but do not overemphasize

Awareness of cultural differences, in hand with a deepened cultural self-awareness, provides a pathway to recognising and valuing differences, and carries the potential for fruitful further learning. Interculturalists emphasize that there are no ‘universal’s that enable automatic understanding, and we must assume difference. When talking about different cultural values and traits we consciously want to use generalisations – describing the observed preferences of groups of people based on research, which we are open to adjust in the light of concrete experiences. While we do not want to minimise or deny cultural differences, cultural differences should not be overemphasized as this can lead to setting stereotypes in stone. Reverting to stereotypes can occur easily when people are confronted with an unfamiliar and different culture, as one of our interviewees illustrates:

“Listening to Europeans talk about the public sphere in Europe it is very controversial, likewise when listening to Asians. But when these groups meet each other they tend to reproduce patterns of what is generally considered to be ‘Asian’ or ‘European’. We wanted to go beyond that, we wanted to refine our views and test our own tendencies to reproduce patterns of the ‘other’.”

Sometimes it even seems easy to blame cultural differences for conflicts, and this can hide the real source of conflict, whether social or personal. It has been said that it is not the differences between cultures that leads to conflicts and misunderstanding, but the misunderstanding and not-knowing about cultures. Hence, the willingness to learn about others, to explore differences in perspectives rather than making assumptions, seeking out what contrasting people have to offer is very likely to create synergies and new exciting solutions different from the proposal of just one individual. This process, however, requires an investment of time, self-reflection and conscious facilitation.

“Of course there are cultural differences, many in fact, you can’t ignore. This also makes it interesting.”

COMPASS team member Judith Staines, co-author of The International Co-Production Manual on performing arts co-productions between Europe and Asia, says:

6 For example, Hong Kong University offers an interesting course programme on “CHINA THROUGH THE EYES OF THE WEST”, http://www.ln.edu.hk/history/progs/pdf/hst193-gec335.pdf
7 LaRay M. Barna ibid.
8 For more on the discussion about cultural differences see: Boyacigiller et al. 2003; Mecenil 2002; Düssel et al. 2001
“Our research interviews with several co-producers of the same production often threw up quite contrasting experiences and perceptions of the one project. We found this extremely interesting and informative – it seemed to point not to big misunderstandings between partners but to different cultural perceptions of what is memorable and what is important. Most of those who were interviewed stressed that in their experience the only way to learn about international co-production is by doing it. You have to take risks and be open to learning from your mistakes. One interviewee gave us a great subtitle for the Manual – Claire Sung of The Wuturi Players, Korea spoke about international co-production as ‘the journey which is full of surprises’ – a perfect metaphor for an open process of international collaboration.”

An attitude of respect – the basis of any relationship

Respect is a significant concept in Chinese culture. Chinese has two terms for the English word ‘respect’ – zunzhong (尊重) and zunjing (尊敬). Both share the common character zun, a term referring to ‘elder’ or ‘senior’, honourable titles and forms of address used to differentiate social positions, status and roles. Zunzhong seems more like the English term ‘respect’: it tends to be directed at following law or social order, and valuing different cultures and people. Zunjing has an additional dimension of referring particularly to the respect you offer to people like family, elders, persons in high political and social positions and teachers. In China the concept of respect also goes in hand with the concept of ‘giving face’ gei mianzi (给面子). Both in personal and official communications one is expected to ‘give mianzi’ – to pay respect to someone’s social status and position where appropriate. While in Western cultures respect is paid more to individuals, in China respect is paid to the system (family, company, group etc.) in which the individual lives.

The Western concept of respect is rooted in notions of justice, fairness, and equality for everyone, regardless of a person’s background or position. This came out in our interviews, where several people said they were looking for “truly mutual partnerships”, i.e. a partnership of two equal partners.

Respect is a value that crosses cultures and ideologies. Research has shown that respect is among the five core moral values shared by most cultures and individuals. What differs is how different peoples show respect, for example according to status, age, gender. Gergely Salát, author of the ‘Value System’ article in Part II, recommends the following:

“When we cooperate with Chinese, the most important thing is to respect them, their traditions and values. The Chinese have heated discussions on the compatibility of Chinese values and the modern world, but outsiders should not intervene. While many Chinese are unsure whether their traditions, such as autocratic control, fit the modern world, they are still very proud of them.”

An attitude of modesty and respect has also been identified as one of the core competencies of an ‘Interculturally Effective Person’. We can display this attitude by demonstrating modesty about our own culture and respect for the ways of others, as well as by being

10 Chinese-English Dictionary (Wu et al., 1978)
11 In Moral Foundations Theory Jonathan Haidt, a professor of psychology at the University of Virginia, has identified five fundamental moral values shared to a greater or lesser degree by different societies and individuals: Respect, Care, Fairness, Loyalty, Purity.
humble about our knowledge of the other culture and therefore willing to learn much and consult with our partners from the other culture before coming to conclusions.\footnote{In A Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person by Thomas Vulpe, Daniel Kealey, et al., Centre for Intercultural Learning. Canadian Foreign Service Institute, 2001.}

Empathy – the glue

Interculturally effective people are also able to empathise with, not just understand intellectually, how others see the world. In fact, sometimes intellectual understanding can block empathy. Empathy, often described as “putting oneself in the other person’s shoes”, allows us to re-perceive our world in a new way. It has also been described as the ‘glue’ that connects us. It involves COMPASSion for others, expressing charity, kindness, benevolence, and goodwill. In the field of Emotional Intelligence\footnote{Daniel Goleman has become a leader in the field of Emotional Intelligence with his books Emotional Intelligence, 1995 – proving that emotional intelligence or EI matters more than IQ or technical skill in educational success, and looking at EI’s consequences for leaders and organisations in The New Leaders, 2002.} empathy has been identified as a leadership competence. Persons who practise empathy listen attentively and thus can grasp the other person’s perspective. This enables them to get along well with people of diverse (cultural) backgrounds. A Chinese translation of the Western concept of empathy is 同理心 (tonglixin) – literally meaning ‘with head and heart together’, a connecting of like-minded thinking and feeling. Empathy is the respectful understanding of what others are experiencing. It occurs only when we have successfully shed all preconceived ideas and judgments about others. The key ingredient of empathy is presence.\footnote{As defined by Marshall B. Rosenberg Ph.D. in Nonviolent Communication: a Language of Life, 2003.}

COMPASS editor-in-chief Katja Hellkötter wrote this reflection after taking part in the so called ‘Empathy Walk-Exercise’. It is an example of the shifts in perception that can occur when practising empathy:

“For the exercise I chose a Chinese partner of mine, a woman around my age, who was my direct counterpart in a joint cultural project. We had very different views on ‘culture’. I thought she was naive and I was convinced her ideas would not work out in Europe for this project and would fail. It was extremely difficult for me to acknowledge that her view had an equal value to mine. I was kind of ashamed when I caught myself realizing that I had little respect for her, because I found her ideas somehow ridiculous. I even got quite angry about this whole situation. […] I tried to call for her logical understanding (insight) that her suggestions of cultural content simply would not match the taste of the project target group (an intellectual and academic audience that had already travelled to China many times). I realized that I needed to shift and find a totally different approach […] I suggested spending an afternoon of drinking tea together. This suddenly opened up a new dimension. We were able to start sharing some simple thoughts and feelings related to how much we enjoyed the tea, and also shared some personal stories. And I slowly started seeing her with my heart instead of only with my head. Her shoes no longer looked so ugly to me. I could just acknowledge that they were very different from mine.”

Building trust over time

As in any human relationship trust is the most important capital, and it also reveals to be the number one success factor in partnerships between Europeans and Chinese. Trust or
xinren (信任), however, does necessarily come naturally or automatically, especially when exploring new cultural co-operations. It takes time to build trusting working relationships, and usually takes a conscious effort and patience.

We trust when we feel comfortable with the other. This can be based on something we have in common, or we can cultivate it over time by not only understanding why other people act as they do, or simply being highly motivated to co-operate with them but, more often than not, by adapting our actions or behaviours to the other person's to increase everyone's comfort level. This may involve changing our communication style – more face to face than e-mail, for example, or by spending more or less time socialising than you are used to. One interviewee summarized his personal experience:

"We had a written agreement on the project and a verbal commitment to further work. The relationship was carefully built over time to build trust and a shared vision. I felt there was risk in the way I managed working in China and needed to trust the situation and the relationship. While my Chinese partner and I felt comfortable with each other quite soon, it took us 18 months to discover an appropriate project together. Again this was important."
Getting Prepared

When the cultural practitioners we interviewed were asked what they would do differently if they could start their project all over again, most gave us clear messages: "… learn and know more about each other before the project" and "be well prepared and with an open mind".

The authors can only reiterate the importance of preparation and its impact on the project implementation and overall outcome. Here are some tips, some skills to acquire and recommended practices to prepare for an intercultural project.

Be inquisitive – gather cultural knowledge – read and ask questions

“To know the road ahead, ask those coming back” Confucius

Intercultural cooperation requires knowledge about culture, history and language, as well as about political, economic and social realities – for China or Europe. Here are two ways to start learning from those who ‘know the road ahead’:

- Reading – the authors provide literature recommendations at the end of each article. A compilation of useful books and internet resources is in the resource chapter.
- Asking someone with experience – this is a more interactive way to deepen your knowledge, and also a safe way to ask questions you are not immediately comfortable asking your Chinese partner. Who could and should be your advisor when you start a Europe-China project?

See for yourself – travel to the partner country

In addition to gathering information in your own country the best preparation is to travel to China or Europe to get first-hand experience of the local context before embarking on a joint project. It’s an effective way of avoiding some of the challenges later on in the project. Both our European and Chinese interviewees emphasize this:

“The reasons behind the challenges I met would have been my inexperience of working in China; and no preparation for my initial attendance at the meeting in Beijing other than reading cultural orientation books.”

“Experience, coming to Europe to understand the context in Europe is important. There should be mobility, more visits from Chinese professionals to Europe to contextualise, and vice versa … such meetings need to be followed up.”

Language – look for good interpreters and start learning Chinese

One obvious challenge to plan for is the potential language barrier. If there is no common language, or no common level of the same language, you can either engage interpreters and/or translators, or include bilingual team members who can help bridge the gaps in mutual understanding. In either case, we recommend you plan additional time for bilingual project communication. Our interviewees had some recommendations for selecting interpreters:
“We found very good interpreters for the project, specialists in the cultural sector – that was a fantastic help for the meeting itself.”

“Always bring your own good interpreter, someone who not only interprets the actual conversation, but also the cultural context.”

There is no comprehensive database yet for cultural language interpreters, however, the European cultural centres in China might offer their network contacts (see next section: Finding Partners). A worthwhile ambition is to learn some Chinese yourself. This will not make up for the need for a good interpreter but, contrary to expectations, Chinese is not so difficult to learn (just time-consuming). And it is definitely a way to understand more about Chinese culture.

Another point has to be made: Europe is characterised by linguistic diversity. Languages of the European Union include twenty-three official languages along with a range of others\(^{15}\). Except for the British, all other Europeans who engage in Europe-China cooperation are working in a non-native language. So if both sides, Europeans and Chinese work in a 3rd language, this could also lead to language-related challenges as well. Thus, a certain patience and sensitivity to this potential source of misunderstandings is useful.

_Cultural orientation seminars and cross-cultural training_

“Our team even followed a course ‘How to negotiate with the Chinese’ before we went the first time to Beijing. Very interesting, enriching and useful.”

Another common approach to prepare for intercultural work is to undertake training sessions to acquire country-specific knowledge to help you understand underlying cultural values. Both in Western countries and in China, cultural value frameworks developed by Western anthropologists or management experts, such as Edward T. Hall, Geert Hofstede or Fons Trompenaars, have long dominated most programmes. However, in both Europe and China, there is an ongoing debate about the need for more updated models.

COMPASS team member Kerstin Gal, a researcher on cultural learning at Leipzig University, says:

“The problem with approaches such as Hofstede is that they take nations and peoples as a starting point to define culture. This predicts that culture is something homogeneous; it is an inward oriented perspective and, at the same time, a separation from everything outside, without regard for the diversity of a collective. A contemporary researcher who meets the zeitgeist better is Clifford Geertz, whose concept of culture is semiotic, in other words, it is not about extrapolating rules to describe culture, but rather about identifying the meaning of culture. He argues that culture is subjective and primarily dependent on the perception and interpretation of the reality of every individual: ‘man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun’.”

\(^{15}\) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_the_European_Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_the_European_Union)
The authors want to emphasize that cross-cultural or intercultural trainings (both terms are often used interchangeably) are only a starting point for a continuous journey of discovery and learning. They do not – or should not – offer quick solutions and lists of dos & don’ts promising easy success. In general, these trainings aim to:

- raise the participants’ cross-cultural awareness
- provide them with a culture-specific knowledge of history and how it has shaped present day values and practices
- ideally, practise techniques or skills useful in intercultural interactions (a selection are listed below)

By far the most effective approach to look for in a training programme is the experiential element, as well as a trainer who is experienced in both intercultural theory and practice on the ground. One influential training method is the Cultural Assimilator (CA) method based on so-called critical incidents, or stories involving culture clashes, developed by cultural psychologists. They provide basic cultural scripts about a specific country that cover a variety of situations and the culturally appropriate behaviours. Taking into consideration the critique above about intercultural trainings in general and Clifford Geertz’s concept of culture, the goal for cultural training could also be described as achieving a communication capacity that enables one to react sensitively to individual situations and realities.

**Intercultural Competencies**

One of the COMPASS authors, Irene Oehler, who has worked as cross-cultural coach and trainer for many years, identifies four basic requirements or competencies for intercultural cooperation:

- **An openness to other ways of doing things**: an open mind allows us to be receptive to new ideas, to build relationships with people very different from us, and to learn about unfamiliar cultures.

- **Self-awareness of one’s own cultural assumptions**: self-awareness is about becoming aware of one’s own ‘cultural baggage’: our assumptions, our preferred way of communicating, as well as awareness about how our – preferred – way of doing things may be perceived by others.

- **Learning to relate to others**: to some this comes naturally; others may have to make a conscious effort. The practices listed below offer techniques that have proved to be helpful.

- **An ability to synergise diverse approaches**: lastly, and often most challenging, there is the ability of a team leader or project manager to reconcile differences to find creative, new solutions in order to produce something that is greater than the sum of its parts. All of these competencies and more can be developed with motivation and resilience.

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Self-awareness and self-assessment
Self-awareness is the foundation for the development of intercultural competencies. Interculturalists have developed a range of assessment tools to determine where we are in terms of our intercultural competencies and the effectiveness of our ability to handle conflict across cultures. Many cross-cultural training programmes will include at least one type of assessment.  

Transformational change and learning
The authors also want to draw attention to another field — organisational learning. Some organisational learning pioneers, such as C. Otto Scharmer, Peter Senge and Ed Schein, explore the nature of transformational change and learning and have developed methodologies and theories with very practical value. Further practical tools are available to prepare for intercultural encounters and cooperation. Practices from the field of learning include:

The Empathy Walk
Empathy allows a person to see another person’s unique point of view. It is often mistakenly believed to be rooted in emotion. However, it arises from cognitive advances made in human development and thus can be ‘learned’ and practised. One of the exercises to practise empathy is the so-called ‘Empathy Walk’. The aim is to practise putting oneself in the ‘shoes of others’, to develop empathy for someone different from your self, and gain some skills in establishing relationships across boundaries. A concrete example of this process has been included above under Basic Principles.

Shadowing
This technique refers to actually accompanying – shadowing – a person for a period of time, for example half a day, to observe them at work. The purpose of this exercise is to observe, and absorb practical and intuitive knowledge from a partner, colleague or a person with relevant experience. It leads to a deeper understanding of the other person.

Practise observing rather than judging
When we find someone’s behaviour unfamiliar or confusing, we tend to evaluate or judge it. Interculturalists recommend a process of Describe, Interpret, Evaluate (D.I.E.): describe what you have observed (rather than judge), and try to understand what’s behind the actions observed before you evaluate. Otto Scharmer calls this “suspending your voice of judgment”. We can also practise thinking: “His or her point of view is different from mine, this is interesting”, rather than judging it, as in: “His or her point of view just doesn’t make sense”. Many organisations also reward fast pace and fast decision-making but, when working in a new or foreign environment, quick decisions made on the same assumptions as at home can be costly. Suspending judgment and being able to see the intrinsic value in

17 A comprehensive overview of tools currently available can be found at: http://www.intercultural.org/tools.php
18 The Empathy Walk was first developed by Ed Schein.
19 See for example Ed Schein: Kurt Lewin’s Change Theory in the Field and in the Classroom: Notes Toward a Model of Managed Learning: http://www.solonline.org/res/wp/10006.html#three_aae
different cultural points of views is an invaluable skill in communication, and can be learned in intercultural awareness workshops, and further developed through conscious efforts.

- **Flexibility**
  This refers not only to one's own ability to communicate in a range of styles but also to allowing others to communicate in a range of ways – without (negative) evaluation. Flexibility also refers to flexible behaviour: first observing others in a new environment (again without judgment), and initially copying other people's behaviour is one way of making others feel comfortable, even if you're not yet familiar with the rules. When working across cultures we also recommend you do not trust the proverbial first impression as it is usually based on your point of view. Flexibility also means being ready to update one's views after experiencing and learning about another culture.

- **Practice of active listening**
  This is a proactive approach that aims to check and clarify, rather than to assume understanding of others. In unfamiliar situations this skill becomes even more critical, as it involves not just listening to the words said, but also to the context: who says what to whom and where? What body language can you observe? It involves checking our understanding regularly to avoid misunderstandings or one-sided agreements. In practice, the active listener frequently paraphrases and double checks the meanings of words used: “… if I understand you correctly, you …”, or: “when you say ‘x’, do you mean …?”

- **Meditation practices: emptying yourself – listening with an open heart**
  In our Basic Principles, the authors state that empathy occurs only when we have successfully shed all preconceived ideas and judgments about others, or ‘emptied ourselves’. This is a basis for intuitively relating to other people. Eric Messerschmidt, head of the Danish Cultural Institute in Beijing, who first came to China at the beginning of the 90s, said:

  “When I came to China rather accidentally, I really knew very little – I had these cliché images in my head: The Great Wall, Forbidden City, Mao… But I had no theoretic background or knowledge about China, so my impressions as well as the way in which I related to China were very matter-of-fact, emotional, intuitive. What really struck me was the tenderness I observed between people. I felt a very sensual quality of relationships, and I observed the dignity and pride of people.”

To practise ‘emptying yourself’ and ‘opening your mind as well as your heart’ meditation exercises are sources of inspiration, e.g. from the Buddhist tradition\(^{21}\).

During the feedback process in writing this chapter one of our Chinese colleagues said “what if the other party is not ready?” One possible answer is that it’s good to have these competencies and skills yourself before you start, but it is equally helpful to apply these practices together with your partner in the process. While we call this chapter ‘Getting Prepared’, we want to stress that this is not a linear process, but one of trial and error, back and forth. And, most of all, it is a continuous learning.

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\(^{21}\) Otto Scharmer for example refers to meditation instruction in the *Shambhala*, or *The Sacred Path of the Warrior* by Chogyam Trungpa, *Turning the Mind into an Ally* by Sakyong Mipham, or *Zen Mind Beginners Mind* by Shunryu Suzuki.
Katja Hellkötter talked with two experts, Dr Marcus Hernig, Professor of Cross-Cultural Studies at Zhejiang University, and Tony Fang, Professor of Business Administration at Stockholm University School of Business. Whether discussing theory or praxis, both see a need to move towards a concept of culture beyond categories of differences.

Dr Marcus Hernig is Professor of Cross-Cultural Studies at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou and author of books on Chinese culture, history and everyday life. He trains corporate companies on cross-cultural issues, working with Western (in English or German) and Chinese staff (in Chinese).

Katja Hellkötter (KH): Marcus, can one train in intercultural competence?

Dr Marcus Hernig (MH): The preconditions for intercultural competence can be trained: a knowledge framework and – more importantly – basic, selective tools for behaviour and communication. Intercultural competence is a special set of communicative competences, as American linguist Dell Hymes once said, that enables you to act successfully in an environment with partners from a different socialisation and language background.

KH: Some academics, especially cultural scientists, are quite sceptical about ‘intercultural communication and training’ (ICT), arguing that these concepts are too simple and also too oriented towards efficiency. What do you think and what is your approach?

MH: I am also very sceptical about ICTs that still focus on a set of ‘dos and don’ts’. These concepts, whether consciously or unconsciously, are based on an old approach that characterises culture as static and nation specific. Many of these ‘tools for behaving in the right way’ will lead us in the wrong direction. This will lead to faulty perceptions of what people really think, do and how they behave in today’s societies. A trainer must be a very good observer, capable of reflecting on current society stages. My underlying concept of culture is of dynamic, ever-changing cultures, because we all live in an ever-changing patchwork of cultural features that determine our behaviour. That is even more important for cultural clusters, as found in China, which have undergone long-term separation and rapid change.

For that reason my approach is very much concerned with communication – different styles of communication that are currently important in a society. Globalisation for instance is a factor that rapidly introduces internationally recognised communication styles: ‘top-down argumentation’, ‘objective critique’, ‘C(lear)-B(rief)-S(incer) reporting styles’ etc., to societies like the Chinese. That is a contemporary stream of culture enhanced by intense global business contexts.

KH: How about traditional communication and learning cultures in China today?

MH: Yes, on the other hand young Chinese are also used to traditional communication styles still favoured in China’s education system: authoritarian styles, answer before question – these are all very passive styles of communication that differ from current Western concepts. Finding the right balance, demonstrating and training these current differences – and observing possible changes to adapt concepts accordingly – this is the core of my training approach.

Historical knowledge of a society’s development is also important. By this I mean basic knowledge about fundamental settings, development stages, important features and of course profound changes in the ‘cultures’ we are discussing. If Westerners do not
understand the Confucian background that dominated Chinese education for centuries and do not even understand that socialist education fossilised this style in a certain way, they cannot interpret the current behaviour of young Chinese. Therefore my trainings also include the cultural knowledge that governs modern Chinese society.

**KH:** In your training sessions, you work with both Westerners in English or German and Chinese in Chinese language. Sometimes in mixed groups, sometimes not. Do Westerners and Chinese perceive training approaches in different ways? Are there practices that work with Westerners but not with Chinese?

**MH:** Trainings are different, their content is highly dynamic. It’s not only true with the concept of dynamic and changing cultures but even more with different target groups. I started my training business with sessions for Chinese participants in Chinese. Using the participants’ language enables the trainer to catch their real thoughts and talk personally about problems. This is the first very 'Chinese' feature of trainings. Chinese trainees tend to develop a very personal relationship with the trainer, discuss emotions when cooperating with foreigners and easily express in their own language everything normally hidden within when interacting with Westerners. This is an important benefit of ICTs for an only Chinese group. But there are more differences: in training, Chinese participants still adopt an internalised attitude towards the 'almighty teacher'. They like to listen to the teacher's advice, enjoy lessons and structured course material. This is a learning behaviour they have always been used to – so why not use it to facilitate knowledge within training? On the other hand – due to the dominating dynamic approach – their 'behaviour culture' needs changing too. Chinese people like to play, to gamble, to have fun. This behaviour pattern can be used to introduce communication styles and practise them through role play or competitive games. Then, the trainee becomes the active participant the trainer is seeking – and will try out new styles in an entertaining way.

The last very typical feature for the Chinese – they really look for differences, because many Chinese trainees are still convinced that there are fundamental cultural gaps between East and West. When they notice that many of those so-called differences are linked to a society's development – we often generate a kind of surprise in their minds.

**KH:** How about Westerners – what kind of communication patterns do they have?

**KH:** Westerners also stick to their internalised communication patterns like asking questions. That is a concept perpetuated in Western education and NOT emphasized in Chinese education, although both Socrates and Confucius favoured the concept of asking. But this 'art' was neglected in the course of Chinese education. My sessions for Westerners are much more open – and nearly always change from my original outline. The question forms a very important communication routine in training Westerners.

Mixed training sessions combining Westerners and Chinese, for all or part of a training session, are becoming ever more popular because they combine both styles described and focus on dialogue structured by the facilitator. Nothing is more convincing than first-hand information from your own peers, so I am convinced mixed trainings will be part of the future in this business.
Tony Fang is Full Professor of Business Administration at Stockholm University School of Business. He is also Visiting Professor at Europe China Institute, Nyenrode Business University, The Netherlands and Visiting Professor at Asia Research Centre, Copenhagen Business School. He is on the editorial board of the International Journal of Cross Cultural Management and Journal of Intercultural Communication.

Katja Hellkötter (KH): Our subject is intercultural cooperation between Europe and China. Why don’t we first talk about the notion of ‘intercultural’?

Tony Fang (TF): The terms ‘intercultural’ and ‘cross-cultural’ have been widely used in both theory and practice. In Chinese, both can be translated as *kuawenhua* (跨文化). I am quite critical of these terms and try not to use them. We often hear people saying: “We have no chance of understanding each other; this is my culture and that is your culture, and we are so different that we cannot communicate with each other.” These terms present cultures as kind of ‘airtight’ groups existing exclusively of each other, without the vision that cultures can coexist within each other and can change through cultural learning over time. The terms are essentially products of the static paradigm of culture which has dominated cultural research and practice for decades. Today, cultures are becoming so diverse, complex, fluid and mobile, we need to find better terms to capture the dynamics of interactions of cultures.

KH: What ideas for alternative terms do you have?

TF: My research is still ongoing. For the time being, I prefer to use “culture in globalization”, “managing culture and leadership in globalization”, when I talk about cross-cultural and intercultural issues.

KH: You criticize Geert Hofstede’s intercultural model that still dominates most intercultural training approaches. What is your main criticism and what alternative do you suggest?

TF: Geert Hofstede is a great social scientist. His intercultural model has had an enormous impact in the consulting world as well as the academic world. The model has awakened managers’ interest in and respect for cultures. However, the downside of Hofstede’s vision of culture is increasingly recognised in the age of globalisation and the Internet when cultural learning takes place not just longitudinally from one’s own ancestors within one’s own cultural group (which Hofstede and many other cultural pioneers have focused on) but in a multi-dimensional way from different nations, cultures and peoples in an increasingly borderless and wireless workplace, marketplace and cyberspace.

My critique of Hofstede’s intercultural model has two main points. Firstly, I question the sustainability of Hofstede’s bipolar cultural theory in understanding culture in the age of globalisation when cultural learning occurs faster than ever before and cultural coexistence within cultures is a fact of life. Hofstede says: “The vast majority of people in our world live in societies in which the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual. I will call these societies collectivist. … A minority of people in our world live in societies in which the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group, societies which I will call *individualist*” (Hofstede’s italics). According to Hofstede, the USA is an individualistic society whereas China is a collectivistic society; moreover, the USA is a short-term oriented society whereas China is a long-term oriented society. I

question this 'either-or' interpretation of culture. I doubt whether cultures/societies can be labelled as either collectivist or individualistic and so on. I argue that any living culture embraces paradox and contradiction. Therefore, the US culture is both individualistic and collectivistic, both short- and long-term oriented, depending on situation, context and time. The same is true of Chinese culture, which is both individualistic and collectivistic, both short- and long-term oriented depending on situation, context and time. This does not mean to suggest that the USA and China are the same culture. The way they embrace paradox and contradiction can vary over time.

Then I question Hofstede’s assumption that “cultures, especially national cultures, are extremely stable over time”. Hofstede is not wrong in taking a snapshot of cultures in a given place at a given time. But Hofstede is wrong when he claims that his cultural snapshot represents the mainstream of cultures, irrespective of situation, context and time. For various reasons, some cultures may be more stable over time than others. But saying that, as a rule, cultures are stable over time can be questioned. I see Hofstede’s theory in mountain villages in Spain isolated from the outside world. I become critical of Hofstede’s theory when I see how Chinese culture has been changing over the past three decades given the interactions between China and other nations.

KH: What is your suggestion for an alternative kind of intercultural model?

TF: My suggestion is to liberate the concept of culture from the current static ‘either-or’ box and bring it back to its natural situations, contexts and time. It is important to capture the ‘both-and’ dynamics of culture. In other words, we need not only a cultural snapshot but a cultural video of various situations, contexts and time to capture the life of culture in action.

KH: So you mean a more process-oriented model of culture?

TF: Yes, you’re right. Time or the temporal process is brutally ignored in Hofstede’s theory. We need to examine how culture develops during its life process and how various conditional factors, including trigger events, influence the changing identity of culture over time.

KH: Is there an indigenous Chinese perspective towards intercultural theory and praxis?

TF: Yes, I think so. Moreover, I believe indigenous Chinese thinking can be useful for generating new cultural theories of global relevance. In my research I draw on inspirations from the ancient Chinese wisdom of Yin Yang to understand the ‘both-and’ nature of culture by looking at the paradox and change inherent in culture. The Yin Yang model suggests that human beings, organisations and cultures, like all other universal phenomena, intrinsically crave variation and harmony for their basic existence and healthy development. We are both Yin and Yang, feminine and masculine, long-term and short-term, individualistic and collectivistic . . . depending on situation, context and time.

KH: As I ask you about ‘indigenous Chinese thinking’ anticipating that this is different from Western thinking – are we not falling into the same intercultural trap again?

TF: I understand your concern. Yin Yang is an indigenous Chinese thought. But it has the capacity to embrace the ‘either-or’ thinking. In my research, Hofstede’s cultural snapshot is embraced in a larger ‘ocean’ of culture of humanity.

KH: Can you further describe your Yin Yang model?

TF: If we use ‘+Vi’ [i = 1, 2, 3, … n] and ‘-Vi’ [i = 1, 2, 3, … n] to symbolise various paradoxical value orientations, the Yin Yang model suggests four propositions.

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23 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_and_yang
Proposition 1: If \{'+V1', '+V2', '+V3', ... '+Vn'\} exists in a culture, \{'-V1', '-V2', '-V3', ... '-Vn'\} can coexist in the same culture depending on the situation, context and time.

Proposition 2: To guide action in a given context at a given time, human beings choose the most relevant value(s) from the full spectrum of potential value orientations ranging from \{'+V1', '+V2', '+V3', ... '+Vn'\} to \{'-V1', '-V2', '-V3', ... '-Vn'\}.

Proposition 3: In a culture in a particular context at a particular time some values \{'+V1', '+V2', '+V3', ... '+Vn'\} can be promoted, while other values \{'-V1', '-V2', '-V3', ... '-Vn'\} can be suppressed, thus resulting in a unique value configuration.

Proposition 4: Each culture is a unique dynamic portfolio of self-selected globally available value orientations ranging from \{'+V1', '+V2', '+V3', ... '+Vn'\} to \{'-V1', '-V2', '-V3', ... '-Vn'\} as a consequence of the culture's all-dimensional learning over time.

This view of culture is different from Hofstede's but it has the capacity to embrace Hofstede's thinking and further develop it in a larger dynamic cultural context in globalisation. As such, each culture is not guided by just a few values but rather surrounded by numerous potential paradoxical value orientations. Cultural identity is a matter of value portfolios self-selected by people depending on situation, context and time.

The Yin Yang model explains why cultural differences can still remain over time not because of permanent differences between nationalities as claimed in the Hofstede paradigm but because of the possible differences between cultures’ self-selections of value portfolios over time. Hofstede uses an onion metaphor to understand culture and emphasizes the importance of stable “core values”. By contrast, my metaphor for culture is an ocean in which cultures learn from each other to shape the dynamic value portfolio of that culture given situation, context and time. The former is a model of cultural destiny regardless of time, whereas the latter is a model of cultural learning over time.

KH: Can intercultural competence be trained?

TF: Yes, I think so. My approach is to guide managers to be sensitive to different situations, contexts and time where/when cultures manifest in different and even paradoxical value orientations. For example, while most intercultural (and cross-cultural) studies show that Chinese culture is a large power distance culture and Chinese leadership is hierarchical and formal in character, I ask managers why karaoke is so popular in China. I ask why leaders in Chinese organisations tend to adopt quite opposite leadership styles in karaoke and other informal settings, and how the dictatorial and democratic, formal and informal, masculine and feminine leadership styles co-exist within one and the same culture and organisation, just like the Yin Yang integration.
Finding Partners and Building Partnerships

WHO IS WHO? HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT PARTNER?

While in Europe it is common to find your partner for cross-border collaborations via cultural networks24, there is no equivalent structure of cultural networks in China yet, because networking in China works differently. There are, however, a lot of international (network) conferences taking place in China which offer an excellent opportunity for networking and partner search. The exchange of contacts between peers in cultural networks is an important first step to scan the field and know which partners could be reliable to work with.

In the performing arts, ISPA (International Society for the Performing Arts) and IETM (International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts) have organised conferences and, with the explosion of international events in China, these occasions increased exponentially. Also Chinese organisations are increasingly present at international platforms outside China, giving a first opportunity to meet. In IETM, the Asia Project was set up, uniting IETM members with a similar interest and experience in collaborating with China and the rest of Asia. This network inside a network is of crucial importance.

European cultural centres and official representations: good entry points and brokers

If European partners are first timers to China and have no networks yet, they would – depending on which country they come from – normally consult their country’s Cultural Institute, the Cultural Attaché at the Embassy or the European Chamber of Commerce. Some European cities also have their own representative offices that act as an intermediary. These foreign representations in China have networks of Chinese government institutions (normally embedded in a certain institutional framework such as a bilateral cultural cooperation agreement) and also many direct contacts with other players, artists and the independent scene. Some of the European cultural institutes have set up dedicated partner matching and collaboration services, such as the British Council and its Connections through Culture programme25. Many of these institutes have engaged in cultural mapping studies, to include sectoral information and local players. Another example is the China-Netherlands Cultural Mapping platform by the SICA Dutch centre for international cultural activities26. The resource chapter at the end of the COMPASS publication provides further information on Europe-China cultural exchange programmes and contacts.

Direct contacts and cooperation with Chinese partners: possible and necessary

While ten to fifteen years ago Chinese government intermediates (e.g. The Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries27 associated with the Foreign Affairs Organisation) channelled most of the exchanges, the situation is now different.

24 The article Cultural Networks – A Particularly European Phenomenon by Mary Ann DeVlieg, Director of IETM – International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts, in the Chinese version of the COMPASS gives an overview of Networks in Europe.
25 The Connection through Culture programme by the British Council offers a) information, b) study tours and networking events, c) development grants, and d) individual support and tailored knowledge. Organisations can register on the Connections website to access support. The Connections Development Grant is currently in its 11th round: it enables one member of staff of non-profit organisations to visit their counterparts in China or the UK to further the face-to-face discussions needed to develop projects beyond initial expressions of interest, it offers up to £1,500 for a visit of about 10 days. More: http://ctc.britishcouncil.org.cn/.
26 http://www.culturalexchange-cn.nl/mapping-china
27 This organisation still exists, but its importance decreased. http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/ljzg/zgjk/3575/t17824.htm
With increased international networking and legal changes, foreign partners can now make direct contact with any Chinese partner. Large commercial companies and big state-owned companies\(^{28}\) are the main players in China who execute cultural projects and act as partners, for example when organising performance projects. For intercultural exchange projects, public organisations such as reputable Chinese research institutes, universities and academies are possible partners for collaboration\(^{28}\).

As an organisation you always need to find a local partner (a Chinese legal entity) to be able to conduct a cultural project in China, although it is possible in some fields in the creative industry sector\(^{30}\) to establish a ‘Wholly Foreign Owned Company’ (WFOE). Also, to get the necessary performances permissions European partners need to work with Chinese agencies or directly with venues, who have government certification that prove they are eligible to apply for approval permits for foreign partners\(^{31}\). The European representations in China cannot apply for these directly. So, for the Europeans, it is normally a combination of a partnership with both a European institution in China and a Chinese agency. The article by Tobias Zuser in Part III provides more information on the main players in the cultural sector in China. For a list of the Chinese authorities in charge of foreign direct investment in the cultural and creative sectors in China see the law article by Philip Lazare.\(^{32}\)

**Parallel strategies: finding independent artists and maintaining official partnerships**

An important point is that independent artist partners are not necessarily found via government partners, who will normally not be in a position to look for independent artists, or to organise a network with multiple independent players. The political culture is very different from the culture in the independent sector. For an official programme, the European partner cannot afford not to work with government bodies and, if they want the independent scene to be involved at the same time, tactical and creative solutions are necessary. One interviewee, Nelson Fernandez from NFA International Arts and Culture (UK) with long-time China-experience, shared his story with us:

“I went to China to interview candidates for the programme we were running on the basis of an initial selection made by our partners in the Ministry of Culture and partly on basis of open applications received by our European partner in China. We made our selection and found that some of the selected participants were official candidates, some not… This became a problem as some people were not really acceptable to the Ministry.

So the creative solution in 1999 was to organise two programmes, one an ‘official’ programme and one for the ‘independents’, with both programmes run simultaneously. The Ministry of Culture did not forbid us to have the independent one, we

\(^{28}\) For example, the Beijing Gehua Cultural Development Group or the Poly Group etc.

\(^{29}\) For example: Beijing University, Central Conservatory, China Conservatory, Shanghai Theatre Academy, Tongji University in Shanghai, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts and Nanjing Arts Institute, the China Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing, the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, or the Chinese National Academy of Arts in Beijing, etc. Also see article by Tobias Zuser in Part III.

\(^{30}\) See Law article by Philip Lazare in Part III: Table A provides an overview of the specific restrictions and conditions for foreign investment in various sectors. For example, WFOEs are possible for commercial galleries, advertising and creative agencies, PR and event companies and professional photographers.

\(^{31}\) Information to be included in the application: list of artists with all personal details, set list, and where foreign texts are used (e.g. songs or other) they must be translated into Chinese. Normally the artist will be granted a 30-day visa (an F-visa for cultural exchange). Source: Tobias Zuser, Beijing.

\(^{32}\) Philip Lazare, Law and the Cultural Sector: Issues for Foreign Artists and Companies Operating in China, see page 96
just needed to double up everything (from introductory workshops, to receptions, and parties, etc.) and to keep activities for each programme separate from each other, which of course had financial implications. But it worked in the end: the participants of the two workshops knew each other and actually got on quite well when they met 'by chance.' So we learned very quickly about the differences in our political cultures and about the need to think creatively.”

However, the solution described may not be needed in every case. Depending on the political and cultural climate at the time, the openness of the government in China varies. According to the experience of the authors, it also depends on individuals in government organisations. There are a few individuals in government positions who not only have an amazing understanding about Europe, but are well aware and connected with the scene, and on top of this they have a position of power within their organisation. If these three parameters are in place, there is certain space to act. Nelson Fernandez continues his story:

“Some years later, in 2004, there were changes – the cultural environment had changed. We were able to have a programme in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture with officially nominated and independent candidates. Whereas four years earlier it was difficult to bring together those different candidates, by 2004 the cultural environment had changed and made it all possible. It should also be said that we had also developed a relationship of trust with our Chinese partners and I have no doubt that this had also helped. These cyclical changes happen a lot in China, just as they do in other societies.

In 1999 I took a delegation of producers to China. The producers wanted to see a certain kind of work. The officials of the Ministry of Culture wanted them to see other work. That kind of mismatch and organised agendas has changed. The Chinese Ministry of Culture does not get involved in the same way any more. The international affairs office is more relaxed now. The exchange expanded so much that they are aware that things are different. So they are not as proactive supporting visits as they were in the past in China, since those visits now take place anyway… relations have changed.”

Of course this trend towards more openness and a more relaxed attitude cannot be taken for granted and the situation may well change. In China political changes can have immediate effects on the cultural field, which are wider ranging, more immediate and have a deeper impact than Europeans are used to. If leaders identify relaxation as problematic they might again announce policies that stress the leading role of government in cultural exchange programmes and Europeans must make sure to familiarise themselves with the current situation.

Finding partners via networks of friendship

Of course the best way is always to find partners via some kind of existing friendships or through introductions. If you can tap into the rather institutional friendship resources of twinned cities, for example, or if you work on the basis of a personal friendship with any individual with a certain position in China, using an already existing ‘capital of trust’ is definitely beneficial.
Maps out the position of your partner in the cultural landscape and in their organisation
Where does the partner fit into the Chinese or other cultural landscape? Which organisation and decision-maker sits above the partner in the organisational hierarchy, and what decision-making authority does he or she have? These are the questions that European partners are confronted with and they often find it difficult to get transparency. Agota Revesz, Consul for Culture and Education, Consulate General of the Republic of Hungary in Shanghai says:

“Another problem area is to see through the way administration is organised here in China. I feel I have much more clarity already, but I still cannot see the top of the mountain. I wish I could see through the structure and know who is responsible in what situations. Recently, I wanted to know about how to deal with an outgoing project, the city government people told me that I needed to contact SARFT for censoring. I understand that I need this for incoming projects; censorship is there, but for outgoing projects? Often things look easy on the surface at the beginning, only later a lot of problems are revealed.”

Of course this is related to a different structure of ownership, and to the fact that the private and government sphere in China are still more intermingled than they are in Europe. What might look like a private agency can be a semi-private entity closely associated with a government office above it, impacting on decision-making to a considerable degree.

Different popularity levels of partners
China has become of greater and greater interest to Europeans, which results in a situation where well-known Chinese institutions can often choose from a range of European partners, who are all knocking on their doors. This might result in competition for capacities, or human resources being ‘overused’ for several partnerships in parallel. As one of our European interviewees reported:

“What I realize to be a problem is if the partner organisation is a really well-regarded organisation and is approached by many partners from Europe and the world, this can result into a certain kind of saturation and unfortunately also arrogance. Of course this is natural – the more choice for partnerships there is, the more competition there is as well. And this brings an imbalance for the partnership, if genuine interests are different, and power positions do not match.”

Partner matching: some asymmetries – different sizes, ownership, identities
Different structures in the cultural landscapes of Europe and China can also lead to an imbalance for the players involved when forming the partnership. European arts companies are in general smaller and more diverse. When finding a Chinese partner, the partner might be big and powerful, which might lead to an imbalance in the relationship, or different perceptions about each other.

Another issue is that European arts organisations often assess organisations for their artistic director’s vision and skills, while the director of a Chinese company might
not always be the person tuned into the artistic side. Another issue is that European companies (all or mostly independent companies) are generally searching for independent companies, often non-profit companies, but such companies don’t normally communicate much with the commercial and government-run companies. If a European freelancer empowered to represent a small arts company meets a decision-maker from a large Chinese company, in the eyes of the Chinese this might be regarded a problem if their counterparts do not have a position at what is perceived as an equivalent level. Furthermore, in general in China companies and arts organisations are larger than in Europe and employ more people. COMPASS advisor and author Katelijn Verstraete reports:

“The members of the IETM network were working on a very different field than the participants who finally participated in China. In the end, it was mostly the independent sector in China who benefited from the meeting, not the official sector. The structure of the performing arts field in China and in Europe is so different that, for small European companies, dealing with big Chinese companies there are different approaches and interests. This mismatch, that was due to structural differences in the sectors in Europe and in China, revealed itself as a real challenge in the process of exchange.”

Unclear intentions – when is a ‘yes’ a ‘yes’?
On the level of ‘artist meets artist’ there is of course a high chance that the intentions are articulated honestly from one to another. However, as soon as there is an institution involved, whether public or private, there is a high chance that there are hidden topics on the agenda of each partner – or the intentions are different. Our survey revealed that unclear intentions are a source of failure for partnerships. For example, a Chinese institution says YES to a partnership, even though they are not interested. There can be a number of possible reasons: politeness; not wanting the European partner to lose face by confronting him with a NO; or more likely, being ‘caught’ in a relationship of obligation.

Cultural cooperation as a meeting point with other strategic interests

The issue of strategic interest vs. pure cultural exchange needs to be considered in the framework of cultural diplomacy. On both sides, in Europe and China, examples of cultural engagement illustrate how culture is sometimes seen as a ‘soft power’ and may indeed be used in that way. Commercial interests can lead to cultural interests and vice versa. Sometimes another strong driver accompanies or underpins the desire to set up a cultural exchange, leading to new potential synergies that can be positive for all players.

We can see, in the promotion of language learning, whether through the fast recent development of Confucius Institutes across Europe and the world, in the long-standing engagement of the British Council, the Cervantes Institute, Alliance Française and others, the multilayered interests of both national governments and beneficiaries. The learning of each others’ languages is one of the most powerful tools for building intercultural understanding that we have. But the teaching and learning of languages and engagement with the culture, literature and heritage of a linguistic community bring commercial and economic benefits too.
It is no accident, of course, that government investment in overseas promotion, whether on the cultural side or in promoting economic links and opening up new commercial markets, 'follows the money'. For many European and other countries, China – along with the other so-called BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India) buoyant world economies – has been a target country in recent years. Cultural projects and cooperation initiatives between Europe and China can benefit from such momentum and maximise potential for more intelligent, strategic, diverse meeting points and networks. The phenomenon that cultural cooperation can be mixed with business promotion is not new, but has over 100 years of history.13

One of our interviewees, a young Chinese government officer responsible for cooperation with European countries, described it in this way:

“One the one hand, European-Chinese partnerships are often not solely based on friendship, but on benefit-oriented strategic intentions, politically, economically and militarily. On the other hand, Europe does not speak with one voice towards China because each EU member state has its own interests.”

‘Donor-recipient’ patterns – or sharing the financial responsibility equally?
Particularly in non-profit projects, we still find an expectation from the Chinese side that the European side provides the financial resources. Even though there are a lot of financial resources available nowadays in China, this is an expectation or behaviour pattern from the past that European partners might still encounter today. If this is the case, it can be frustrating for European partners. One of them, a former arts director of one of the European cultural institutes in China, says:

“Partnerships are seldom equal in terms of financial investment. There is still a general expectation that the foreign partner will pay for everything.”

But we also increasingly heard from cultural practitioners that the old pattern is changing:

“The donor-recipient mentality has changed. In the first arts management programme we, as a European partner, paid for everything: it was a partnership of sorts, but very specific. In the last programme we no longer had to pay for international flights, we had the partner in China pay for the interview costs which was interviewing about 60 – 100 people in two and a half weeks. So there was no need to provide certain things anymore. For the substance we discovered we did not need to pay such high amounts. Most people had resources and did not really need per diems.”

Arts and culture – a means of promoting regional interests
In China – probably as in Europe – there is increased competition among the regions and provinces and also between cities. If the European partner has a national level partner but the project is due to happen in the provinces, regional interests can get very strong, and often are much more related to promoting the province, for tourism rather than for culture and art as such.

13 E.g. see Roswitha Reinbothe, Kulturexport und Wirtschaftsmacht, Frankfurt, 1992.
Setting up multi-stakeholder projects involving partners at different levels is challenging. Keeping the interests of the different stakeholders in mind is then a natural consequence of the project. It’s important to be aware of these different interests and managing the different expectations of the stakeholders can be challenging. In the process of finding solutions, many compromises may have to be made.

Discussing regional interests, it is also worth mentioning that the European cultural institutions are increasingly diversifying their geographical focus in China, working more regionally. The British Council and the Goethe-Institut, for example, are both working with partners to set up programmes in second tier cities in China. This is not only in order to reach new audiences for culture, but also to develop more links between institutions across the whole of China, as these develop a more international outlook. This also brings benefits and opportunities to regional cities in European countries, given that institutions in Beijing and Shanghai are often focused on national level exchanges. Furthermore, the Creative Cities approach that has become very popular in recent years is also a strategic way of positioning a city through culture and creativity. It might open up opportunities for cultural practitioners if they can join with city networks, but it also creates an increased demand for cross-sector management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Look beyond the normal well-known shortlist of partners: do not just choose a partner because you know they are very popular with other European institutions. Check partners that are less known in foreign circles, but might be extremely committed, offering a lot of attention and resources for the partnership.

- Check capacities: get an understanding of the capacity of your potential Chinese partners and their difficulties. Partner institutions can be good, but capacities for cooperation may not be available.

- Map out people in the hierarchy: it is important to map out people to know where they are in the hierarchy. Our recommendation: ask a lot of people the same question.

- Check intentions clearly: make sure you are aware of motivations and expectations.

- Dialogue interviews: this is a tool designed to engage a person in a productive conversation. They may help you to find partners for a project, or provide you with insights into questions and challenges that your partner faces. This tool was developed by Otto Scharmer.

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34 The ‘creative city’ concept was developed by Charles Landry in the late 1980s and has since become a global movement reflecting a new planning paradigm for cities. Described in The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators and other writings.


36 Learn more: http://presencing.com/tools/
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS AND CONTRACTS

It is a common cliché that contracts do not have the same value in China as in Europe – which is true, to a certain extent. The law in China does not yet have the same final power as in the West, which is also related to a different notion of time and reasoning. Constant change is a fixed parameter of Chinese thinking, thus the Chinese might not see as self-evident that what was written in the contract at a certain time is still valid after some time has passed. It might therefore be ‘logical’, that contracts need to be adapted in line with changes that happen. As one interviewee put it:

“You need to be aware that everything changes from the original proposal – timing, costing, speakers, VIPs or even agreements.”

Written and oral agreements – equally important

Personal credibility and oral agreements are sometimes more important for the Chinese than written contracts. Yet this should not make us underestimate the importance of written agreements, or even neglect to define anything in writing at all. For bigger programmes, official agreements are an absolutely essential requirement, as the story below illustrates. For smaller projects, we also recommend defining the terms of reference, and establishing a process of joint governance at leadership level as well as on the working level. Personal credibility and verbal agreements plus written agreements are complementary parameters for success.

These quotations from two project partners illustrate well how contracts can be a source of conflict. Wilfried Eckstein, contributor of the case story ‘Urban Academy’, and head of a cultural and education section of the German Consulate in Shanghai, says:

“The major emotional challenge in preparing the project was the contract about our cooperation with the museum, our Chinese partner. It was about the services provided by the museum and about the allocation of our financial support. We took great personal care to make clear that the contract was an issue of legalising our transfer of money and not a sign of mistrust in our relation with the museum.”

While his Chinese project partner, Eva Feng, External Communication Manager, Himalayas Art Museum, Shanghai had a different perspective on the contracts issue:

“I must admit that the first time I read the draft contract, it was really getting on my nerves. Comparing the responsibilities and rights of both parties, I had a strong feeling that the museum was in an inferior situation and it seemed like we were forced to sign an unequal treaty. Then our European partner explained to us that it came from the contract template of their Consulate which they could not change at all and these terms did not mean mistrust. I believed in the sincerity, trust and determination conveyed by our partner in all the formal and informal meetings throughout the eight to nine months before it came to negotiating the contract. If we got hung up on the terms, it would not help to push things forward. So finally I managed to persuade the museum director to ignore those annoying terms and sign the contract.”
Memorandum of Understanding for bigger scale non-profit projects

The term ‘Red Tape’, (红头文件 hong tou wenjian)37 in Chinese, refers to official documents issued by the government. These documents have mandatory power and effect. All cooperation that happens on the basis of an official ‘red tape’ framework receives a lot more resources, publicity and help in general. Especially European partners who implement bigger scale cooperation projects (e.g. Years of Europe in China) should make sure that their project is based on this official reference framework. COMPASS editor-in-chief and author Katja Hellkötter says:

“The Memorandum of Understanding between our sister-city partnership was often underestimated by the European side. It is a very powerful tool, a catalyst for cooperation. All the projects that were mentioned and part of the Memorandum were a lot easier to implement. There is not only an ‘approval’ and government support already existing for MoU projects. Projects that are labelled/stamped with ‘friendship project’ achieved more attention, more budgets and got approval quicker.”

The statement from another European interviewee illustrates the bottleneck that can be created if this kind of framework is missing:

“I was in the management team of a big cultural programme by our government in China: it was kind of an equivalent ‘Year of X in China’ project. Conceptually and content-wise the whole project was designed as a Europe-China project, this was also reflected in the name chosen for the event programme. We did not want it to be a mere presentation of our country in China, but really to be an intercultural partnership project. However, it turned out to be really difficult to get the support of Chinese local governments. Why? Because our whole project design had one ‘architectural mistake’. We had not signed any bilateral partnership agreement with the government of China to which we could refer, which would have been the legitimating argument for regional governments to support us. So we realized, even though nowadays in China it is possible to approach and cooperate with Chinese partners directly, for such big programmes you need terms of reference at a national level. This is what they call ‘red tape’.”

Business model partnerships

For long-term engagement in China, an option is for cultural players to operate on a company-based model. For example, for theatres or other performance venues from Europe it is possible to establish a partnership with a Chinese partner on the basis of a Joint Venture model. The law article by Philip Lazare in part III provides a complete overview of business models in the cultural and creative sector.
SETTING UP A TEAM

Hierarchies, power and personnel issues

Project managers in Europe usually have a lot of authority and autonomy, whereas in China project managers are more often assistants to the actual decision-maker. Strongly defined hierarchies in China can also result in more restrictive communication channels within Chinese project teams; i.e. not everyone has permission to communicate with everyone, and only certain levels are allowed to receive certain pieces of information. In general personnel issues are regarded as ‘internal affairs’ by the Chinese partner and it is normally entirely inappropriate to interfere.

“The selection of people for the team really was an issue. […] We knew there was one very good researcher in the organisation, who was absolutely necessary to the process, but at first he was not allocated to our project, because of a lower hierarchy in the organisation. Furthermore we wanted an external facilitator, someone independent. But again, this was almost impossible as in general they are not so respected in China. You could see a lot of politics going on. In the end we got the people we wanted, it just took a lot of time to convince and give arguments.”

Titles and authority

Titles reflect a person’s position in the hierarchy and are crucial to be able to place the person in the system. So, for Europeans, it is important to use a title that reflects their authority adequately for their Chinese partners, instead of only mentioning their function, e.g. Project Management. The right titles open doors and make people listen: e.g. Project Officer indicates a lower position, while Project Director conveys authority. Chinese titles, on the other hand, often don’t reveal the person’s authority clearly for Europeans, so it is critical to check this at the start. Sometimes only experience will tell.

Cross-cultural team building

An even number of Chinese and European team members is the ideal condition for a successful intercultural exchange process; it enables ongoing interactive work between ‘East’ and ‘West’. Regular reporting and feedback processes also help avoid or uncover misunderstandings. As in every team lifecycle, the authors highly recommend discussing mutual expectations, e.g. Who is the leader and what is his/her role? How will important decisions be taken and conflicts resolved? What methods do we have in place to ensure that all team members’ contributions and ideas are included?

Europeans should be prepared to take a leading role in such a process. As the Chinese are used to waiting for initiatives by representatives of higher hierarchical orders, they tend to be passive. They might also act quite defensively in a face to face discussion. Politeness is one reason for this, while another very strong one is the fear of making mistakes which might result in punishment and loss of face. They will need some time to lose this feeling of insecurity. Europeans have to be patient.

The authors would like to note here that our interviewees reported very little on how specifically they approached their cross-cultural team building. This suggests that there is still a lot of room for improvement and skills development.
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Concept of guanxi

Guanxi (关系) means relationship, network, or refers to people one has connections with. It denotes a strong feeling of interpersonal relationship, loyalty and trust, and the moral obligation of reciprocity, i.e. returning favours, to maintain the relationship. People are born into certain networks, and build others over time. In practical terms it translates into “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know”. The right person can open doors and make things happen very quickly.

“Relationships are more than just a name card. The Chinese appreciate this deeper relationship in a way. (...) Invest in partners to come to meet you. Even though you might not know what comes out of it. But Chinese partners do look very much at the person behind the project.”

Culture of saving and giving face and the art of saying no

Guanxi and the concept of ‘face’ mianzi (面子) are interwoven. Face refers to the image, prestige and status of a person or their organisation, and by sharing or building guanxi, everyone’s mianzi can be elevated – and everyone wins. Mianzi, however, can be easily damaged by open criticism or disrespect, and must be protected at all costs. Following this rule, however, created its own issues for the European partners in this example:

“One of the problems might be our timidity: we have all read many things about Chinese face and how important it is not to make them lose it. The result is that we become too careful; we are so terrified to make our partners lose face that we tread on eggs constantly.”

A concrete example of a face-saving way of saying no, while being very definite, might be that you could cancel an invitation for lunch or dinner on another pretext, like having no time, being too busy. The Chinese side will probably realise the Europeans are really serious and start finding ways of how to find a solution acceptable for both sides.

Culture of hospitality in China – a ‘belly culture’

Attending lunches and dinners is part of building trust in professional relationships in China. Food in China is more than just a culture of hospitality but part of a ritual in Chinese life.

“The Chinese tradition … thought first of feeding ‘life’ rather than elaborating on the ‘soul’ because it did not establish as sharp a separation between a principle of life and organic being. It did not assign the ‘head’ a different fate from the rest of the body and situated the spirit in the heart (xin 心)38. Instead, Laozi urges us to shift our attention to the ‘belly’, the seat of ‘nutrition’, where vitality is concentrated. Conversely, in Plato’s Timaeus, the head, the ‘most divine’ part of the body, is what matters most. The purpose of the rest of the body is merely to ‘support’ the head.”39

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38 Usually translated as ‘heart-spirit’ or mind.
Successful communication, or understanding, means achieving common meaning. And it is differences in meaning, far more than simple differences in vocabulary that create misunderstandings. Intercultural Communication is the creation of meaning by people who are more different than they are alike. As cultural environments shape our communication styles, it is about how we expect others to communicate with us, and how we interpret or judge others.

The late Dr. Dean Barnlund offered a formula to clarify the major factors that contribute to the achievement of intercultural understanding: the interpersonal equation:

“Interpersonal Understanding is a function of or dependent upon the degree of Similarity of Perceptional Orientations, Similarity of Systems of Belief, and Similarity in Communicative Styles.”

“Similarity of Perceptional Orientations” refers to people’s dominant approaches to reality – some prefer the novel and unpredictable, and some the known and predictable – as well as how flexible or rigid people’s perceptions are. Some react with curiosity to the unpredictable, some feel more uncomfortable when facing unfamiliar events or complications in a project. “Similarity of Systems of Belief” refers to the conclusions people draw from their experiences, i.e. how similar their attitudes and beliefs are on important issues.

Finally “Communicative Styles” is defined as: “the topics people prefer to discuss, their favourite forms of interaction, and the depth of involvement they demand from each other”. It also includes the preferred “channels of communication – vocal, verbal, physical”, and whether they are more tuned into the “factual or emotional content of messages”. Those elements, of course, overlap and affect each other, and determine our behaviour. What people say is influenced by what they believe, and what they believe, in turn, by what they see. Their perceptions and beliefs are partly a product of their way of communicating with others.

We tend to be attracted by people or groups who are similar to us, who share a similar world view or express themselves in a familiar way; artists, for example, being drawn to artists regardless of their origins. And often we tend to avoid those who challenge our assumptions, or who communicate in a way we judge as strange, or as not immediately accessible.

The experience of our interviewees, however, also shows that it is exactly this unfamiliar territory that can shift perspectives and lead to new discoveries:

“Engaging with Chinese practitioners and audiences has enabled me to explore my own expectations about practice and explore who I am as a producer and as a human being. I was also interested in connecting practitioners in the UK with those in China for professional development opportunities.”

For further reading on intercultural communication the following influential researchers offer a good starting point: Edward T. Hall, Milton J. Bennett, Stella Ting-Toomey, and in China: Liu Dajin & Xie Chaoque, Hu Chao, and Dong Daixiao. Edward Hall introduced the high/low context communication framework, Ting-Toomey the face negotiation theory, Hu Chao the E-time model of intercultural competence, and Dong Daixiao his two directional extension model of intercultural identity.

As a general rule, the more familiar we are with someone, and the better we understand the underlying beliefs – why someone acts the way they do – the more comfortable we feel and the more open we will be. So, for example, the more we learn about others’ systems of beliefs and values, and how this impacts their communication styles, the more likely we are to be able to suspend judgment and allow others to communicate ‘their way’.

The most common (and traditional) approach to breaking through cultural and national differences, is to train in country-specific knowledge and cultural values. Most intercultural training uses models for understanding underlying cultural values and beliefs and how they reflect on a behavioural level. The best known (and also criticized) author is Geert Hofstede, along with Charles Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars. More recently, Shalom H. Schwartz developed his Cultural Values Orientations framework, which differs from the former well-known theories of cultural dimensions in “deriving the constructs to measure culture from a priori theorizing and then testing the first of these constructs to empirical data.” However, cultural knowledge is only a starting point, and cannot replace personal encounters. Interculturalists have identified three main components of Intercultural Communicative Competence:

- Knowledge (information necessary to interact appropriately and effectively)
- Motivation (e.g. positive affect toward the other culture, empathy)
- Skills (behaviour necessary to interact appropriately and effectively)

Direct vs. indirect communication

One of the most striking contrasts in communication styles is the degree of directness. In general, in the West, communication tends to be more linear or direct, while context is equally important to the Chinese. People with a more indirect style will also consider the context of a situation, and not just the words spoken, and they know how to ‘read between the lines’.

“The culture does not necessarily give an outright refusal. Read what the signs are. Refusing is an offence. You need to be sensitive to that.”

They often ‘can’t tell it as it is’ as this could upset the other person and make the other person lose face, diu lian (丢脸) (the other word for face). Avoiding conflict and preserving harmony and people’s guanxi has priority over handling conflict in a direct manner, which in many European cultures is associated with the notion of honesty and trustworthiness. However, indirect communication does not equal using many words, as our interviewees discovered:

“Languages are structured so differently. Chinese can sound very short, abrupt. People working in China need to understand that about the Chinese language. It makes them appear harsh but they are not.”

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It is important to suspend judgement, pause and respond rather than to react to a communication style different from what one is used to, allowing others to express themselves in their way.

A Chinese government official recommends to Chinese partners going to Europe:

“They need to use KISS (Keep It Simple and Smart) language with very clear logic when communicating with Europeans in order to avoid misunderstandings.”

When you have to say no or refuse an offer, make a clear sign that shows you care, provide a good reason, and assure the other party that you’d love to attend next time.

**Written vs. oral communication**

Communication styles also differ in the channels people use. Written communication via e-mail has become a standard communication tool for most Europeans. For the Chinese, especially the older generation, or people working for government agencies, the preference is often still face-to-face meetings, or at least phone conversations. This can pose practical problems in long-distance communication. On the other hand, the younger generation in China particularly has taken to new media, maybe even more so than their European partners:

“Social media has changed things in China too. I don’t use Twitter. I don’t use YouTube … or only as a research tool. I use Facebook for keeping in touch with people rather then finding new people. Social media is changing relationships also in China. As such I don’t use social media for projects.”

COMPASS editor-in-chief Katja Hellkötter reports:

“In one project I had developed a daily communication routine of chatting with the Chinese project assistant via MSM (Hotmail Messenger, which is very popular in China) in Chinese language. The spaces for a closer exchange that this informal chatting opened-up were amazing: I was able to inquire about problems and about what was really going on the Chinese side, which I would not have been in oral or in email exchanges. It was more superficial and in the same time deeper.”

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45 See step PR & Marketing in this chapter for more information on social networking sites (SNS) in China.
Designing Content and Format

Content is the heart of every project and it is crucial for an intercultural project to find ways of generating content jointly that both sides find equally valuable. But what do you do when you find your Chinese partner suggesting a programme or idea that you know will not appeal to your home audience? Or, conversely, when a European partner is very excited about a project idea where the Chinese partner knows that this may not resonate with the local audience or is culturally sensitive? And what about the importance of connecting content and format? What if the priorities are different – is it possible to find a good compromise? Furthermore, it is vital for Europeans thinking about projects in China to be aware of major sensitive topics: what kind of content is not allowed and what are the lines that you must not cross? Here are some issues to be aware of.

Forbidden content – ‘walking a fine line’ or finding space between laws
Mainland China has a huge collection of laws, regulations and official notices that restrict the creation and distribution of “illegal content” and apply to all media and forms of cultural production. These laws provide broad definitions of what constitutes illegal content, which usually contain the following attributes:

- undermining national unity
- divulging state secrets (which has a wide definition)
- advocating cults or superstition
- spreading rumours and disrupting public order and social stability
- disrupting social harmony
- endangering the excellent cultural traditions of the nation
- being pornographic or vulgar
- harming social morality

In addition, content that touches on “significant topics”, such as the Cultural Revolution, or other “major historical themes”, while not always forbidden, must be pre-approved by the competent authorities. With such vague and extensive language, it is basically at the discretion of the authorities to determine whether a news story, feature film, theatre play, or indeed any kind of cultural production, violates the law. On the negative side, this can lead to arbitrary decisions, suppressing anything which is deemed politically or morally unsuitable. On the positive side, the flexibility of these definitions opens up space for interpretation. Chinese COMPASS editor and author Yi Wen explains:

“It depends a lot on the individual curators and their ability to walk this ‘fine line’ of programming content that ‘hits the mark’ of the (independent) art scene and at the same time is somehow in line with the law, making sure that the authorities approve the content. And actually it might happen that content is so contemporary and abstract that it is sometimes difficult for the authorities to ‘measure’ or see through it.”

The notion of civil society and…
The notion of civil society in Europe differs from that in China. Although China has

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46 This information is provided by Philip Lazare, lawyer and author of the COMPASS law chapter. Also see Part III ‘Cultural Sector Framework’ for more information on the legal framework.
been inspired by European ideas since the early 20th century, Confucian philosophy still provides the underlying framework for China’s societal value system. This system defines the individual more according to their functional position in society than in terms of individual expression. The encounter with China forces Europeans to put their value system and their assumptions into perspective. When Europeans do projects in China that are explicitly about civic engagement they are certain to encounter the boundaries of the existing system. The frameworks for communities in Europe and in China are simply different. One of our interviewees reported:

“The in my home city I was able to establish connections with community networks and other stakeholders from the City Council, so we had a very good multi-stakeholder partnership that was fruitful for our project. We were hoping that through connections we could develop a similar set-up and network for our project in China. But indeed … we had chosen an idea for which obviously the ‘soil’ is not equally fertile in both countries. This became a real challenge: our Chinese partners became displeased with the ideas of community, civic liaison, and research, so we spent two weeks renegotiating the terms of our agreement. We finally tried to make civic and community contacts ourselves.”

…the public sphere

Another topic closely related to notions of civil society is the notion of ‘public sphere’. The meaning of ‘public’ or Gong in Chinese is different from the notions of ‘private’ and ‘public’ in the West. Gong cannot uniformly be associated with physical public space. In Chinese discourse, Gong is often used to signify abstract, non-spatial notions of society’s interests. The public-private divide in Western thinking, such as Haberma’s theory of civil society, is based on views of the public sphere as a domain separate from that of the state. The public-private dichotomy may also reflect a contrast between government-owned institutions and private institutions such as corporations. The relationship between state and society is very different in China from in the West. This is also reflected in the arts.

Some art forms, like interventionist art, are meant to interact with the public. Some artistic practices are understood as cultural investigation and intervention rather than representation. When this art takes place in an urban context the artists directly intervene with and within urban spaces. Europeans view public space as a sphere where conflicts can be visualised. But, how does interventionist art in public spaces work in the Chinese system? One of our European interviewees who did an interventionist art project related to urban issues and the public sphere reported:

“I think the positions of Chinese artists towards the topic were as different as if I had worked with European artists. Some had a very clear idea about what their interventionist art work is all about – artistically and also politically – and exactly because of this connection between the artistic and the political they were doing what they were doing. Others took the topic of public urban space or interventionist strategies more like an experiment or because it looked to them like something fash-

47 The May Fourth Movement in 1919 was an early climax of China’s modernisation process; it was initiated by Chinese intellectuals who were against Confucian traditionalism and wanted China to enter the global discourse of nationalism.
They of course stepped back immediately at the point when the authorities entered the scene. [...] In the end, you are easily under surveillance when acting in public addressing sensitive topics. (Maybe in Europe you are also under surveillance but the consequences are certainly different.) [...] My experience is that Chinese artists tend to be more indirect, more ‘let’s make it look like normal art’, but I understand this absolutely as a necessary strategy. And this is something Europeans need to learn when they want to understand or even realize non-commercial art tendencies in China.

Relevance of topics: domestic vs. international issues

Xu Jiang, Director of the National Academy of Art in Hangzhou, remembers the 2007 Shanghai Biennale that examined the phenomenon of the millions of migrant workers, and China’s urban vs. rural development split. The reactions of foreign curators who were invited varied: some were interested, but others felt that this topic was already passé in Europe. Xu Jiang’s response:

“I maintained the issue is of great significance to China … The urgency of such issues is lost on those international ‘art citizens’. Only we Chinese can grasp it. So it is up to us – not people from other countries – to highlight issues of our nation and our times. It shows how important ‘home-grown thinking’ is in cultural exchange.”

The following quote is from a European partner’s report related to the mismatch of themes:

“Our project topic was sustainability and culture. However, my Chinese partner was very focused on post-industrial development. I had shown them around our region and their major question was: what can we in China learn from this ‘case’ – how had this ‘special zone’ where the Industrial Revolution started in Europe transformed into post-industrial times? But for us, these issues were being considered twenty years ago. They were only interested in sustainability in the framework of this particular context of post-industrialisation. To my understanding this was a very narrow approach to the concept of sustainability.”

Different views of authenticity

In general, Europeans value authenticity, and seek ‘authentic experiences’. In China sometimes other values seem to dominate authenticity, for example, national pride or the face of the nation. The following story by COMPASS advisor and author Katelijn Verstraete illustrates the challenges related to this different understanding of authenticity:

“Bringing a group of 50 artists to a remote province in Southern China which was not so exposed to foreigners was quite a challenge, which I knew about. We were there to research the dance of the Miao minority. The research trip was linked with tourism, and we were part of boosting the image of the province etc… so we gradually felt that our research would become a highly managed tourism trip to the ‘suit-

able’ villages to observe local dance. This was connected with face, with the need to show Chinese tradition in the best possible way. But this worked against the original objective of the project. […] The person in charge from our Chinese partner organisation knew we would not want to see Chinese dancers being transported to a different village to show their dance but we wanted to see it in an ‘authentic’ way… but this was how the local organisers in the province organised it and there was nothing we could do about this. So different concepts of what is authentic/original and what it means to preserve … it all resulted in a lot of discussion on intangible heritage preservation, political control, image building etc…. It did influence the project in a major way though and that experience was part of the general understanding of Chinese culture.”

It is important to elaborate further on this different notion of authenticity or originality in China and the West. Authenticity has to do with the individuality of the creator. The notion of the individual creator in Chinese history is not as important as in Europe where this notion became very prominent in the 18th and 19th centuries. In Confucianism it was seen that the past was a resource for all the human values. So the mission of a wise person was not to create the new but only to transfer the heritage of the Ancestors, or to rediscover and re-invent it. Simon Leys writes:

“It was a moral obligation to do so. Looking for the new, original authentic was not important and ‘copying’ or refining what ancestors had created was more important. This is reflected in Chinese art.”

This different view of creation is something for Europeans to understand in the context of Chinese history. In addition, transferring the spirit of things was generally more important than the material evidence of it, leaving untouched the authentic, original evidence of it.

Simon Leys, sinologist and author of L’Humour, L’Honneur, L’Horreur, explains how different values are attributed to material and immaterial culture in China. The past in China is about remembering the people through the written word (literature) not the buildings. Material culture was all about legitimating power. So with the power shifts, buildings and material traces needed to be destroyed. The Cultural Revolution is the best example of this.

**Designing dialogues: different formats, communication cultures and notions of learning**

“It was not easy to find a way between the Chinese style of presenting and the European style: the ex-cathedra Chinese way and the debating European way. It was an interesting learning process for all participants but the whole meeting was a clear expression on how China does things differently from Europe.”

Boundaries can be felt when partners prioritise and want a different set-up for a dialogue, for example, when organising a joint conference. In Europe, in addition to conventional forums

50 The concept of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) emerged in the 1980s, as a counterpart to World Heritage that focuses mainly on tangible aspects of culture. In 2001, UNESCO made a survey among States and NGOs to try to agree on a definition, and a Convention was adopted in 2003 for its protection. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intangible_cultural_heritage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intangible_cultural_heritage)

such as conferences and seminars, Open Space Technology or World Café formats have become quite popular, as they try to get maximum involvement and engagement from participants. In China new formats are likely to work better with the younger generation; the older generation – especially in government organisations – still prefers more traditional forums.

In conceiving the content of projects it is of crucial importance to have a full discussion about how content will be presented, as there are different things at stake (prestige, face, hierarchy, …). The authors have observed that the more aggressive and direct the approach of Europeans, the less it matches the Chinese style. So how can dialogues and conferences become spaces where both parties feel comfortable and satisfied with the exchange?

Katelijn Verstraete, COMPASS advisor, reports:

“Finding the right formats continues to be a challenge in China. In our home country in Europe at least, there is a very open experiential and learning-through-practice approach. In China, it needs to be academic content. Also in arts management, given the education and society, people expect not only experiential knowledge but also formal academic methodologies. For the programmes in China we need to ensure that they have formal academic formats. This is different to other parts of the world. This is not to say it’s not changing. […] Developing ideas of how to take a programme forward, who are the potential participants, identifying formats, is all done through dialogue. There is an art in knowing how to transfer and transmit knowledge. Face-to-face meetings are important.”

And Dr Li Xiangning from Tongji University College of Architecture and Urban Planning, the Chinese curator in the case story project ‘Urban Academy’ gives further evidence on the challenge of different dialogue traditions:

“Although the forums attracted the attention of the general public and architecture and planning professionals, Chinese artists as a collective group seemed reluctant to participate in the discussion and dialogue. The expected exchange between Chinese and German artists never took place at all and this turned out to be a weak point of the whole event.”

Beyond communication preferences related to generation and age, there is a more fundamental difference in how Chinese and Westerners approach dialogue. A reflection on the original meaning of the Greek word ‘dialogue’ is illuminating: literally a rational (logos) way of arguing between two opposing sides (dia). On the contrary, the Chinese traditional culture of dialogue is much more based on a symbolic and allusive way of communicating with each other. This reflects a certain dilemma and a challenging opportunity at the same time. You might also check the COMPASS Glossary that elaborates further on the term dialogue and other related terms.

Different concepts of contemporary and traditional

When it comes to co-creating content, there are different views on what is contemporary and what is traditional. We have observed that this is one of the biggest sources of different ideas for programming between European and Chinese cultural partners. COMPASS core team member and advisor Shen Qilan, Editor of Art World China explains:
“Because the debate on Modernity is still going on in China, the conflict between Contemporary and Traditional is a side-effect of the transformation of the ‘modern mind’. There are three main attitudes towards tradition: Liberalism denies it, Conservatism praises it, Eclecticism integrates it. The first question, ‘How to deal with tradition?’, is highly political in China. Secondly, in China, there is a tradition of Confucianism as well as a tradition of destroying Confucianism. The tradition has internal contradictions, which causes the tradition-complex.”

The following story of a European Cultural programmer presents her project journey from an initially difficult start, where the partners’ understanding of the notion of ‘contemporary’ proved fundamentally different, the process of working through this issue on both sides until ‘finding a middle ground’, which eventually resulted in something new and unexpected for both sides:

In preparation for an exhibition of ‘contemporary’ Chinese artists to be shown in Germany, I went through a whole range of discussions with my Chinese partner, an official cultural institution.

To begin with, their understanding of the term ‘contemporary artist’ meant ‘living artist’, as opposed to dead artist. Our understanding of the term was ‘conceptual’ or even ‘interventionist’ artist. Our partner then offered a selection of several living artists, but traditional landscape watercolour painters, all members of the official artists association with close ties to the head of the association.

I tried to convince them to adapt the content as much as they could for the target audience in Germany, and tried to explain more about the audience. A new set of painters was suggested; this time all abstract painters. The message that contemporary art for us is a new development in the art world obviously got through. It got more difficult though, since this was still not our idea of ‘contemporary’. Questions around ‘interventionist’ art arose. Why would an official institution support an art movement that would eventually question this institution itself? After some time I realised that those responsible at the working level understood what I meant, and put great effort into putting together something suitable. Then again, they would face the problem within their own organisation, showing the new content to their heads of departments, who were shocked. Thus, for the working level, the situation became problematic. The German side felt their proposals didn’t go far enough and were still too conventional and traditional. Their own bosses felt that their choice was daring, did not include any senior painters and no beautiful landscapes. It took months of discussion until a selection of artists was agreed on. One must say that in the end the process itself was something one could learn a lot from; both sides really questioned their own objectives, and went to the limits of their own ability to accept and tolerate.

In the end an exhibition came about that was not what either side had wanted. And yet, it was something new. The Chinese side had sent art abroad that did not serve as an ambassador for China in the way they understood it. The German side showed an exhibition that was not the interventionist art we were used to. But what we got was something new, it was a selection of painters that have been acclaimed by an art historian as a group of artists not at all known internationally, not playing a role at home much, but finding personal answers to urgent questions of contemporary life in cities today. Given how far apart both sides were at the beginning, it was a quite successful outcome.
RECOMMENDATIONS

○ Developing the project vision jointly
Bringing pre-determined, fixed ideas may lead to frustrations when they are not shared by the project partner, and can hinder the process of creating something truly new together.

One interviewee shared his learning:

“…definitely spend time building the relationship to a point where there is shared vision and understanding; … be prepared to create projects and shift focus. […] I always have a set of interests and areas of interest and am prepared to shape a project with someone.”

○ The merit of letting go of pre-defined ideas
No matter how important an idea seems to you at home, it will not necessarily be so important in your partner’s culture.

“I am also happy to dump any existing ideas and build something completely different with a partner – it is important for me that we discover a project together. Avoid selling fixed projects if you want to develop longer term developmental projects, concentrate on detail and the bigger picture at the same time.”

“It has allowed me to explore the needs of Chinese partners and ensure that things are both practical and fit the political environment.”

○ The HOW of generating ideas jointly is as important as the WHAT
The comment above also illustrates the positive results from giving attention to both the ‘what’ and the joint exploration process. The tools and resources below hopefully inspire you to enter the process of co-creating ideas. Cultural mentors or personal and culturally sensitive guides can help to facilitate the process, and not only understand what is said, but also to interpret the cultural context (how – who – where).

“But certainly, when it comes to providing support for such projects, a simple guidebook is of little use. What would be useful is a kind of an interculturally experienced ‘coach’ who accompanies the development process of both sides in the cooperation-building.”

○ Integrating apparently contradictory ideas
Integrating differences requires not only time and conscious facilitation. It also requires the ability to accept and work with apparently contradictory ideas. To work with contradictions (as long as they are not political) might be more difficult for the Western partner than for the Chinese partner. Chinese cultures traditionally don’t have any difficulty holding two ostensibly contradictory propositions to be true simultaneously (for example: yin–yang)\(^\text{52}\). Conversely, Westerners seek to reconcile inconsistencies; and are more 'synthesis oriented'.

The ‘Middle Way’

When negotiating contents we need acceptance and tolerance, and to find ways of identifying concerns that provide a common ground, even in conflict situations. We saw in the case story above how new and surprising territory can be found when both partners step away from their extreme points of view and are ready to make compromises: “the exhibition turned out to be different from what either side had wanted initially, and yet, it was something new”. One of our interviewees, Prof. Dai, a researcher in intercultural communication at Shanghai University, recommends:

“In line with the principle of “Zhongyong” (中庸 – the Confucian Doctrine of the Mean), I always encourage people to avoid going to extremes in conducting intercultural communication. In addition, my model of intercultural identity highlights the middle ground that lies between human universality and particularity, and emphasizes the significance of cultural tradition in identity construction.”

PRACTICES AND FURTHER RESOURCES

- The Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) is a conflict style inventory, a tool developed to measure an individual’s response to conflict situations.
Planning and Timing

This section presents the main differences of approach to time, issues around decision-making and other important aspects to be aware of when planning and managing projects.

A different notion of time and its implications

Europeans, in general, prefer to plan well ahead. Since things are in constant change in China long-term scheduling has become almost impossible. Most Chinese have learned to respond to this by ‘staying fluid going with the flow’ and being flexible. This approach may be perceived by Europeans as short-term planning or even absence of planning. The reality is that things can change very quickly in China and rigorously adhering to schedules is likely to lead to frustrations, or can be perceived by Chinese partners as being inflexible (and thus hampering progress).

“Differences in the Chinese approach of some people I engaged with were interesting – long-term planning can sometimes be difficult due to a feeling that change happens so fast you cannot plan for the future.”

At the same time, China’s long history has brought about a long-term perspective on matters, which still resonates in today’s China. Another common approach is to ‘give things time’ and things will happen – one way or the other. This approach is rooted in Confucianism as well as in China’s agrarian roots following the rhythm of nature. The implication of this is that many Chinese adopt a careful and conservative approach when dealing with new things, which – apparently in contradiction to the above approach – will be perceived as too slow by Europeans. Often patience is the only way to handle this.

Eric Messerschmidt, Head of the Danish Cultural Institute in China, says:

“Something really different is: Chinese partners have a much more long-term view on cooperation than Europeans. Chinese partners do not only think about the next follow-up project, but much longer about many years of cooperation and its impact. They always have a ‘macro-view’ on top of a ‘project-view’. I think in this respect the Chinese are ‘wiser’. There are different dimensions in China, also in terms of perception of time.”

Western interculturalists have developed frameworks introducing cultural dimensions, including the dimension of time to help deal with cross-cultural issues. Edward T. Hall, anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher, first coined the term polychronic – also sometimes referred to as multi-focused – to describe some groups’ cultural preference of attending to multiple events simultaneously, as opposed to being monochronic, where individuals tend to handle tasks sequentially. Classic time management – highly influenced

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53 Chinese Central Government plans in 5-Year Plans or Guidelines (since the 11th plan in 2006), originally modelled after the Soviet-style Planned Economy.

54 As encapsulated in the Confucian saying: “The quicker you want to go the further away you are from your destination” or “more haste, less result” yu yu zai buda (欲速则不达) in the Lunyu (The Analects of Confucius: Chapter on Zhu Lu). This doesn’t necessarily mean that we shouldn’t hurry, but that we should not be impetuous.


by an American belief in ‘time as a limited commodity’ – holds that the best way to manage time is to deal with one thing at a time. The reality in many other cultural environments, including China, is that people attend to a variety of tasks and/or relationships at the same time, e.g. being in face-to-face meetings and taking calls on their mobile phones at the same time, or not being liable to get irritated by unpredictable or unscheduled events (staying fluid).

This fluid sense of time can cause irritation to Europeans who prefer precise timelines and find it hard to deal with imprecise responses, like being asked to “wait a moment” or yihui (⼀等) without knowing why they have to wait, or how long that moment will take.

Different decision-making processes and their implications

Another aspect to be factored into planning an intercultural project is the different approach to, and pace of, decision-making. While European project managers usually have a lot of autonomy in their decision-making and can make quick decisions, without (time-consuming) consultation with their superiors, the Chinese partner may first have to reach consensus within their organisation or wait for a decision from the top. On the other hand, sometimes a democratic decision-making and leadership culture in a European organisation can result in more time-consuming processes, while a top-down management style, as still found in more traditional organisations in China, where orders are given and decisions are made by the boss may enable speedy last minute decision-making.

For the European side it is often difficult to identify the decision-maker because of different structures of ownership in China. Organisational charts and responsibilities are less clear in China. A certain title might not mean anything, and one needs to know this. All of which is likely to take more time than in Europe, and this needs to be calculated into the project plan. The European perception of the process may sound like this:

“When a decision is taken we never know why or who took it and who we should talk to solve it. […] Many times, we felt that the Chinese could not take any decisions because they were afraid of making a bad move and angering the forces above them.”

Or another interviewee’s experience was that “some things can be no problem one time and a problem the next time”. As two of our interviewees put it:

“One first step is to be prepared for this, which has implications for the planning process, i.e. some decisions may take more time.”

“It is important to map where people are in the hierarchy [of the Chinese partner organisation]. My recommendation is always: ask a lot of people the same question. And also: look at the relationships as long-term relationships that have to grow over the years. There is different cause-and-effect relationship in China.”
**FURTHER PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING**

*Different annual rhythm*

China’s holiday periods are regulated by the Central Government. Until recently there were three holiday week periods (Golden Weeks) scheduled around Chinese Lunar New Year (generally around the end of January), May 1 – Labour Day (and the five following days) and October 1 – National Day. In 2008, these Golden Weeks were reduced to two (May 1 is now a one-day holiday), and traditional festivals, like Tomb Sweeping Day (Qingming Festival around April 5), Dragon Boat Festival (early June) and Mid-Autumn Festival (late September or early October) were added to the list of public holidays. People are encouraged to spread their third week’s holiday throughout the year.

Things slow down dramatically, especially around the two Golden Week holidays. It would be almost impossible to schedule meetings around these holidays, and travelling or obtaining any kind of ticket becomes difficult. So it’s important to choose a time of the year that works for both sides:

“January turned out to be a bad time for both our institutions. In China everything at that time of year is about preparing for Chinese New Year (Spring Festival). In Europe we were ending Christmas and Western New Year vacation.”

Also see the *Glossary* where we elaborate further on expressions related to time.

*Time-consuming hazards: Customs and other formalities*

One of our interviewees also had particular memories around the paperwork required to travel and/or work in China, and the time needed to work through the system:

“Hard to get visas and permits. The process was slow. Everything needed to be translated. We did not have any secrets. Still the process was very bureaucratic. At the Customs, if papers were different or badly filled out … things did not get through. So from the start you need to know these things, and assess them…”

“In the summer of 2011, Shanghai’s music fans were often left frustrated because concerts had to be cancelled at the last minute. In one case, the audience even waited for several hours only to be told eventually that the band was not to perform. Everybody had to be refunded. The reason was always the same: the planning and organisation had not been careful enough. One prominent foreign rock band did not have a multi-entry visa and was taken by surprise when they were not allowed to re-enter China after a short trip to Hong Kong. In another case, the musical instruments never arrived because they were stuck in the Italian Customs. Another band did not play because their instruments got lost on their way from Beijing to Shanghai. In one case IT equipment was stuck for three weeks because the papers in Germany had been filled out sloppily.”

Even European logistic firms sometimes tend not to take Chinese Customs and CCC security inspections seriously enough. CCC is a Chinese tool to assess technical equipment and other imported goods. If, for example, computer equipment is so specialised that it is
not standardised in any of the CCC listings, the equipment might not be allowed to be imported into China. There are formal papers and formal stickers. European logistics companies must do thorough research before they start the process of sending goods to China. The way to deal with such problems is to engage an experienced Chinese import company from the very start of any project – and to establish a personal relationship. The reason is that, in the worst case, the importer must be motivated to make serious efforts to solve problems. The European side should also try to check references: does the logistics firm have a close working relationship with Customs officers? Good guanxi can work miracles.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Western reasoning vs. the Chinese concept of process or ‘going with the flow’

One of our interviewees reported:

“Having studied Latin before, my natural reflex when first learning Chinese was to ask my teacher ‘Why? Can you give us a rule that applies to other cases?’ He could not provide rules, but instead he explained to me very concrete examples of Chinese grammar, often with different options. Having been so trained to learn via analysis and extrapolation, I felt lost. But slowly, over time, I learned to suspend my inner voice of asking ‘why’ and somehow over the years my knowledge of the Chinese language was built up. Later when the reflex of asking ‘why’ came up again in my professional working life with Chinese partners and did not lead anywhere in finding a solution, I reminded myself of this first encounter with China via learning the language and that I needed to go along with the situation anyhow.”

This little anecdote reflects a difference in thinking that Europeans are confronted with when working with China and the Chinese. The Western tendency to analyse, or to find it hard to accept that there are no answers to questions or no reasons given for certain circumstances in the project may lie behind challenges. Further quotes from our interviewees relate to this:

“Even though they had planned it a year ahead, there were some changes. So they were looking at solutions, without telling us what the situation was. So, long delays for answers on certain decisions were a fact. The lack of transparency was hard to work with.”

“The Chinese partner set the way communication was done: by not communicating, not answering e-mails, not getting back with decisions … leaving us in the dark.”

Again, as a Western reader, we probably ask ‘why’ and how can we further understand this difference in thinking patterns? Findings from research on cognitive processes might provide further answers. However, we want to emphasize that not every experience can be attributed to these differences. Often we are just dealing with individual working styles on either side, or we experience the individual’s restrictions within their organisation or system.
**Contextual view vs. focus on particular objects in isolation**

In 2005 Richard Nisbett, cognitive scientist and professor of psychology, published *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently and Why*. According to his research, Chinese and other Asian cultures strongly influenced by Confucian thinking, e.g. Japan and Korea, “attend to objects in their broad context. […] The world seems more complex to them than to Westerners, and understanding events always requires consideration of a host of factors that operate in relation to one another in no simple, deterministic way. […] Formal logic plays little role in problem solving. In fact, the person who is too concerned with logic may be considered immature.”

These fundamentally different world views can be traced back to Aristotle and Confucius, where Greek philosophy has a strong interest in categorisation and analysis and formal logic plays a role in problem-solving, whereas Confucianism emphasizes values such as interconnectedness and harmony, which led to a more holistic view of events. Chinese broad, contextual view of the world, and their belief that events are highly complex and determined by many factors, can either clash with or complement the focus of Westerners on particular objects in isolation from their context.

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57 In R. Nisbett’s *Geography of Thought*, p. xvi. He concludes “if people really do differ profoundly in their systems of thoughts – their world views and cognitive processes – then differences in people’s attitudes and beliefs and even their values and preferences, might not be a matter merely of different inputs and teachings, but rather an inevitable consequence of using different tools to understand the world”, p. xvii.
FURTHER CONTEMPLATION

François Jullien from The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China

“Art, or Wisdom, as conceived by the Chinese, consequently lies in strategically exploiting the propensity (natural tendency or disposition) emanating from the particular configuration of reality, to the maximum effect possible. This is the notion of ‘efficacy’.”

Explanation of cause vs. implication of tendencies

“We never reckon that we understand a thing till we can give an account of its ‘how and why’, that is, of its first cause. […] Kant tells us that causality is a general law of understanding that must be established a priori. Chinese thought, in contrast, seems almost never to rely on such a principle, even in its interpretations of nature. Of course, it cannot totally ignore the causal relationship, but it refers to it only within the framework of experiences taking place in front of us, where its impact is immediate. It never extrapolates it in imagining a series of causes and effects extending all the way back to the hidden reason for things or even to the principle underlying reality as a whole. […] The Chinese interpretation of reality in any realm, and even where most generally speculative, thus appears to proceed through the understanding of the disposition of things. One starts by identifying a particular configuration (disposition, arrangement), which is then seen as a system according to which things function: instead of the explanation of causes, we have the implication of tendencies. In the former, one must always find an external element as an antecedent, and reasoning can be described as regressive and hypothetical. In the latter, the sequence of changes taking places stems entirely from the power relations inherent in the initial situation, thereby constituting a closed system: in this case we are dealing not with the hypothetical but with the ineluctable.”

Going along with the ‘propensity of things’

“Even in the case of strategic deployment, in which the conflictual aspect is the most marked (since one is face-to-face), the advice of Chinese thinkers is always to aim to evolve, to adapt totally to the movement of the enemy, rather than attack him head on. A general should always act with a view to profiting from the dynamism of this partner, his enemy, for as long as it operates, so as to allow himself to be renewed by it at the expense of his opponent and at no cost to himself. In this way he will maintain his own energy as completely as at the beginning. […] In China, ‘practical reason’ thus lies in adapting to the propensity at work so as to be carried along by it and exploit it. […] It is simply a matter of either ‘going along with’ propensity and thereby profiting from it or ‘going against it’ and being ruined.”

58 François Jullien, The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China, p. 16. Jullien calls this “intuitive efficacy” a word “indicative of Chinese culture”. Intuitive efficacy is a way of sensing and using the potential of a situation in the process.
Costs, Financing and Funding

From the results of our interview survey and in line with our own experience we can report the following challenges related to costs, funding and financing.

Different mix of funding sources – different notions of accountability

The funding structure for European arts organisations is in general based on mixed funding, a combination of government support, earned income and sponsorship. This calls for a clear system of accountability and transparency. Annual reports are published or can be requested for view by stakeholders. Organisations must be transparent by law, but transparency is also seen as an indicator of social responsibility. This structure is of course in line with a multi-stakeholder society where the role of the state is to enable independent art organisations with funding and support structures, and where a ‘checks and balances’ system is in place as a control mechanism. If a European arts organisation gets financial support from the state, detailed documentation is requested. In China this might not yet be the case, but if a Chinese partner enters an EU-funded project, they need to know that this is very important and failure to present supporting documents can mean no support.

In China, the two main sources of financing available are government funding and corporate funding. Foundations and philanthropy are slowly growing, but are currently more common in sectors such as sports or environment, or for projects with a social mission. However, it is interesting to see that cultural heritage is becoming more important in philanthropy, linked to the strong interest of Chinese people in the past and feelings of responsibility towards their heritage.

Earned income is not yet a substantial source of finance, but is increasingly important, as cultural operators and venues need to find financial models to replace the decreased income from state support. This is the case both in China and in Europe. A lack of understanding of these different funding mechanisms and the related needs for reporting (on the European side) can lead to real problems. A European partner told us his disappointing story:

“The end of my relationship with my Chinese partner revolved around their disregard for accounting procedures. I was duly accused by them of harassment, as it was a break in etiquette to ask for receipts and the agreed input to the project report. The problem was that the Chinese partner was not used to having to apply for and report to a 3rd party (foundation) for funding. This kind of mechanism does not exist in China. If they want to do a project they just apply internally to their university and get money and do not have to deal with any thorough proposal writing and reporting systems – the related administration involved that all of us know from working in the cultural sector in Europe. I think in the end the conflict and lack of understanding we had boiled down to the fact that mechanisms in the cultural sector are so different in Europe and in China and that we have a multi-stakeholder society with independent bodies (networks, universities, artists etc.) on the one hand and support structures (foundations, government arts funding programmes etc.) on the other.”

59 For information on European cultural funding mechanisms see www.culturalpolicies.net.
60 For information on philanthropy in China see http://blog.socialventuregroup.com/sv/2011/05/the-2011-hurun-philanthropy-list-big-spenders-making-big-splashes.html
Non profit vs. commercial interests – money matters

“… the negative shock I got when returning to China in 2007 after not having been here for ten years is that people from the younger generation no longer had any respect for culture, it is only about money now. Let’s say the ancient morality was no longer there. I think this is very difficult.”

This general feeling that money is the number one priority for many Chinese is reflected by many of the interviewees. They also stated that the cultural sector is now perceived as a sector that should make money. Cities invest in cultural infrastructure and festivals to build up their image. And yet the investment in hardware is not followed by support for software and the selection of what is presented is often driven by commercial success and not by an intrinsic interest in the artistic project. Tobias Zuser, arts manager in Beijing explains:

“Arts administrators in China need to understand that performances by foreign ensembles are a non-profit business (sometimes even loss-making) on the foreign side, and are simply commercial business on the Chinese side. In the end, the common goal of a cultural project will be to break even and that’s fair enough in this exciting, lively and important market for art and culture, since bringing cultural projects to China should derive from the intention to improve intercultural relationships and understanding, rather than establishing profit-making businesses.”

Budgeting: real costs vs. artificial rates

Whether you work through embassies and foreign cultural centres or a Chinese agency to bring your project to China, or whether you apply for funding in your home country, supporting institutions require a budget (estimate) for the entire project. Some funding institutions are more flexible in their cost schemes and it would be sufficient to give a very rough estimate, while others require costs on the basis of real market prices, requiring quotations from several suppliers, salary sheets etc.

A further challenge is to budget ‘marketing costs’, that are normally not eligible in Europe, but which are necessary in China because of different traditions, ways of working or culture. For example, the regular lunches and dinners which are part of building partnerships.

If a European partner establishes a budget for a project in China, they need to be aware of the different price levels in China. Accommodation can range from RMB 500 to RMB 1000. In general, good quality can be expected as many hotels are new. Daily meal allowances would range between RMB 150 and RMB 400. Flights and trains are relatively cheap compared to Europe. Many budget airlines operate in China and train journeys are often far better and cheaper than in Europe. What is important to note is costs that the European partner might not be expecting: e.g. costs for so-called ‘performance fees by the cultural department’ (which can be up to RMB 3000 per person for professional groups – this fee can include meals and daily expenses); or freight and Customs fees (officially, a deposit for instruments or artefacts should be paid at Immigration, and can be up to 20% of the total value. Exceptions are possible). You also need to budget for performance

61 For a detailed overview on funding and financing structures in the cultural sector in China, see Tobias Zuser article in PART III.
permits and it is never clear how much this will be\(^6\).

Other challenges can be related to a misunderstanding of what real costs are compared to arbitrary rates that are unconnected to real market costs. One of the authors of this publication reports that she once got funding from the European Commission for a Europe-China project and recalls her extreme difficulty in explaining to her Chinese partner that the formula for allocating the overall budget to the three different partners was not simply 33% each – as he suggested – but that the money was there to cover expenses and real costs. Also that it was still a non-profit project and not an income-generating project. He thought it was extremely unfair that, for example, she had budgeted a higher fee for the European experts – simply because they were earning a higher salary in their home countries than the Chinese team members did in China.

From the Chinese point of view it can look quite different. One of our Chinese interviewees reported that he was really displeased to see that the European project leaders in his EU-China project team were flying business class to China, spending an amount of money equivalent to five months’ salary for the Chinese team members. Furthermore, they got a daily allowance of €30, equivalent to 270 Chinese Yuan, for food etc., while the Chinese team members spent less than 150 Yuan on their daily living expenses. This created a feeling of being treated unfairly. Indeed, in the past ten years, this kind of imbalance in the financial treatment of team members was sometimes the case, and this is related to an underlying ‘development country vs. developed country value pattern’. It also relates to a notion of ‘cheap Chinese labour’ as well as ‘the need for more luxury for foreigners in China than for Chinese in China’. In general, it is important to look at purchasing power (one can buy less with €1000 in Europe than in China) and to do salary benchmarking when defining budgets. And, given the economic changes in Europe and China (inflation), it is advisable to regularly update yourself.

It should be noted that the salary structure in China is different from Europe. Europeans are subject to higher taxes compared to Chinese. So salaries/fees paid to Europeans do not necessarily mean actual ‘money in the pocket’. Chinese counterparts might not be aware of the level of taxes in Europe and the impact this has on budgets. In China, on the other hand, artists might have a basic salary in an institution (if they are not completely independent) and get substantially higher fees for special project assignments, which become the main part of their income.

A lack of transparency on costs can also lead to the challenge that the grey zone for negotiation becomes an area for power struggles. One of the authors experienced an ongoing negotiation regarding a performance permit. Her Chinese partner did not say how much the costs were, but only told her at the last minute, when she no longer had any choice but to pay.

The following report from one of our interviewees is another example of challenges related to pricing and costs:

“One area of problems is price negotiation. This can be so annoying and actually I had some really disappointing and even painful experiences: One case: in 2007 we had a project where we needed a projector for a presentation, no animation, just still pictures. The Chinese partner asked for 10,000! This was so far off the scale and

\(^6\) Generally there are two ways of bringing cultural projects to China, although it usually ends up as a combination of both: Chinese arts agency, Cultural Attaché, Embassy, Chamber of Commerce, Cultural Centres. (source: Tobias Zuser, arts manager, Beijing)
bore no relation to real costs at all. You get this feeling that because we are foreign partners, they need to get the money out of you … Or another case: just recently in Shanghai, I was looking for a venue for a Hungarian artist, the budget we had was very low. I found one and had a really good negotiation with the owner. I wanted to pay RMB 6,000, which I thought was fair, and I reported to my home country happily. Then, a few days later, I got a new quotation with a price of RMB 38,000, including service feeds, lighting and a lot of extra costs… There is this space where you feel absolutely uncertain, you had thought you could take something for granted and had a good feeling, and then it turns out to be the opposite, this even hurt. Price negotiations are often so arbitrary.”

Root cause: no division between non-profit and profit-making cultural sector

The root cause of most of the challenges mentioned above derive from the fact that value creation in China does not differentiate between the material and immaterial. This results in the unity of cultural and economic policies, of the cultural and the economic spheres of value. This is the fundamental difference in the economic paradigm of, for example, German cultural policy during the 1980s and 1990s. The buzzwords were indirect productivity, sponsorship and professionalisation of the non-profit sector. This economic paradigm called for more efficient management and auditing of public cultural institutions, additional private funding and a marketing approach focused on audiences. It did not however overcome the distinction between ideas-based, artistic, aesthetic and educational value creation and economic value creation63.

One of the interviewees explains his observations related to the issues of value and money as follows:

“In China there is a culture that exists in the West as well: the sense that the more expensive something is, the more valuable it is. The West has rejected that approach in general. The cost of something does not relate to its value. But in China … that is not the case. Cost equals value. It’s best not to position oneself as offering services for free, or too low in price … as that would mean you are not worth much. We have a different way. Ascribing value is different in the West. It has to do with where the society is. Post-industrial societies in Europe have seen many changes and our values come from that. In China industrialisation is happening now … everything is in development. So my advice is: do not undervalue yourself when working in China.”

Exchange rates

The Euro has been going up and down compared to the Yuan over the past few years. Exchange rates are changing continuously. In many China-Europe projects this is reported as a source of problems. One of the authors, working on many Europe-China and other international projects, recommends:

“Yes, exchange rates are very much an issue in all our international projects. What is important is how to avoid problems. We recommend: make clear contracts with a clear reference to this at the beginning, so there is no dispute later.”

63 Culture Management in China: A German Perspective on Chinese Practice with a Feedback by young Chinese Cultural Managers, Uwe Nitschke, Klaus Siebenhaar (ed.).
RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Definitions**: discuss budgets and costs openly. Find out what is the understanding of the terms ‘costs’, ‘expenses’, ‘financing’, ‘profit’, ‘non-profit’ etc. It is worth investing some time in thorough explanations and definitions, which is part of business administration skills.

- **Fairness**: China has changed tremendously over the last decade, as have the qualifications of people and related salaries. The differences between foreign and Chinese salaries (due to different levels of education and experience) are no longer so great. The criterion for payment and money allocation should simply be ‘expertise and qualification’ and by no means Western or Chinese. It makes sense do to benchmarking in the sector for similar jobs. In Europe the levels of salaries for certain jobs in the government supported cultural sector are defined by law (e.g. minimum wage and salary ranges). One should of course also be aware of the purchasing power in China and Europe in defining salaries. But with recent inflation in China, the differences between Europe and China are diminishing.

- **Contingencies**: it is wise to budget contingencies of 10–15%, in order to have some space to cope with financial losses due to changing exchange rates. However some funding partners or cultural institutions are not yet used to this kind of risk-management budgeting.

- **Budget communication**: the need for a more intensive communication process and partnership building across cultures should be reflected adequately in the budget. Often this is neglected.

- **Importance of contracts**: contracts need to have a clear budget annex, jointly agreed, with a clause on the procedure in case of dispute related to the budget. Also make sure the contract is clear about what supporting documents you need and what type of reporting is required.
The PR company Storymaker recently set up a Beijing office and specialises in the field of cultural dialogue. To learn more about the challenges and success factors for cultural project PR in China, Katja Hellkötter (KH) talked to Heidrun Haug (HH), founder of Storymaker, and her Chinese colleague Kelly Liu-Chaumet (KLC), General Manager of Storymaker China.

**KH:** What is important when drawing up Public Relations and Communications plans for cultural projects in China?

**HH:** There is one principle and a big challenge: think German, think Chinese but do not think in stereotypes. We need the perspectives of both sides and – above all – respect for diversity. Within intercultural projects it is essential to have native employees who are open-minded and driven by respect. There is no other way for an intercultural cooperation about understandings und interpretations.

**KLC:** Yes, it is crucial to know how to create and implement a suitable PR and Communications plan. An essential step is to study and compare Chinese culture with the project’s cultural background to determine similarities and differences. This can be the basis for a strategic communication plan including opportunities, actions and evaluation. Official international projects or communication activities of foreign companies in China are particularly influenced by political and social factors. The conditions can change rapidly – it’s important to prepare alternative plans and crisis scenarios – in an emergency they outline the necessary routine and enable a fast reaction.

Of course, it is also important to define why we use PR and strategic communication for a project in a cross-cultural context. One of the main objectives of PR is to connect people with different cultural backgrounds, also the aim of any cultural project. Two-way communication in PR is ideal for building a bridge between people, establishing an interactive platform for open dialogue – a central requirement for cultural projects.

Another significant point is defining your target audiences in China and analysing their gender, age, habits and careers. China has a complex media landscape with many publications, websites, radio and TV stations and appropriate media channels should be selected for your target groups. It is also important to constantly monitor media coverage and public reaction and evaluate your communication plan. Initiating offline activities often supports your online communication, as they can create more interesting themes for online stories. Pay attention to your cooperation strategies: networks and partners can foster synergies in communication. Interesting partners make your key messages more interesting and diverse. Partners like NGOs or related government agencies in China will increase the government’s attention.

One more general principle: if a project is about art and culture, communicate effectively about that – avoid mixing in too much politics or ideology.

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64 Based in Tübingen, Storymaker was the first German PR agency to set up a local presence in China in 2007 and is registered as a wholly foreign owned enterprise since 2010. Their largest project to date was as communications lead for the 2010 EXPO presence for ‘Germany and China – Moving Ahead Together’ in Shanghai, an event series supported by the German government and implemented by the Goethe-Institut. The cross-national team of Storymaker works with a broad network, meeting diverse needs in Public Relations. For the Goethe-Institut, Storymaker is currently involved with the follow-up Discovery Tour. It also supports the German foundation Mercator with Chinese media activities for the ‘Enlightenment in Dialogue’ programme accompanying the German exhibition ‘The Art of the Enlightenment’ in the National Museum of China.

http://www.storymaker.de/geschaeftsfielder/china/discovery-tour
KH: What are the differences and challenges of PR in this field compared to in Europe?

HH: In Europe, marketing and communications are an integral part of a cultural project. Professional PR preparation creates a good story with messages, Q & As, information packages and interviews. We inform journalists who write their own reports and commentaries. In China the media need more 'fast food information', ready for publication. A PR agency has to produce more creative material.

KLC: In general, in China it is more about connections and networking – what we call guanxi. In Germany, PR is a well recognized profession. Companies, the government, individuals and organisations all need PR – including culture. But in China, PR is still a young profession and many people regard it as another form of bribery. If you do communication for cultural projects in China, you should observe carefully the current state of the country and its ideology. If any damage is done, the situation can easily become risky.

KH: How do cultural projects get noticed by the Chinese media and other multipliers? Can you evaluate the impact of different media?

KLC: There are two main types of cultural project getting media attention: high-level cultural exchange programmes which the media keep a close eye on, even if they cover less interesting topics, and cultural projects involving hot topics, which the Chinese government and the public care about. With ever more cultural projects taking place in China, to get media attention, the key point is making your project unique and finding a suitable angle. You must take into consideration that the topics the Chinese government and the public care about will be on the media’s agenda.

HH: The communications strategy for “Germany and China – Moving Ahead Together” showed that both new media and traditional media are good communication tools. Mainstream media like television and the growing influential micro-blogging channels proved the most effective way of spreading the word. The fast development of new media has certainly had a great impact on traditional media. New media channels can achieve high results as they enable interactive communication. However, traditional media remains an important well-established communication tool.

KH: Tell us about your way of 'storytelling' in China. Can you describe a short case story of a cultural project in China where you did the PR and marketing?

HH: People can never get enough stories. For us, the story is always the starting point. Whether in Europe or in China – it is a story that makes a company or a project unique. The challenge is always to find those stories. A good example of intercultural storytelling is the ‘Discovery Tour’, where journalists put their own experiences into stories. We developed this concept for “Germany and China – Moving Ahead Together” in 2010. Four pairs, each with one German and one Chinese journalist, were sent on a research tour in both countries and took turns reporting on each other’s country. The approach was 'see my country through my eyes', with the aim of promoting mutual understanding about the other country’s culture, social life and political system. As a result, 58 wonderful real-life stories were published in renowned German and Chinese media as well as 93 blog entries.

KH: How about social media technologies and forums, the equivalents of Facebook etc. How do you assess their importance for communication in China, in reaching audiences for cultural projects? What experiences do you have using them? Any particular sites you would recommend our readers, cultural practitioners from Europe, to use?
HH: It is well-known that many social networking sites (SNS) have been blocked in China, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and even the newly introduced Google+. However, domestic SNSs are booming in China, thanks to the need for social communication online, and the success of foreign social channels. Take Renren and Sina Weibo as examples. Renren, a Facebook-like SNS, went public on 4th May 2011 as the first Chinese social networking site listed in the USA. Sina Weibo, a Twitter-like microblogging site, had 140 million users by May 2011, following its launch in late 2009, a strong comparison with its competitor Twitter that was launched in 2006 and has now 300 million users. A survey in December 2010 showed that more than 60% of Chinese journalists use social channels for news tip-offs or for reaching interviewees.

The interactive characteristics of social media have greatly deepened communication from all sides – thus social media allow us to get closer to our target audiences. Very often, we are able to get direct and prompt replies to the messages we post.

Tudou.com, famous as the most popular culture channel in China, is definitely a good place for culture lovers. There, topics about music, art, books etc. are widely discussed and shared. Of course, microblogs like Sina Weibo will be able to help you invite more people with the same interests to focus on your culture event/information in a faster and more wide-ranging way.

KH: What three main recommendations do you have for cultural stakeholders wanting to present or market cultural projects in China?

KL.C: For a cultural project in China, you must:

- Follow the overall topic trends and consider which are interesting to the Chinese government and the Chinese public
- Find a good angle and adapt to public opinion
- Remember to be appropriate – regarding time, location, people and the management of relations and affairs.

RESOURCES/LINKS

● MEDIA RELATED WEBSITES:
  Danwei www.danwei.com
  China Digital Times http://chinadigitaltimes.net/
  Paper Republic Paperrepublic.org
  Chinasmack http://www.chinasmack.com/
  Shanghaiist http://shanghaist.com/
  Chinese Media Net (多维媒体) http://www.chinesedianet.com/
  China Digital Times (CDT, 中国数字时代) http://chinadigitaltimes.net/
  China Media Project (中国传媒研究计划) http://cmp.hku.hk/
  China News Digest www.cnd.org

● CHINESE DOMESTIC SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES:
  ○ TWITTER-LIKE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES
    Sina Weibo http://weibo.com/ Chinese language only – the most influential Twitter-like site among professionals with over 100 million registered users.
    QQ micro-blog http://t.qq.com/ Chinese language only – a major Twitter-like social networking site.
QQ has over 600 million users in China (largely students and residents in T2/T3 cities) and its micro-blog users exceed 100 million. Other portal sites also have Twitter-like micro-blogs, e.g., Sohu and 163, but Sina and QQ are the leading players.

○ FACEBOOK-LIKE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES:
  Kaixin001 [http://www.kaixin001.com/] - in Chinese only
  Renren has the largest audience base among university students whereas Kaixin001 is popular among urban professionals. Both have nearly replaced MSN’s MySpace as the key social networking sites for Chinese netizens. People can share photos, write diaries and interesting posts, raise comments and play games.

○ INTEREST-ORIENTED SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE:
  Douban is a virtual meeting place for netizens who want to find friends with common interest in arts and cultural-related themes. Most Douban users are young elites and white collar workers who visit the site to share their favourite books, music, artwork and cultural interests. Douban is also a rich events calendar database of offline events in cities around China, so netizens often visit Douban for comments and thoughts from influencers before attending performances or purchasing products such as books or music.

● CHINESE PRINT AND ONLINE MEDIA RELEVANT TO REACH CHINESE AUDIENCES FOR CULTURAL EVENTS:
  Douban.com (豆瓣) (see above)
  Launched on March 6, 2005, it is the largest Chinese website devoted to movies, books and music reviews. It had about 30 million registered users, mainly young college students, in 2010.
  Modern Weekly (周末画报) [http://www.modernweekly.com/]
  Launched in 1980, Modern Weekly is a popular magazine-style newspaper with high circulation, reaching 1.5 million at its peak. After a revamp in 1998, it established itself as the publication of choice for Chinese society interested in Arts & Culture and Media.
  City Pictorial (城市画报) [http://www.citypictorial.com.cn/]
  Launched in 1999, this magazine targets young, affluent urban readers. Lively and on-trend content focuses on lifestyle, culture & fashion and provides popular opinion pieces shaping behaviour among an influential readership. Target audience is 20–40 year olds in large and medium-sized cities across China.
  BUNDPIC (外滩画报) [http://www.bundpic.com/]
  Rising to become a mainstream weekly publication in China in 2007 with heavily weighted influence in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou. It has an original writing style with a news focus, often with exclusive scoops that explore more controversial angles of a story. It is considered in China to be an advocate of international ‘fashionable’ lifestyle and trend-setting.

● ENGLISH PRINT AND ONLINE MEDIA TO REACH FOREIGN AUDIENCES IN CHINA ON CULTURAL EVENT INFORMATION IN MAJOR CHINESE CITIES:
  That’s Magazines, Urban Magazines, The Urbanatomy Guide Series (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen) [http://thatsmags.com/prd/] (print and online)
  City Weekend (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou) [http://www.cityweekend.com.cn/beijing/](print and online)
  Time Out (Beijing, Shanghai) [http://www.timeoutbeijing.com/index.html] (print and online)
KEY FOREIGN PR COMPANIES IN CHINA:
Burson-Masteller http://www.bmchina.com.cn/EN/About_Us/Pages/Perspective.aspx
Ogilvy http://www.ogilvypr.com/ Beijing & Guangzhou
Edelman http://www.edelman.com/globe/contactinfo/ Beijing & Guangzhou
RuderFinn http://www.ruderfinnasia.com/util/contact.html
Weber Shandwick http://www.webershandwick.cn/2008_en/company/contact/default.asp
Ketchum http://www.ketchum.com
Hill & Knowlton http://www.hillandknowlton.com.cn Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou & Chengdu
Eba Communications, Hong Kong based http://www.ebacomms.com/EBA_WEB/html/eng/contact/talktous.htm

SELECTED CHINESE PR COMPANIES:
Blue Focus (http://www.bluefocus.com/index.aspx), first Chinese PR corporation listed on stock market. Founded in 1996 with headquarters in Beijing, Blue Focus has subsidiaries in Guangzhou & Shanghai and offices in 23 other cities across China employing over 500 people.
Hanma (http://www.51hanma.com/index.html) Beijing-based, a top media relation consultancy in China with influential and reliable media resources. Hanma has strong government links (e.g. Information and Technology Ministry, Information Office of State Council China, CCTV, China leadership research institute subordinate to Party School of the CPC Central Committee, China association of mayors)
Evaluating Projects

In this section we look at evaluation from two angles: formal post-project and time-bound evaluations and evaluation understood as a process of continuous learning and reflection.

Formal project evaluations

Writing evaluation reports is common for European cultural practitioners and is related to the cultural sector funding system. Reports are required for accountability to funding bodies and other stakeholders. In joint China-Europe projects the challenge for Europeans lies in the fact that Chinese partners are not used to a similar reporting system of 'checks and balances':

“We did not evaluate the project, we did not even hear from them on the final financial reporting, luckily they did not make a cash contribution, but they never replied to our request for a letter stating their in kind support.”

In general, it seems that Chinese partners are less concerned with evaluation. However, it is important to point out the importance of formal evaluation especially in the process of intercultural cooperation projects. One needs to see if the project is working, if one has achieved what was planned, how changes can be made, if the resources used were justified and to learn from shared experiences. How evaluation is positioned might be important: not as a dull reporting chore at the end of the project, but as an opportunity for dialogue, reflection and future collaboration – a genuine concern about the collaboration on different levels.

One cultural practitioner recommends using good documentation of the process as a tool for evaluation:

“I would note down all the minutes of meetings in Chinese, decisions made etc., and share them – just to ensure things were in writing. Chinese tend to do a lot orally – it’s a different way and also works. The problem is if – according to European standards and system – you need to prove accountability.”

Tangible and intangible results

Obviously formal evaluations need parameters and clear objectives. Often these are indicators such as visibility, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, which can be used as basic parameters. More techniques are available for assessing tangible, quantitative results. Additional methods and indicators need to be developed for assessing intangible results and for evaluating process. We have observed a more tangible results-orientation on the Chinese side and stronger interest in evaluating processes on the European side. One European interviewee said:

“When asked for the results of the project, our Chinese partners answered: we produced three great catalogues. The European partners said: it was a great process, we learned a lot.”

The European Commission for example uses these indicators.
But a Chinese interviewee, Dr. Li Xiangning from Tongji University College of Architecture and Urban Planning the Chinese curator in the case story project 'Urban Academy', says:

“If I were to do the project all over again, I would keep more detailed records of the whole process. (…) The process of negotiation towards mutual understanding is as important as the final results, the forums and exhibition.”

The authors recommend implementing a protocol of joint governance including frequent reports and documentation of team meetings. Not just for later accountability to stakeholders – these are also useful tools to close information gaps and to avoid misunderstandings in the team.

_Evaluation as a process of active learning throughout the project_

“Evaluation is Reflection in Action: evaluation, as we see it, is collective reflection on the actions taken by individuals within a group. Its purpose is improvement both in the understanding and analysis of reality and issues and in future action. Thus seen, it is an important method of group education and learning”.

Beyond formal evaluations, which always have a bit of a negative ‘must-do-after-project’ connotation, the authors want to discuss a proactive way of evaluation. They advocate ‘learning and reflecting’ as a built-in and ongoing tool in the project process. Proper attention to learning will enhance the likelihood that participants will develop appropriate intercultural competences, function effectively as a team and work productively with partner organisations. In general, evaluation as reflection is more people-centred and less technical.

_Reflection as a practice and tool_

Reflection sounds like a very general and easy practice, but in most projects there is not enough time for reflection, whether alone or with a partner. For some, reflection is seen as unnecessary theorising that delays action. As an exercise that does not consume too much time during daily project work, writing short reflection paragraphs (not just thinking about a problem) can be a helpful routine and a way of raising one’s own awareness. Beyond that, reflection could be instituted as a method of joint governance in the project, perhaps as ‘reflection days’.

One of the COMPASS authors participated in a conference on Culture and Development in Berlin some years ago. One of the topics discussed was what tools could be useful to make intercultural cooperation processes more successful. A European cultural anthropologist who works as a facilitator suggested that there is no better way (he did not like the word ‘tool’) than reflection. He presented his methodology of so-called ‘reflection days’ which take place ‘in conclave’. The purpose is for project managers to step back from their daily work and, with some distance, reflect on the project with a clearer mind and


also with less emotion that might be involved with problems. One interviewee, asked for his opinion on reflection days said: “To integrate reflection days is a great idea, but I am afraid we simply don’t have time for these kinds of extra activities.”

This illustrates the constant dilemma – in pressurised situations, we first tend to cut off support systems and the time needed for that, because they suddenly seem less important than the project steps. The authors recommend implementing reflection time as an integral part of the project design, and to allocate regular time and budget for it. It helps to improve a team’s effectiveness and impact, and of course openness is a necessary condition.

The COMPASS project – an opportunity for reflection and for participatory evaluation

We observed that for some of our interviewees the process of sharing cooperation experiences initiated by this COMPASS project was seen as a good opportunity to review projects. Some European interview partners took the opportunity of using the COMPASS project to invite their Chinese project partners to reflect on their joint cooperation, an exercise which they probably would not have done if there was no ‘official’ publication in the making. As one interviewee said:

“A really interesting way of reflection and of information generation – these COMPASS case story interviews. For me, they opened up a new level of dialogue with my Chinese project partner at a point where I had already been a bit disappointed that our relationship had obviously come to an end, just because the project was over. I was happy to get to know the perspective of my Chinese partner through reading her lessons learned. We never really shared the stressful feelings related to the conflicting issues we had, and the COMPASS interview process was a kind of release and increased our understanding for each other.”

This also shows that it can be quite fruitful if an external party comes in and stimulates reflection, not for the purpose of measuring results achieved, but for the purpose of learning further. Often outsiders with sensitivity can play this role more effectively.

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68 Further reading: Participatory evaluation: a tool to assess projects and empower people, Ilse Brunner, Alba Guzman; and The Case for Participatory Evaluation, J. Bradley Cousins, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
Making the Project Cooperation Sustainable

*Staying in touch and becoming old friends (lao pengyou)*

It may take conscious efforts to stay in touch, but there is immense value in the relationships built and contacts made throughout a project, or as one of our interviewees put it:

“Social networks are more important in China, you have to keep the communication up even though you do not have a concrete project, but might have one later.”

Staying in touch can lead to new ideas, projects or partners you find through new friends on the ground in China. Equally, lack of follow-up can mean missed opportunities.

Developing and realizing a project together is likely to move the European partner from the status of an outsider *wairen* (外人), or stranger, to become a *neiren* (内人), 'someone from the inner circle', or even a *lao pengyou* (老朋友), an old friend. The Chinese, in general, invest significant time and energy to grow and nurture their ‘circles of influence’, or relationship networks, the famous *guanxi* (关系), and we recommend you do the same. People belonging to the inner circle, or *lao pengyou* will enjoy a high degree of trust and loyalty, and also enjoy access to the friend’s network - all of which furthers future projects.

“… the fact that I was surprised with the good communication with the partners, the closeness to the people, the feeling of having made friends. If I see them next time, it will be a real feeling of having done something together which was not easy but we succeeded in varying degrees.”

Fortunately it is not so difficult to keep up this relationship. Writing e-mails, making phone calls, sending greetings cards for Chinese New Year are ways of doing so at a distance. Inviting your partners to lunch or dinner if you have the chance of paying a visit to China would be the most effective way.

*Building future capacities*

The sustainability of projects naturally depends on people already involved in the project linking with new people. We recommend implementing a kind of ‘snow ball’ mechanism to carry forward knowledge, networks and ideas. This could take the format of a ‘train the trainer’ approach, as implemented for example, by the British Council in their arts management programme. Joanna Burke, Director of the British Council in China advises:

“It is important to have follow-up programmes with multipliers that result from programmes, such as the arts management programme we did. These trained people could train the next generation of multipliers and help identify those who would benefit from an overseas training experience in the future.”
Having a vision on top of a project

The last learning from our interviewees we want to share is from curator Hou Hanru who advises:

“What I do is to leverage a project to explore more long-term possibilities. [...] So in the end, employ a long-term strategy, and adopt a political vision in place of ‘make-a-quick-buck’ opportunism. I feel that with this kind of vision cultural exchanges will be smooth sailing.”

Adopting a long-term vision should also be reflected very concretely within the project design when writing a proposal. Most project applicants tend to conclude the proposal steps with activities such as ‘exhibition’ (or maybe one step further ‘elaborate exhibition catalogue’), but then normally the project formally finishes. There is no money left for elaborating the follow-up steps. Why not design the first step of the follow-up activity as the last step of a project? A final activity of every project could be a ‘Vision Workshop’ with all project partners with ideas for follow-up projects and proposals.
EUROPALIA – China in the heart of Europe

Europalia is a major international arts festival held every two years to celebrate one guest country’s cultural heritage and contemporary arts, with a programme centred on Brussels, the heart of Europe. From October to February, the festival fills numerous locations in Brussels, other Belgian cities and neighbouring countries. The mission of Europalia is to promote better understanding between nations and stimulate cultural exchange between peoples. In 2009, europalia.china took place, an idea proposed by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We talked to Bloeme van Roemburg, artistic coordinator for music/performing arts/film and literature of europalia.china. The main lesson learned in this case story: it’s all a matter of finding compromises, let go of what isn’t very important and fight for what is. And, as she advises, be well prepared and have an open mind.

We wanted europalia.china to be a very large-scale festival, covering all aspects of Chinese culture. Not only visual arts, historical exhibitions and music, but also theatre, literature, film, gastronomy, scientific colloquia… It was very important for us to show ‘Contemporary China’, which was not always easy. We succeeded in making a huge and successful festival. We discovered early on that it would be a big challenge to achieve all this. We knew it would be bureaucratically complicated to work with China. The language barrier would be tough to overcome, as well as differences in work procedures. Fortunately we had very good translators and experts to prepare all the negotiations. Our team even followed a very interesting and useful course ‘How to negotiate with the Chinese’ before we first went to Beijing. We also thought that China would be immensely proud of their culture, and that there would be censorship involved. Those clichés were certainly confirmed as we started working on the programme.

Before we initiate a new festival, we organise several round tables/brainstorming sessions with (national/European) experts linked to the country. We also organise meetings with all our cultural partners (museums/theatres/concert halls/literary & film partners). Their input is very important as they take the final decision on what is presented in their venues. The aim is to gather as much information as possible to draw up a first outline of an ideal programme. This ‘ideal programme proposal’ was the starting point for negotiations with the Chinese partners.

In its 2009–2010 China edition, Europalia organised 48 exhibitions, 100 concerts, 188 literary encounters and seminars, 28 dance performances, 57 theatre performances and 146 cinema screenings. The festival attracted 1,101,175 visitors and spectators. To structure the programme and facilitate public understanding, festival events were grouped under four main themes: eternal China, contemporary China, colourful China, and China and the world. The festival offered a highly diversified picture of China, presenting popular art – puppet theatre, masks, tea… – as well as national heritage and contemporary art. Some residence programmes for writers and young choreographers were even realized.

The Europalia team, in collaboration with a group of European experts, develops each festival with a national team from the guest country, working within a framework agreed with the country’s government. Thanks to these collaborations, the festival is able to meet the expectations of both sides. We worked with many different (official) cultural bodies in China, the main one being the Chinese Ministry of Culture. The exhibition team...
worked with many different museums all over China, under the supervision of Fan Di'an (NAMOC). The other disciplines also had their own partners: the China Performing Arts Association (CPAA) for theatre/dance/music, the China Film Bureau for film, the Writers’ Association for literature and the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles (CFLAC) for the conferences. Also some specific cities (Shanghai, Hong Kong & Beijing) and provinces (Guangdong & Nanjing) were involved. The collaboration is both financial and conceptual. Every single event, whether big or small, had to be approved by the Ministry and by us. The risk for censorship was always present, but we did our best.

The collaborations varied according to the disciplines. In the visual and performing arts fields it went well. Sometimes there were tensions related to differences in taste and priorities about what to present. But we didn’t programme anything we didn’t like. Also, not everything we wanted came. Overall, we were very happy with the results. The fields of literature and film were more challenging, as the Chinese side preferences were to show officially approved work. We managed to get approval from the relevant institutions to also get non-official artists involved, and there we covered the costs ourselves. So a lot of creative effort was necessary to make the programme interesting and to keep both sides happy.

We knew the cooperation would not be easy, but a festival of this size is bound to encounter many challenges. I feel that one of the problems might be our timidity: we have all read many things about Chinese ‘face’ and how important it is not to make them lose it. As a result we become too careful; we were so terrified of making our partners lose face that we constantly trod on eggs. The Chinese have no such qualms whatsoever, they don’t care if we lose face or not, so the fight was sometimes a bit unfair.

Another observation was that when a decision was taken, we never knew why or who took it and who we should talk to solve it. Sometimes someone said yes to a project, but for obscure reasons minds were changed, so they just replaced that person and the new person then said no. Many times, we felt the Chinese could not take any decisions because they were afraid of making a bad move and angering the forces above them. They were sometimes bad at taking initiatives.

Projects like this are bound to encounter many cultural differences – this is normal but it also makes it interesting. We tried not to give too much importance to cultural differences: they can be a handy pretext to explain why things go wrong. It’s all a matter of finding compromises, let go of what isn’t important and fight for what is. Whether you negotiate with Americans, Chinese or Brazilians, you should always be polite, respectful, fair but firm, and clever. If you receive a business card using just one hand, it really is no big deal. They know it is a different custom here, so I can’t imagine them being offended. They were amused and a bit condescending at most.

The result of the cooperation was fantastic. We had gorgeous exhibitions, concerts and performances. The public was enthusiastic and numerous. Even more difficult projects (like Kunqu opera and contemporary music) were very well received. One advice I would give is not to be scared. Negotiations are never easy, whatever culture you work with. Don’t blame cultural differences. Sometimes a Belgian entrepreneur can be even more different from you than a Chinese one. But be well prepared and with an open mind.

Learn more: Europalia: www.europalia.eu
Culture360.org article: http://culture360.org/magazine/china-in-europe-europalia-cultural-festival/
In conversation with Xu Jiang, Director of National Academy of Art in Hangzhou

Xu Jiang is Director of China’s prestigious National Academy of Art, Hangzhou, in Zhejiang Province. An artist who graduated from the oil painting department of China Academy of Art in 1982, he was one of the first Chinese after the Cultural Revolution to study fine art in the West, at the Academy of Fine Arts in Hamburg, Germany in 1988. He has been curator of many national and international art exhibitions. In conversation with Xu Jiang, we learned about what is needed for a better shared foundation of Sino-European cultural exchange. On the Chinese side: home-grown thinking and preservation of cultural roots and heritage, and on the European side: a much better understanding of the ecology of Chinese art, beyond the ideological lens.

Yi Wen (Yi): There have been many exchanges between China’s National Academy of Fine Arts and universities and arts organisations overseas. Could you discuss the successes, failures and lessons learned?

Xu Jiang (Xu): The biggest problem is language. Without the language you don’t have the thoughts and there won’t be a good exchange. Twenty years ago I went abroad and established many connections. After my return Id spend days looking up words in the dictionary to write a letter. But my friends in Germany couldn’t understand a thing. We got stuck on low-level exchanges and higher level exchanges were even worse. Language presents a very big problem in transmitting messages accurately.

Katja Hellkötter (KH): Have you felt any other barriers in exchange of ideas?

Xu: Certainly there are some barriers. We might say the same phrase but everyone interprets it differently. The language problem is more than ‘lost in translation’. Some important issues the Chinese take very seriously may not matter so much to foreigners.

For example, the 2007 Shanghai Biennale theme ‘Fast-Paced City – Quick Human Flux’ examined the phenomenon of the millions of migrant workers and issues of China’s urban vs. rural development split. We invited several foreign curators to participate. However, some took an interest in the theme, but others felt it was passé. In Europe, rural-urban migration is no longer a hot topic. For instance, renowned curator Okwui Enwezor (Director of 2002 Kassel Documenta) said he wasn’t interested in the topic because he’d done it all – state refugees, political refugees and conflict refugees. I maintained the issue is of great significance to China because the fate of the villages is threatened by massive urban development. The sheer scale of it is far from the rural-urban migration in Europe and has ramifications for national and political stability.

Less than a month later, 200 million migrant workers were stranded by a heavy snowstorm on their way home for Lunar New Year celebrations. This quickly became a huge problem of communication and understanding.

China’s National Academy of Fine Arts (Zhongguo meishu xueyuan, http://eng.caa.edu.cn) is sometimes mistaken for the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing (Zhongyang meishu xueyuan, http://www.cafa.edu.cn/aboutcafa/lan/?c=1101). China’s National Academy of Fine Arts (also just called China Academy of Art) is located in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province, yet sharing the rank of the national academy of art together with CAFA. China’s National Academy of Fine Arts was founded in 1928 by the eminent educator Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培) whereas the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing was founded in 1918. Neither academies are to be confused with the Chinese National Academy of Research in Art (sometimes just called Chinese National Academy of Art) located in Beijing (Zhongguo yishu yanjiuyuan), which may be considered as an equivalent to CAS, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, a nationwide resource gathering specialists in various fields of traditional Chinese art. Also see: http://www.gscaa.cn/en/node_518667.htm

While the first two are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education offering educational programs on BA, Master and PhD levels, the latter is under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and can be regarded as an institute for research in art on a post-graduate level.

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social problem. The ‘Fast-Paced City – Quick Human Flux’ theme raises questions about the identity of us all as urban dwellers. True, some migrant workers arrived in Shanghai barely two years back, but we find many Shanghainese talk about their ancestors’ origins two centuries ago. Many trace their roots to the countryside and are not true city natives. The urgency of such issues is lost on those international ‘art citizens.’ Only we Chinese can grasp it.

So it is up to us – not people from other countries – to highlight issues of our nation and our times. It shows how important ‘home-grown thinking’ is in cultural exchange. Nowadays, we all share a foundation of common knowledge, which underpins our exchanges. However, we must ask ourselves how to preserve our own traditional character on this shared foundation. As we praise the triumph of pluralism, we also mourn the loss of the purity of artistic traditions. When people from around the world study my art, no one would say it is homogeneous and purely Chinese.

In China, we would consider such introspective issues, but not in Europe. In general, Europeans advocate expansionism. Whenever I mention American culture, they pay attention because the United States is a more culturally expansionist competitor. Maybe not a more powerful culture, but certainly a more popular, secular, trendy, and entertaining culture that poses a threat to European culture. So the last thing Europeans want to see is a more Americanised China or a more Americanised Chinese culture. That is the foundation for Sino-European cultural dialogue.

Therefore, I think that home-grown concerns play an important part in cultural exchange. We live in a cross-cultural world but cannot simply follow the globalised pack. We need to preserve our cultural roots in order to execute the transformation demanded by our times. What kind of transformation? If we want to transform Western things into something consistent with our heritage, we must know our heritage: two transformations.

Yi: You are both a manager and professional painter. What is the difference on the artistic level?

Xu: When most Europeans talk about Chinese art, they mention Ai Weiwei and go on about Cai Guoqiang, Xu Bing and the like. In fact, there are many other good artists here. We can only say the Europeans’ grasp of the ecology of Chinese art is inadequate.

Yi: The Chinese art I saw displayed at Art Basel was all political pop art. Do you think Sino-European exchange can operate on the purely artistic level? Or must it follow the art market?

Xu: I think Chinese artists should keep a clear head and not just go along with the art market. Those declared heroes yesterday for standing up for so-called artistic freedom in politics would today use the market to puncture that heroic facade. We Chinese should recognise this is the complex reality of the West. Westerners see a few figures through their ideological lens and grasp them, only to exhaust them. So you shouldn’t assume that China’s artistic freedom hinges on these few figures; China’s artists are slowly waking up.

Of course, Europe has very good artists and critics, with very good insights. Our art requires the nourishment of exchange and the test of time. Let’s not dwell on this but make sure we keep a level head. It gives us a glimpse into the West’s inscrutable world. They promote a few art figures but brush aside millions of Chinese artists. To their credit, these Westerners do recognise the kind of art they deem crucial for spiritual judgement and the
artistic thought process. So we need to acknowledge both the active and passive aspects of this phenomenon.

Yi: How do you think these problems can be resolved?

Xu: We need to develop our own mechanisms and foster our own elite, especially in the commentary field. They must have the capability and authority to hold their own ideas, interact with and judge China’s artists, especially those who march steadfastly to their own drumbeat. China’s artists cannot just sit back and complain. To qualify as the elite they must be capable of critical self-reflection. By elite we don’t mean those who saunter down the Shanghai Expo VIP line but rather those who dare to criticise themselves. They’re as thoughtful as they are vocal. In the dialogue between China and the West, many people used them symbolically, as new vs. old, advanced vs. dated. But once we realize this, many of us become arrogant ‘heritage zealots’, falling into one of the two extreme camps. I can feel that in China today a new mainstream camp of thinking people has emerged.

For sure, in the modern world we are inseparable: you in me and me in you. I challenge you to identify something purely Chinese. To some extent, China today has out-westernised the West. We should therefore take a sober look at ourselves, and channel our real concerns and thinking through the elite. Otherwise, our dialogue will be stuck at the cultural elite level.

Our universities these days are very vibrant and full of lively young people. You cannot bend them with your will. They are vigorous, sensitive and thoughtful. They have a vision of the future elite, which is very important. But then their generation is no longer so young, most already over 30 and approaching 40. The ‘mainstream camp’ should pay attention to these ‘future elite’.

KH: What suggestions do you have for the content, methods and processes of Sino-European cooperation?

Xu: I’ll talk about methods because I am not an official, just a grassroots leader. I think today conditions are ripe for some meaningful collaborative projects. For example, we are now planning a biennale of fine arts academies worldwide. The goal is to connect all the academies to consider one single issue. Our plan is to not invite some big-shot master but for each academy to form a team around a theme. The teams are invited to China to display their creation. We aim to create an opportunity for future elites to interact and work together. For instance, ten schools might take the theme ‘touring rehearsal’ – students each bring their own historical memory and we’d provide materials and space for one month. At the end, each group shows their plans and products.

In this process different student teams will interact through undertaking an artistic creation in the vast environs of China. They can forge a common foundation of ideas, and think together.

China National Academy of Art in Hangzhou: http://eng.caa.edu.cn/
The experiences of an independent dance company – a UK-China dance project

Since 1999, Farooq Chaudhry has worked with dancer and choreographer Akram Khan to develop and produce his work as an artist. Together they founded the Akram Khan Company and in 2006 they realised a co-production with dancers from the National Ballet of China and produced bahok. What stands out in this case story are particular keywords: non-strategic, purely artistic and intuitive.

We did not plan to start collaboration in China. I had been there in 2006, visited some dance schools, and met some people to get a feel for the place. At the ISPA conference in 2007 in HK a colleague introduced me to the artistic director of the National Ballet of China, Madame Zhao. She said she was interested in the aesthetic quality of Akram Khan’s work and felt it would connect very well with an Asiatic mind. She wanted Akram Khan to choreograph for her company, but that is not something we do. We proposed working together on a project. Madame Zhao was surprised but took up the offer, as it was an unprecedented opportunity. So there was no real rationale behind it, only an interest to work together and discover each other.

Because we did not plan it, we did not really have expectations. It just started and rolled along on its own momentum, driven by desire and a curiosity to explore. It was never really a strategic project but a purely intuitive and artistic process.

We initially worked with four dancers from National Ballet of China and five of our dancers; a combination of principals, soloists and dancers who had just joined the company. Madame Zhao felt they would benefit from the exposure to different environments. We had no concept and no story. But our interest in working across cultures – which is our ethos – was the vision for the project. The first idea was related to a bridge, but the real idea only came when we all met in the studios in UK. Akram did not know what to do, how to start. The dancers could barely talk to each other due to language problems. When they did, they started to talk about feelings of being lost, confused, anxious and in transition. This reminded Akram of an airport lounge and from here the ideas for the piece started. The work was entitled bahok, which means carrier in Akram’s native Bengali.

Our partnership model was collaboration under the direction of Akram Khan. The financial aspects were shared. They originally wanted us to pay the dancers’ salaries. We did not agree and felt NBC should pay the salaries but we would give NBC 15% of net profits from touring income. More like a business model. We covered the dancers’ expenses. They offered rehearsal studios in Beijing. In the end, our company probably took on more of the financial risk than the National Ballet. We avoided dwelling too much on the problems, as this can be exhausting. We put the human quality first, and try to solve issues through quick and simple solutions. They are never going to be like you, and you are never going to be like them. You search for common ground.

I guess with Madame Zhao we were lucky that we were dealing with the right person. We met in February 2007, had auditions in April 2007, then met in the UK in July 2007 and the premiere was already in early 2008! This is nice in Asia. They don’t take too much time to decide, not too many details. If you think too much about an idea, it can become heavy and burdensome. The main challenge was the different type of organisational needs due to the hierarchy of a large ballet company in comparison to our small more
democratic dance company. All of a sudden they decided they needed one of the dancers back for a new company work, as happens in ballet companies… this would jeopardise our tour but then they solved it by offering somebody new. Despite the good experience we also met some challenges. The contractual issues are different from the UK. Contracts tend to be signed late and we were nervous. We faced the usual challenges, working at distance, getting technical data late, getting visa permits, etc.

If I reflect on differences we met in the process I would say the main challenges were with the dancers. They are less independent; they struggle being abroad for a long time. They are not used to our more democratic environment of working. This is nothing to do with political systems and more to do with a ballet system where someone else takes care of you throughout your career. They felt homesick. We had one dancer who really wanted to quit and go home as she couldn’t take it any longer. She missed the ballet culture and training. This was going to jeopardise the tour. In the end we agreed she would return in the tour breaks but remain with the project till the end. There was some emotional blackmail which cost us lot of money. They are also quite attached to family, food and, in the end, they are only children, so they are more connected to their parents than children in Europe. Our rehearsal director was crucial in ensuring communications were clear. We hired someone who could speak English and Chinese. The language issue was quite straightforward and not a problem.

We were very proud of bahok. We felt we created a work that reflected some of the issues of the modern world and felt people could connect with this. The audience loved it and the reception in China was a success. The whole project was very smooth. The Chinese director stepped down in the end and a new person came. That’s what you see in China. They tiptoe towards new ideas and then suddenly it can change.

If I try to summarize the lessons I learned, I would say having faith, goodwill, patience, being clear from the outset and culturally sensitive. We gained more than knowledge from this cooperation, we gained understanding. For me, knowledge is knowing what something is and understanding is knowing what something is, but also what it means. We had a dream and an ambition that we let guide us through this adventure and avoided a rigid strategic approach. Dreams for me are about making yourself better. Strategy is about being too aware of what others may think and trying to prove it to them. Between these two it is easy to lose sight of who you are and what you really want to say!

Learn more: http://www.the-producers.org/FarooqChaudhry
The Chinese Ministry of Culture

A conversation on Europe-China cooperation with Chen Ping

Chen Ping is a government officer responsible for working with European countries in the Chinese Ministry of Culture. He speaks excellent German and has a rich experience in cultural cooperation with Europe. He is currently busy coordinating the 2012 Year of China in Germany. While talking with Chen Ping, COMPASS editor Yi Wen learned that Chen Ping has great respect for European-style project management. He commented that, “What they have in common is that they are all very professional, and execution is meticulously carried out by experienced project leaders.” However, Chen Ping also said that in his opinion Europeans did not know enough about China and that there is something about the Europeans he particularly disagreed with, “They can tie anything and everything together with culture, politics, human rights and talk about them all in the same breath.”

Yi Wen (Yi): At the government level, Sino-European cultural exchange is mainly under the liaison bureau of the Ministry of Culture. How do you find the current state of affairs of Sino-European cultural exchange? What trends do you see for future developments?

Chen Ping (Chen): In recent years, we’ve had relatively frequent exchanges and collaborative activities with Europeans. For instance, the National Ballet and Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe will be participating in the Edinburgh International Festival this year and Meng Jinghui and others will be participating in France’s Festival d’Avignon OFF. Overall, since 2001, there have been ever more cultural exchanges between China and Europe and the scale also keeps increasing. We have held mutual year-long events celebrating each other’s cultures or had shorter cultural festivals with France, Germany, Britain, Italy, Spain and Ireland; in Austria, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands, we have held Chinese art festivals; we have also had some events in the Scandinavian countries, but on a slightly smaller scale.

Yi: You’ve had frequent contact with many of these countries’ cultural institutions. How would you describe the experience?

Chen: All I can share are my general impressions and my personal feelings. I feel more comfortable and at ease dealing with the Germans, which may have something to do with the fact that I’m schooled in Germanic languages and literature. The Germans have a rigorous work ethic and are disciplined, so we’re more compatible. The French aren’t as rigorous; the going gets easier with the Italians once you get to know them; and it’s rather difficult to collaborate with the Belgians. They’re very professional, to a fault, so they’re not too accommodating of other people’s points of view. The Scandinavians are very clear cut, and the Austrians are equally serious. The British have their own system so you can sense the distance. What they have in common is that they are all very professional, and execution is meticulously carried out by experienced project leaders. The projects are executed step by orderly step.

Yi: You just mentioned so many countries and each organisation you liaise with must be different. What are some of the challenges working with them? What expectations do you have towards your partners?

Chen: We at the culture ministry have already got used to the European style of working, so we get along quite well. When we hold events related to Chinese art in Europe, usually those of us at the Western Europe section, together with the partner institution, do the overall planning and the subordinate cultural institution carries out the actual implementation.
As for our European partners, I feel that they love to run their own show and invite Eastern countries to participate only to dress things up. That being said, interest in China has increased in recent years. I do wish they would listen to what the Chinese are saying and make it a priority to understand Chinese culture, Chinese society and the state of China’s economic development to avoid misunderstandings. Treating each other as equals is the basis of any dialogue.

In addition, Europeans must understand how Chinese people handle things. They also have to appreciate the habits, principles and methods of the Chinese.

Yi: What do you think the Chinese working in cultural management can learn from their European counterparts?

Chen: First, they have to learn how to plan things. This is a weak link in many of our cultural organisations. Next they must learn how to operate systematically – from creation of a preliminary vision to proper implementation. They need to understand that a lot of things require a long lead time.

Yi: Next year, in 2012, the Ministry of Culture will host the Year of China in Germany. How are the preparations coming along and what specific activities are being planned?

Chen: Things are going forward on this plan. Although we are holding China Year in Germany, we hope that this will not merely be us holding it and even just there. We hope that we can work with German arts festivals and other cultural organisations. For example, the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival has invited China as a guest country of honour and we are bringing more than 300 musicians there. The Shanghai Symphony Orchestra will perform the music for the festival’s opening ceremony. A great variety of art forms will be performed. We’ll have Peking opera, choral music, Kun opera, folk music, experimental opera, pop and jazz. World renowned musicians such as Tan Dun, Lang Lang and others will take part.

Yi: What are some of the activities being planned?

Chen: We’re still in talks with our partner institutions, such as the Young Euro Classic Festival, Münchener Biennale, and Ruhrtriennale. The Central Conservatory of Music will be working together with German institutions to hold the Sino-German Competition for Young Composers. Winning entries will be performed in Germany. This project is already underway and will continue through next February.

On May 14 this year, Beijing’s first modern chamber orchestra, Ensemble ConTempo Beijing, established with the support of the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation and Frankfurt’s Ensemble Modern, performed for the first time in public. They will also play at the Schleswig Holstein Music Festival.

As for theatre, the Shanghai Theatre Academy and the Bavarian Theatre Academy, and the Lin Zhaohua Drama Centre and the Thalia Theatre of Hamburg have worked with each other.

In dance, German choreographers and Chinese dancers are in collaboration. For exhibitions, the Communication University of China and the Museum of Applied Arts (Museum für Angewandte Kunst) co-curated an exhibition entitled, ‘Chinesische Dinge,’ to showcase Chinese applied design from after the founding of the People’s Republic up to the present day. It includes a thoroughly comprehensive selection exhibiting, among other things, designs for offices and classrooms, food and beverages, the home, clothing, medicine, cosmetics and jewellery. We will also be holding exhibitions on Chinese contemporary architecture, design and public art in Germany.
Additionally, the focus of this China Year will be cultural dialogue. In the interests of mutual understanding, we will be working together with German foundations and cultural institutions to hold dialogues between German intellectuals, scholars, authors, and artists.

**Yi:** Could you discuss in detail the purpose of the China Year activities?

**Chen:** The goal is to encourage the Chinese and the Germans to get to know and understand more about each other and to get Germans more interested in Chinese art and culture. From our point of view the main idea is to get more people to understand China. We believe that although so many people have visited China, there is still little understanding of China among Europeans. Organising cultural activities in Europe can promote understanding between the Chinese public and Europeans at large, and arouse European interest in Chinese culture. The results of any of these artistic events are seen gradually. Only by stimulating a European audience's interest in China, will they be motivated to use various channels to gain a better understanding of China.

**Yi:** How much funding is available for the events?

**Chen:** The specific amount of funding is still unclear, because we don't get to start applying for funding until June or July. It remains to be seen how much funding will be granted. The China Year lasts for the whole of 2012.

**Yi:** How would you regard European countries’ cultural policy toward China as a whole?

**Chen:** This is a big subject. My basic belief is that the Chinese people know more about Europe than Europeans do about China. There's something about the Europeans I don't particularly agree with: they can tie anything and everything together with culture, politics, human rights and talk about them all in the same breath. If they keep at it there's no way the two sides can gain an understanding of each other; no way to promote any understanding. The Europeans should consider this issue carefully. Take for example the ‘Enlightenment Art’ exhibition not too long ago. No Chinese person would link that exhibition with Ai Weiwei’s arrest, but that was exactly what German intellectuals and the media did, creating uproar.

Learn more: [http://www.ccct.gov.cn/English/index.html](http://www.ccct.gov.cn/English/index.html)
The Dutch Cultural Centre was the Netherlands cultural pavilion for the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. We talked to Monique Knapen, who was assigned by the Netherlands China Arts Foundation to set up the centre and coordinate the programme for six months. “Managing expectations” is how she summarizes her experience. Monique describes the process and realities.

The Dutch Cultural Centre was conceived as a temporary cultural centre in the middle of Shanghai with an exhibition space and a basic theatre. During the six-month period there were seven large exhibitions on different themes such as visual arts, photography, architecture and design. There were 93 performances in a wide variety of disciplines: theatre, music, film, dance and literature, accompanied by workshops, lectures and smaller exhibitions. The content of the programme was very diverse and professional.

I managed a multiple partnership structure involving the Ministry of Culture of China, Ministry of Culture & Education and Science of The Netherlands, SICA (Dutch Centre for International Cultural Activities), four cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht), the City of Shanghai (Jing’an District), the Dutch and Chinese Expo authorities, a Chinese commercial event company and programme partners in the Netherlands and China.

We found the partners after many consultations and benchmarking exercises. I was very optimistic about the possibilities in China. The funding/investment came primarily from the Netherlands as it was a Dutch initiative to be at the Shanghai Expo. The partnership was set up with a commercial event company. We rented the building 800SHOW, a creative park from the City of Shanghai.

The programming of the centre was done in conjunction with local partners. The relationship with the Chinese government went rather smoothly. We received almost all the permits and all the planned programmes were executed. The Chinese art we wanted to present was scrutinised much more closely than the Dutch art. The Chinese curators were quite flexible – if we couldn’t present some works then others were selected.

The programme targeted an art-loving audience, including artists, professionals in the cultural world, students and art lovers in general. If our Dutch participants had Chinese partners it was relatively easy to find the right audiences. Our main goal was to stimulate and realize cultural exchange and, although the art scene is rather small, I had high expectations of the interest in our projects from the general Chinese audience. Our main challenge was finding the target audience. We discovered there was a small audience in Shanghai for our high end arts & culture exchange programme. It was hard to get a large audience with the high level of competition during the Expo period.

In terms of daily operations we worked with an event management company. Their aims were mainly commercial and although they had many affinities with the subject and the project director was very good, it was still sometimes hard to combine the goals of a commercial company and high level cultural exchange. The company had many very young, highly motivated but less experienced staff.

The Dutch consulate in Shanghai was very helpful. In particular, the Head of Press and Culture was closely involved to make the DCC a success. She was based at the consulate for a year (assigned by the Embassy).
Of course there are cultural differences, but I always try to see both sides. I am European but I lived in China for six years, speak the language and have good communication skills. Language was not really an issue in the co-operation process - the common language was English. Not only were we dealing with different cultures, but above all with different expectations on both sides, and this was a challenge to manage.

Some Dutch participants prepared their visit well and tried to work on longer term relations, while other participants were less well prepared and expected us to do everything as facilitator. Some of the procedures were not at all clear from the start because the Expo was a novelty, as was the Dutch Culture Centre, however we managed it all well and mostly within the deadlines.

If I were to start the project again now I would do better since we learned a lot in terms of procedures, audience expectations and numbers and in working with a commercial event company in China.

Now we know much more about the art situation of Shanghai and are able to develop a new level of co-production. At first, we were very dissatisfied with the audience numbers but we found out later that, given the type of work presented, the audiences were actually quite high. During the Expo the competition was fierce and the art crowd is still small.

The Chinese press is another topic; they will only write about you for payment. We really thought from a Dutch, Western perspective that with a press agency we would be able to get press coverage. In other words: good things would get attention. But we found the press would write about anything – good or bad – but only after receiving a red envelope. In the Netherlands we received little press attention. That is something I would spend more time on. More money is required for a communication and press to reach local stakeholders.

Finding the right partners for what you want to present is crucial. Many exchange visits are necessary to find out what would mutually benefit the exchange. In looking for partners, it’s important to take your time and not decide too quickly. You need to see which partners are really interesting and interested. What we want is sometimes not the same as what the partner wants: managing expectations!

We worked with a commercial company to run the space. We did not know what that really meant in terms of the project content. So, while it was run professionally, we felt we sometimes had conflicting objectives. China is more commercially driven; less attention might be given to quality given the priority to sell. It's important to know that.

In general you should be aware of why you want to do projects in China. Are you really interested in the Chinese or is it to promote yourself? Are you willing to shift your own ideas if required to be successful? These are important questions to ask before you start to work there.

Monique Knapen is currently China Programme Director for SICA: Dutch Centre for International Cultural Activities. She has 20 years experience working with China and the arts. She has lived in China for six years and speaks Mandarin. http://www.sica.nl/en/node/20727
Richard Sobey is a creative strategist, and manages the internationally renowned IOU, creating artwork across a variety of media for international contexts, including outdoor and indoor touring theatre productions, site-specific events, interactive digital works, video, installations and exhibitions. Richard has worked in China on various cross-media projects. His advice is to avoid ‘selling’ pre-existing works, also being open and enthusiastic about the nature of differences and any problems, and seeing them as a learning experience.

Synchronicity and opportunity is how my China projects initiated; a personal desire and interest in Chinese contemporary practice coincided with meeting very interesting Chinese producers at the IETM Beijing. I first cooperated with Zhu Luming of VIS A VIS artlab for IOU's Eye Witness video installation at Zhu Luming’s gallery at Beijing’s 798 Art District. It was highly successful and I enjoyed working with him as I learnt so much about the sector and working in China. The project also formed the focal point for bringing together Chinese artists to discuss practice and share aspirations.

Since then, I have produced a range of projects: from experimental music composition to trainings. I have worked with Peking University, independent creative producers, organisations in film, radio and performance and the NGO sector.

Having no official Government partner initially was good for me, I think, because I could take time to understand how things work practically and culturally. Since then, I have taken a more careful approach with official partners and have been lucky. I feel there is no real difference engaging with official individuals (providing I meet their interests and needs). It is about relationships as elsewhere. The differences I experience are dealing with the bureaucracy that surrounds individuals. I have provided testimonials and evidence of my practice, experience and status – this has helped enormously.

Zhu Luming and I first explored common interests, and got to know each other before committing to a project. This was both essential and enjoyable. I was lucky that he was experienced in working with foreign artists and organisations. The partnership was based on both sides bringing resources to the project. We had a written agreement on the project and a verbal commitment to further work. The relationship was carefully built over time to develop trust and a shared vision. While Zhu Luming and I felt comfortable with each other quite soon, it took us 18 months to discover an appropriate project together. Again this was important.

Zhu Luming really worked hard to accommodate the work artistically. The real value, though, was our ability to explore working relationships and understand much more about contexts. Trust and understanding facilitated the cooperation and seeded new relationships. It led to my desire to engage more with Chinese practice and to move to Beijing for 7 months (and 20 visits).

Initially, I deliberately got no support – other than flight costs for research trips from the British Council and UK Trade & Investment. That way I felt I had more control over the contexts in which I would develop work and could respond to my Chinese partner without an external agenda. I am comfortable with taking an open mind developing projects to avoid ‘selling’ pre-existing works. I expect to spend time familiarising myself with practice and audiences to discover appropriate projects. I also expected an increased level
of bureaucracy and control – sometimes unfounded; confirmed in other contexts!

My preconceptions about China were mainly about bureaucracy and control, constructed from a British 'old school' education of Chinese culture and government practice, underpinned by Western media stereotypes. My orientation and research blew these away as did my direct experience.

Differences in the Chinese approach of some people I engaged with was interesting – long-term planning can sometimes be difficult due to a feeling that change happens so fast you cannot plan for the future. I believe knowing where you want to go helps you manage this change and take advantage of opportunities strategically. This has been much discussed with some practitioners. I always have a set of interests, and am prepared to shape a project working together. I am also happy to dump existing ideas and build something completely different with a partner - it is important for me to discover a project together.

We evaluated the project in meetings, but have no documentation (a mistake because the experience is now not transferable). Face to face meeting is always best for me and particularly in China. In this way things happen fast and with deeper trust. What satisfied me most was working closely with Zhu Luming in a genuine partnership, also the artist-audience relationships, the collaboration, and increasing my personal understanding and experience of working in China – and its effect on my practice 'at home'.

Key challenges I met during the process:

- Understanding the cultural work environment: it was vital to me to have equity in our working relationships, dialogue and joint growth. I researched contexts and practice to culturally orientate myself. This was invaluable, especially as it often proved inaccurate and based on outdated expectations.
- Managing the quality of the artistic experience as there were different expectations about practice
- Understanding how to communicate with audiences (including marketing)
- Language: I had to trust translation in all communications – adjusting for social, political and context understandings. I now have a little Mandarin and this has made a huge difference.
- In the original project there were problems because I misunderstood the nature of contracting in China. This was easily resolved, mainly because Zhu Luming was experienced working with Europeans – and patient!

My inexperience of working in China was the reason; and my only preparation for IETM Beijing was reading cultural orientation books. After that I did deeper research on Chinese cultural practice as well as a UK government short training course on Exporting to China.

In summary, exploring cultural difference and similarity is how I grow as a practitioner and as a human being. I was open and enthusiastic about the nature of differences and any problems, which I saw as a learning experience. Fulfilling, though not without stress!

I have responded to similarities in our aspirations and approaches (rather than the differences) to make things happen in the face of difficulty.

Personally, I believe that engaging with Chinese practitioners and audiences has enabled me to explore my expectations about practice, and who I am as a producer and a human being. IOU feels that in its engagement with Chinese culture and perspectives it can better understand its own attitudes and approaches to work and UK audiences.

Learn more: [http://www.ioutheatre.org/](http://www.ioutheatre.org/)
While the economic and political influence of China has been growing rapidly in the past thirty years, its ‘soft power’ – image, charm, cultural influence – has remained relatively weak. The decision by the Chinese government to set up a worldwide network of Confucius Institutes (CI, Kongzi Xueyuan 孔子学院) was intended to be an answer to this problem. Modelled after an institution like the Alliance Française, the aim of the CIs is to promote Chinese language and culture, and enhance the country’s soft power. The first CI opened in 2004 and by the end of 2010 there were about 350 CIs in some one hundred countries worldwide. We talked with Gergely Salát who was involved in setting up the Confucius Institute Budapest. He explains the rather trust-intensive ‘joint venture architecture’ of the CIs and also shares what he finds most challenging. For example, designing content when cultural tastes are poles apart and talks about striving to find some compromise as the hardest task one can face in intercultural cooperation.

I had the opportunity to take part in the establishment of one of these CIs, namely the ELTE Confucius Institute (ECI)70 in Budapest, Hungary, in 2006, and wish to share some of my experiences. Since then, ECI became a rather successful project: among other accomplishments, it won the ‘Excellent Confucius Institute’ award, and the opportunity to host the 2011 Conference of European Confucius Institutes. It teaches Chinese in 16 high schools and universities in Hungary, appears frequently in local media, publishes a magazine and book series, and is considered the centre of Chinese culture and language in Hungary.

CIs have a unique structure. While cultural institutes of other countries are usually independent organisations under the direct administration of their own governments, CIs are all set up and run as joint ventures between Chinese and foreign institutions. The host institution – preferably a college or university with a Chinese or East Asian department – provides the director and staff of the CI, as well as offices and classrooms. In this way the Chinese side can build on a pre-existing infrastructure to promote its aims. A Chinese college or university is also needed for the cooperation; it provides a Chinese vice-director, teachers, study materials, etc. The centre of the network of CIs is the Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters71, an organ of the Chinese Ministry of Education. Hanban provides financing and supervision, so it is the most important organisation for the CIs.

The host institution of ECI Hungary is ELTE (Eötvös Loránd University), the largest and oldest university in Hungary, specifically the Department of Chinese Studies of ELTE, founded in 1924. The whole project was initiated by the department, and the process included long negotiations between the department and leaders of the university, to secure the university provision of space and infrastructure for ECI. Our Chinese partner is Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), an institution we had close contact with for a long time, since BFSU has a Department of Hungarian Studies.

As in most cases of Sino-foreign cooperation, formal applications, signings of memoranda of understanding, official meetings were just one part of the process. I believe the key was personal contacts and background talks. Our department was already known by Hanban because we had organised HSK (Chinese Proficiency Test) in Hungary for years; and we also knew many people at BFSU, through previous teacher exchanges. So when

70 http://konfuciuszintezet.hu/
71 http://www.hanban.edu.cn/)
we decided to establish ECI, we already knew most of the Chinese-side decision-makers. As a result, following informal talks, the whole process was quite smooth. By the time the President of ELTE wrote a Letter of Proposal to Hanban in February 2006 for the establishment of ECI, it seems the decision had already been made by the Chinese side to provide funding.

The first formal agreement was signed between ELTE and the ambassador of China to Hungary in March 2006. In July, another agreement was signed in Beijing, and in October a Chinese delegation visited Hungary to finalise the proceedings. ECI opened in December 2006. The Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Education got involved in the final phase and ECI was opened by its minister.

At least six parties took part in the process of establishing ECI: in Hungary, the department, the university leadership and the ministry; in China, Hanban, BFSU and the embassy. This might have led to an extremely long and complicated process, but in fact it turned out to be extremely fast and easy. The reason was that the Chinese partners were surprisingly flexible.

China treats the CI project as a political priority, but it has no means to exercise full control over the network. For this reason, while Hanban initially provides generous funding to all CIs, it exercises only limited interference in their affairs. CIs are based on trust: Hanban lets them decide what they do, how they work, what their priorities are, who they employ. Hanban merely provides supervision and guidance. One way to supervise CIs is the deployment of Chinese vice-directors: the Chinese partners send a Chinese vice-director to every CI, most of whom do not make decisions, but they do influence them and inform Hanban what goes on.

The Chinese CI project is in its first phase of development where the focus is on quantity. It seems that the main aim is to establish as many CIs as possible worldwide. I believe that the next phase will focus on quality and selection. CIs that do quality work will be given extended support, while those that do not live up to expectations, or misuse the trust given to them, might lose backing.

Competition among CIs might, however, lead to some dysfunction. Since funding of CIs is almost solely dependent on Hanban, rather than some kind of market mechanism, a key to secure stable financing is to do projects Hanban likes. Of course, the tastes and demands of a foreign public and Hanban officials can be quite different. For example, the Chinese tend to like song and dance shows that we might find rather kitschy and unrepresentative of real Chinese culture, while contemporary Chinese art might be more popular with us than in Chinese official circles. The Chinese seem to like pictures of leaders in magazines, while we do not. They like hearing foreign students singing Chinese pop songs, which many of our students do not really enjoy. As a result, we often have to strive to find some compromise between tastes—a hard task, the hardest one can face in intercultural cooperation.

Learn more:
Confucius Institute Budapest http://konfucuszintezet.hu/
Confucius Institutes Headquarter China http://www.hanban.edu.cn/ (in Chinese language only)
The IFA (Institut für Auslandbeziehungen) has compiled a press review on Confucius in the World and China’s foreign cultural policy: http://www.ifa.de/?id=5788&L=1
Urban Academy is a Goethe-Institut project, developed in the context of the World Expo 2010 with the slogan “Better City – Better Life”. In cooperation with the College of Architecture and Urban Planning (CAUP) at Tongji University, and many other partners, the Urban Academy opened a dialogue platform for issues related to urbanisation and sustainable development, on topics such as zero emissions and passive houses to the role of the family and neighbourhood, the role of art, Feng Shui vs. Modernism – all these were discussed in relation to sustainable urban development. We talked with Wilfried Eckstein, Head of the Culture and Education Section of the Consulate General in Shanghai, who initiated and managed this project. One of the main things he learned from this project was that the success of the Urban Academy could be attributed to the active role of the Chinese curator and to the fact that they did not open political and ideological debates.

In February 2009 the director of the International Design Centre asked the Goethe-Institut for a German participation in the opening of this new centre. We suggested the exhibition “Updating Germany” which was on show at the German Architecture Museum (DAM) in Frankfurt. He asked a Chinese friend who happened to be in Frankfurt to visit the exhibition and decided that this was the kind of content and design he was looking for. The show had been the official German contribution to the Venice Architecture Biennale 2008. The International Design Centre was interested in the topic because of the upcoming Expo 2010.

The curators Matthias Boettger and Friedrich von Borries were flexible and helped to adapt the exhibition for the long journey and a six-month display period. The Design Centre had promised to take the show to three more design centres on the Pacific coast. This did not happen. So, the documentation of 100 best German practices, ideas and vision remained at the Design Centre for six months. The venue was outside the city centre and virtually unknown to the arts and culture scene. So we had to do quite a bit to attract audiences after the opening ceremony. We pulled in schools, university classes and some citizen groups to the exhibition and to our educational programme.

The Urban Academy developed from this exhibition. We were actually looking for a way to bring the content into public discourse. We launched the Urban Academy at the opening in September, where a high-ranking German politician and expert gave a speech. This helped to involve the active participation of high-ranking Chinese officials and decision-makers in this Sino-German dialogue, which from that point we called the Urban Academy.

Talking about Chinese partnerships… from the beginning we were looking for a Chinese curator to contribute. Sustainability is usually understood as a long-term perspective of return on investment. For the Goethe-Institut it is mainly a cultural challenge. With this in mind, we sought advice in the cultural field of Shanghai. We approached the Art Museum, at that time the undisputed leader in questions of art in the public sphere. We were lucky and found mutual understanding. The inextricable links between future development in the Chinese urban context, culture and cultural identity became the basis for our cooperation. “Looking out of the window, Shanghai can be proud of its achievements. The landscape matches Hong Kong or New York; but we want to find our
own way and continue the long tradition of Chinese culture,” stated Shen Qi Bin, director of the then most influential of Shanghai museums, Zendai Museum of Modern Art. China is catching up in the global race but, behind the grand facade of a majestic city panorama, the most urgent pursuit is the quest for Chinese identity.

The Urban Academy was to explore sustainability from all aspects with a focus on culture and an exhibition as its outcome. The working title was “Urban Visions”, later changed to “Updating China”. Shen Qi Bin selected the curator for us: Li Xiangning from the College of Architecture and Urban Planning (CAUP) at Tongji University. We asked the German curator Matthias Boettger to join at three points in the preparation of the exhibition. We did not, however, organise a joint curatorial partnership between the two – for financial reasons, and because we felt this would create different demands and needed a more extended timeframe to develop.

The Urban Academy covered topics such as zero emissions, passive houses. Our panellists talked about climate change, demographic developments, the role of the family and neighbourhood. We discussed the role of art, contrasted Feng Shui with Modernism.

We took advice from experts in technical fields of eco-efficiency, from the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and, above all, from our curator Li Xiangning. We involved urban design institutes, architecture offices like Arup and AS&P, architecture faculties from five universities in Shanghai and Germany. For the dual-use exhibition panels for Zendai, Li Xiangning conceptualised modules about eco-efficiency in buildings, eco-cities, social responsibility in housing, translating history into future, art and public space. This led to the documentation of 40 best practice stories in “Updating China”.

If I reflect on what went really well in the cooperation I would say that we achieved publicity, the exhibition attracted 16,000 visitors, our Urban Academy panels had 3,000 visitors and participants, mainly from architecture and planning backgrounds, art and sociology and audiences interested in culture. With the help of the German Ministry for Construction (BMVBS) we welcomed urban planning representatives from German cities who participated in the discussions. The Urban Academy is viewed as a success. It had a broad approach of technical, social and cultural issues around sustainable urban development. German companies such as Allianz and BASF, Chinese developers like Vanke or Landsea sent their experts. The Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences participated three times. Chinese architects and design institutes and journalists spoke on panels, wrote for blog discussions and voted in juries. Li Xiangning has in the meantime been promoted to full tenure at Tongji and nominated the first director of the Shanghai Architecture Museum, currently under construction. The German Embassy greeted the Urban Academy as model for the continuation of the dialogue about sustainable urban development in 2011.

Thinking about what I learned in this project, I can share that the major emotional challenge in preparing the project was the contract for our cooperation with Zendai. It was about the services provided by the museum and about the allocation of our financial support. We took great personal care to make clear that the contract was an issue of legalising our transfer of money and not a sign of mistrust in our relation with Zendai.

The success of the Urban Academy can be attributed to the active role of the Chinese curator and to the fact that we did not open political and ideological debates. The Urban Academy was from start to finish a search for best practice and how to improve standards. When Shen Qi Bin and the curator selected artists on the basis of their proposals, the
question was how subtly and powerfully each artwork expressed concern for our natural and social environment. The exhibition involved artists and architects. The works clearly conveyed their concern about climate change, the ruthless exploitation of nature and damage to the earth’s surface and in cities in the process of economic development. The outcome was at once relevant, critical and aesthetically appealing.

One other lesson learned: the social question is not driven by a Christian understanding of social justice but by a general concern about security. There is a high degree of responsibility for effective social engineering among architects and urban planners. This was extremely interesting for our German counterparts and generated a common understanding about the problems, but of course different ways of involving the public.

Architects are a relevant group for our cultural dialogue because they know not only the rationales of investors’ interests in getting maximum return on capital. They are also sensitive to the direction in which lifestyle in China is developing: a higher demand for comfort and a healthy life, for non-commercial use of public space, parks, riversides etc.

The drive to determine what the Chinese way(s) of life should look like is a major topic for civil society, state administration and for the party. The quest for cultural identity and sustainability drives the need to develop the future since before the Cultural Revolution. Their practical approach to any topic – including the use of public space – is different from our Western legally-protected individualism. There is no ideological or legal framework to protect the individual against the state interests. There is no institutionalised encouragement of hegemony and no established school to praise negative dialectics. Lateral thinking is not a problem as long as it serves a new design, contributes positively to a new product.

After a successful exhibition with renowned artists selected by Zendai and complemented by four artists from Germany, I would have expected to become a friend within the Zendai network. And yet, to date, we feel rather left out when Zendai invites us to exhibitions. The situation reminds me of somebody saying goodbye to me and walking away without even turning around.

Learn more:
Urban Academy: http://www.goethe.de/ins/cn/lp/kue/arc/ua/deindex.htm
Goethe-Institut China: http://www.goethe.de/ins/cn/lp/deindex.htm
Goethe-Institut Shanghai: http://www.goethe.de/ins/cn/sha/deindex.htm
Reflecting on the Urban Academy by Eva Feng, Shanghai Zendai MoMA

We invited Eva Feng, responsible for External Communication at the Himalayas Art Museum (formerly Shanghai Zendai MoMA) and project manager of “Updating China” to share her perspective on this project cooperation with us. Her article is a reflection after having read Wilfried Eckstein’s report. One of Eva’s observations on the factors important for the success of this project was that it was usually the young Chinese staff from both parties who first understood each other’s situation and made mutual agreement themselves, and then they turned back to explain and persuade their bosses to accept the new proposals. And relating to Wilfried’s main learning, she concludes by agreeing that opening political and ideological debates would be exciting, but he would have to take the risk of censorship. For now, she believes that both parties share the same values – being a constructive worker rather than a tragic hero. And that’s the essence of sustainability.

When Mr. Wilfried Eckstein first visited Zendai Museum of Modern Art in early spring 2009, he was impressed by what we have achieved during the past few years and particularly by our 2008 year-long cross-cultural and interdisciplinary art project “Intrude: Art & Life 366”. He appreciated our practice in introducing art into public space and social life. So when he came up with the idea of “Urban Visions”, he came straight to us to talk about collaboration. It took about nine months to reach the contract signing and another nine months to prepare the exhibition.

If I reflect on the lessons learned from this project, well, Wilfried had talked about the contract between the Goethe-Institut and our museum. I must admit though, the first time I read the draft contract it was really getting on my nerves. Comparing the responsibilities and rights of both parties, I had a strong feeling that the museum was in an inferior situation and it seemed like we were forced to sign an unequal treaty. Then the Goethe-Institut explained to us that it followed the German Consulate’s contract template, which they could not change at all, and that those terms did not mean mistrust. I believe in the sincerity, trust and determination conveyed by our German partner in all the formal and informal meetings throughout the eight to nine months before it came to negotiating the contract. If we got hung up on the terms, it would not help to push things forward. So finally I managed to persuade the museum director to ignore those annoying terms and sign the contract.

The contract has very strict rules regarding the issue of compensation, for example, demanding a bank guarantee, which was the first time we met such a requirement since the opening of the museum. Also I found it annoying because of the unequal terms on Intellectual Property Rights. I can understand that they want to protect the name and logo of Goethe-Institut, but what I cannot understand is why it is only one-way protection. It seems that it is only the Museum that might abuse the Goethe-Institut’s intellectual property rights, while the museum’s name and logo do not need to be protected.

In the collaboration, sometimes being ‘helpful and constructive’ is more important than being ‘correct’. Unlike other foreign partners who just give us the money and aren’t closely involved in the process of realizing projects, from the very beginning, the Goethe-Institut took an active role in the whole process. They participated in discussions to select artists, to finalise the visual image design, make promotion and marketing plans, and of
course contributed different views. The museum has its own way of doing things too. So this collaboration is somehow like a marriage between two people, both of whom have very strong characters. Sometimes our meetings were so heated that they looked like debates. Honestly speaking, I enjoyed being inspired, provoked and challenged by my smart partners. But doing things perfectly always needs more time than we actually have. So, considering the timetable, we had to make compromises from time to time.

The interesting thing was how our effective communication was carried out. It was usually the young Chinese staff from both parties who first understood each other’s situation and made mutual agreements between themselves, and then they turned back to explain and persuade their bosses to accept the new proposals. The same thing happened when we designed the exhibition poster. We encountered a lot of restrictions as the exhibition was sponsored by “Germany and China – Moving Ahead Together”, and the committee had very strict and detailed requirements regarding the branding. Besides all the rules, both parties had their own tastes for what constituted good design. In the end we spent a month finalising the design, which was the most painful memory in the whole process. I had to negotiate with GI while at the same time comforting and persuading my boss to compromise. I think Qinwen (the GI colleague) did the same to her boss too. Fortunately, the final version – as the visual symbol of the project – turned out to be a highlight, which contributed greatly to the marketing and branding of the exhibition. A happy ending.

Wilfried also mentioned that “the success of the project can be attributed to the fact that we did not open political and ideological debates”, on which I cannot agree more. I remember that when discussing culture and art in public space at an Urban Academy seminar, we took as a good example our art project in Pudong International Airport. However, one German speaker and some audience members questioned this, as the artworks installed in the airport are not experimental and thought-provoking enough. They were ‘correct’. But again, it is all about making a choice and we choose to be constructive rather than confrontational. Just think that only ten years ago, contemporary art in China was something ‘underground’, but now these works are acceptable in a public space of the highest security level which serves as a window to the outside world. What progress! If we insisted on putting critical and controversial artworks in the airport, we would get nowhere. I think the same is true when Wilfried made his selection of topics for Urban Academy. Opening political and ideological debates would be exciting, but he would have to take the risk of censorship. And I believe at this point, both of us share the same values – being a constructive worker rather than a tragic hero. And that’s the essence of sustainability.

Last, but not least, from this collaboration, I learned that finding a good partner is more important than finding a good project. It was our great pleasure to work with the Goethe-Institut to realise Urban Academy and Updating China to achieve a win-win result.

Learn more:
Himalayas Art Museum: http://www.himalayasart.cn/
Dr Li Xiangning from Tongji University College of Architecture and Urban Planning was the Chinese partner of the Goethe-Institut in this project. Dr. Li is Assistant Dean and Director of International Programs and Associate Professor in History, Theory and Criticism; he also is the founding director of Shanghai Contemporary Architectural Culture Center. We’d like to highlight two comments by Dr Li. First, by saying “I guess it was some kind of destiny that brought me here at the very right moment”, he refers to the Chinese principle of yuan fen, which we also heard from some other interviewees. Yuan Fen\(^{72}\) is a Buddhist-related Chinese concept that means the predetermined principle that dictates a person’s relationships and encounters, usually positive, such as the affinity among friends. In common usage the term can be defined as the ‘binding force’ that links two people together in any relationship. The Chinese use this word somewhat poetically to describe a meant-to-be relationship. Second, when he says: “If I were to do the project all over again, I would keep more detailed records of the whole process. (…) The process of negotiation towards mutual understanding is as important as the final results, the forums and exhibition”, Dr. Li is in line with the authors’ views. His comments illustrate the core idea of the COMPASS project, intending to contribute to understanding through reflection and documentation of cooperation processes.

In mid-2009, when I was teaching at TU Darmstadt under the Erasmus Mundus programme, I received a phone call from my friend Shen Qibin, director of contemporary Zendai Art Museum, one of the most important art museums in Shanghai. Briefly on the phone, he told me that a curatorial project was waiting for me. After I returned to China, we had a meeting and he introduced me to Wilfried Eckstein, the cultural counsel of Germany and representative of the Goethe-Institut in Shanghai. I was excited to know that I was recommended by Shen Qibin to work with Wilfried on a public forum series (later named Urban Academy) and an exhibition that ended up with the title “Updating China”. Wilfried started by showing me the exhibition catalogue for “Updating Germany: 100 Sustainable Projects in Germany”, and I was surprised to find that I had just visited the exhibition at DAM Frankfurt. I guess it was some kind of destiny that brought me here at the very right moment.

After almost two months of discussion and exchange of ideas, we agreed that I was selected as the curator for the series of dialogues and exhibition. The “Updating China” exhibition was to be the answer to “Updating Germany”, the German contribution to the Venice Biennale 2008 with 100 examples of ecological projects. Here, 40 selected best practices (architecture and urban development) would be presented and 10 groups of artists, architects, designers, and experts from other fields, would be commissioned to do 10 concept installations/art works at the exhibition space and public spaces of the Himalayas Art Museum, one of Shanghai’s future cultural landmarks then under construction.

From the very early development of the forum and exhibition, we bore in mind the differences between the Chinese and German cultural contexts; therefore different categories and approaches with the German exhibition took shape from the very be-

72 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuanfen
ginning. Both Wilfried and I believe that these differences reflect the value of cultural
communication and exchanges and should be considered as a positive when evaluating
the outcomes. Unlike the German exhibition, both the Chinese exhibition and the forum
divided the topics and projects into five categories: Sustainable Urban Planning, Green
Building with Energy-Saving Technologies, Heritage Preservation and Historical Con-
tinuity, Social Equity and Ethics, Sustainability in Art and Culture.

The exhibition and forums turned out to be very successful, while we did face some
challenges:

A change of timeframe and exhibition venue. Because of the uncertainty due to the
unconfirmed completion date for the construction of Himalayas Art Museum, the exhi-
bition had to be flexible and make changes. In the end, we had to move to a tighter space
and time framework. But this is very typical – even representative – of contemporary
Chinese social reality that you always need to deal with uncertainty and you need to
develop a special strategy to cope with that situation.

Although the forums attracted the attention of the general public and architecture
and planning professionals, Chinese artists as a collective group seemed reluctant to
participate in the discussion and dialogue. The expected exchange between Chinese and
German artists never took place at all and this turned out to be a weak point of the whole
event.

The different operational approaches of the Chinese and the Germans were apparent
in many aspects. One example would be the format and programme of the opening events.
The Chinese art museum insisted on picking one artist to talk on behalf of all participating
artists at the opening ceremony, while the German partner believed that no one artist is
special and that a single artist cannot represent others. Although most of the problems
were solved finally, the phenomena are worth reflection afterwards. The most important
thing – no matter who compromises – is both parties tried to rethink their own approach
and the cooperation did lead to changes, more or less, in both parties.

If I were to do the project all over again, I would keep more detailed records of the
whole process, not only the dialogues at the forums, but the in-house and backstage
discussions and sometimes debates among the organising parties, Goethe-Institut, the
Curator and the Art Museum. The process of negotiation towards mutual understanding
is as important as the final results, the forums and the exhibition.

In general, the whole project was very successful. Major parts and materials of the
exhibition were shown again in April 2011 at Iowa State University in the US and, as
curator, I delivered a lecture and presentation on the whole project there. This was a very
well received project, not only between professionals and academics, but also with the
general public. The number of visitors attending the forums and exhibition is a proof of
that. 

Learn more:
Article on Contemporary Chinese Architecture by Dr. Li Xiangning: http://www.gowestproject.com/
about-contemporary-chinese-architecture-chinese-architecture-and-chinese-architects/
Cultural exchanges require a political vision

A conversation with Hou Hanru

Hou Hanru, the world-renowned Chinese independent curator, is a professor at the San Francisco Art Institute and at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. Hou also serves widely on the committees of various art foundations in Europe, Asia and the United States. Some of the influential and large-scale exhibitions he has organised include the Venice Biennale, Shanghai Biennale, Johannesburg Biennale, Pusan Art Festival, Gwangju Biennale and the Lyon Biennale. In this interview, Hou shares with us the lessons learned from curating these international events. COMPASS author and advisor Shen Qilan talked with Hou Hanru about his experiences and his views on Sino-European collaboration. His credo: cultural exchanges require a political vision.

Shen Qilan (Shen): How did you start in Sino-European collaborative art projects?

Hou Hanru (Hou): I went to France in the 1990s and ended up settling there. Sino-European exchange wasn’t foremost on my mind. My work was doing things such as art reviews, exhibitions, etc., which naturally led to me becoming familiar with European artists and seeking support from European institutions to do my work. So I began to come into contact with European institutions.

Shen: What was your first Sino-European collaborative project?

Hou: Among my first projects was the 2000 Shanghai Biennale. Shanghai Art Museum invited me to help with the planning and inviting artists from Europe. At the time, several European countries were involved and I had to deal with many organisations. The next project involving Sino-European exchange was the “Living in Time” exhibition in Berlin’s Hamburger Bahnhof, which can be regarded as a joint project of China’s Ministry of Culture and the German government. When I worked on these projects, I didn’t particularly care whether they were part of an official exchange programme or not. Whenever I tackle a specific project I always seek out unique resources, including some European institutions, official and grassroots sources.

But when I came across projects that transcended personal interest, I would use some special programmes to help certain organisations to establish an exchange mechanism. Take for example the Shanghai Biennale. The purpose was to garner support from European resources through organising the biennale. That way we could highlight certain issues for China: firstly, contemporary art as a cultural activity should receive support from both society and the government; and secondly, demonstrating to Chinese officials the significance of the West’s long term commitment to the arts. Through these projects I hoped to give China some points of reference for establishing a system for the arts.

Shen: I heard planning the Shanghai Biennale that year was particularly difficult. What difficulties did you encounter?

Hou: At that time we encountered all kinds of difficulties. The main one was that we lacked experience so we were cautious with lots of things. Back then, contemporary art remained “illegal activities”. So we needed to think how to introduce contemporary art to public organisations and to the government. We had to consider everything, ranging from the choice of theme, artists, internal and external personnel, resources, as well as public support. This work is a lot of fun and also very meaningful. That's because it isn't only about...
factors relevant to the arts but also about opportunities. It is a timing issue. This of course involved Sino-European cultural exchange. At that time European institutions were also somewhat sceptical. They questioned whether China could pull off this Biennale and whether or not they should throw their support behind it. So it took quite a bit of persuading from us. We’d say to them: “If we can work hard on this together we’ll be sure get it done.” It also took some efforts to lobby for support from some organisations. It entailed both sharing information and tapping into personal relationships. The China of more than a decade ago is nothing like the China of today. Back then it was difficult to accomplish anything. Once something was accomplished it was a significant step forward.

**Shen:** At that time were there any misunderstandings between China and Europe?

**Hou:** There weren’t really any misunderstandings, because the planning became clear step by step. It took time for a programme to take shape. There were no major misunderstandings. This kind of misunderstanding is in fact a process of mutual learning and mutual understanding of each other. For any project like this, one should try to gain the trust of institutions to enable you to be the project organiser. Once this kind of communication is established on a personal level, trust can eliminate any misunderstanding.

**Shen:** So what factors are conducive to building trust? And what personal traits are especially crucial for those engaged in cultural exchange?

**Hou:** First and foremost, when a person puts forward a proposal he must foresee and articulate all impacts and possible consequences. For instance, with the Shanghai Biennale, the organisers had to foresee what was its mission, how the public might support it, how it might shape public opinion across China about contemporary art, how it might change the attitude of public institutions and improve the conditions for contemporary art creation. All these are the positive aspects. This kind of foresight involves long-term strategy. There shouldn’t just be an emphasis on power and money but more on the entire scope of things. It requires analysing and thinking from an academic perspective.

In fact, with all the projects I’ve organised, especially those related to Sino-Europe exchange, I’m always very concerned not only about the effect of the exhibition itself but also its impact on the local culture. So it’s from this perspective I identify the strategies and find appropriate resources.

**Shen:** So one must have a vision in order to tackle things of a significant scale.

**Hou:** It isn’t just about scope, but also about meaning, real meaning. It’s not just for the sake of organising an exhibition, even a big project. Generally speaking, we want to exceed local expectations. That way we make the significance of the project even more lasting. For example, I put together the “Day & Night” exhibition in the Rockbund Art Museum in Shanghai. All the museum wanted from me was to do a good exhibition, but I gave a lot more thought to how to extend a show that would last beyond the exhibition period. While a variety of private art institutions are emerging in China, it requires a longer consideration to position this art museum closer to social reality. So this exhibition could be retitled ‘What an art museum can be’. The exhibition evolved into Art Night at Rockbund and became one of its regular activities and a demonstration project. All this consideration requires the backing of resources and cooperation from different organisations. For instance, when we collaborated with Art World magazine and other organisations, we applied for funding from a number of European foundations. This set a good precedent and smoothed the path for future exhibitions at Rockbund.
Shen: So whenever you do a project you think in terms of planning for a demonstration project?

Hou: I like to leverage a project to explore more long-term possibilities. To realize this requires support for cultural exchange activities. One advantage Europe has over the United States is that culture enjoys public support. That's almost unheard of in the US as cultural activities are nearly all underwritten by individual support. Certainly, there are pros and cons to the respective systems. From the standpoint of fairness and non-utilitarianism, public support for culture in Europe has its merits. But this tradition is endangered because public resources are dwindling. There are also changes in ideology underway that are putting pressure on the entire socialist political system. In Europe, public resources for education and social welfare are diminishing as the economies weaken. How to harness public resources in support of culture has become increasingly challenging. This may be a topic worthy of research for China's institutions.

Shen: When you take on this kind of international collaborative exchange project, do the difficulties and challenges come from China or from Europe?

Hou: To be honest, I haven't encountered great difficulties. Suppose we want to invite an artist or a European organisation to participate, we just need to provide a plane ticket and a bit of money for accommodation – that doesn't take up a lot of resources. Since the expectations aren't high, if we can make it, that's good enough; if we can't, that's all right. The challenge doesn't lie in getting the funding but rather in harnessing resources to support some experimental and critical projects. The challenge lies not in doing something that grabbed fifteen minutes of fame. In the beginning, everyone tends to support what the majority likes and what would be enough to get the fifteen minutes. After a certain point, we must convince some organisations to try out something that the majority may not like to see but it's more sophisticated and critical. That's not an easy challenge.

Shen: Wasn't the Lyon Biennale one such project?

Hou: Yes, certain aspects of the Lyon Biennale were. For example, we included a piece on the protests of illegal immigrants in France. We even invited some illegal African immigrants to the exhibition. This was a real challenge. I didn't face much pressure personally but the pressure the arts organisations encountered was enormous. So the Lyon organiser had to negotiate with certain national departments as well as municipal agencies. For cultural institutions in China to negotiate all this wouldn't be easy. But, since in Europe these institutions enjoy relative independence, freedom of speech is thereby guaranteed.

Shen: Have challenges like this overcome the resistance of institutions, or have they been rebuffed by them?

Hou: Certainly, in Lyon. We saw how those officials faced these challenges; their facial expressions were really interesting. Officials of varying ranks had different reactions. Some were scared, some ran for cover, but some showed a more positive response. This certainly was a challenge. The museum director and his team showed a lot of courage, and I found this very touching. For example, some works at the Guangdong Triennale were very challenging, such as the works of Yang Jiecang. Yang made a performance installation which involved the use of neon sign that read: "We can do anything well, just can't speak good Mandarin." This work was at the time very controversial. But then director Wang Huansheng was very supportive. So it wasn't easy. At the Guangzhou Triennial we also created a Pearl Delta laboratory called D-lab. Through this Triennal, it has become a permanent exhibit of the
Guangdong Museum of Art and a fixture in future triennials. We managed to accomplish a lot of interesting things under the most trying circumstances in China. In this kind of exchange project, the key lies in the people involved and the subject matter, as well as the intended targets. There are no fixed rules and no one-size-fits-all principles. The key lies in gaining the understanding and support of the cultural bureaucrats.

Shen: So could you share your experience in dealing with cultural bureaucrats? How to win their support and understanding?

Hou: First and foremost, wine and dine them. Wining and dining is part of the process. The cultural bureaucrats in Europe, such as those in France, are educated bureaucrats. Generally speaking they are people you can hold a conversation with and some might be in your field. They’ve done art criticism, received higher education and later became mid-level decision-makers, including those running European cultural foundations. These people are easier to deal with. If they have no funding they’d tell you honestly. If they do, they will lend support to whatever projects you’re doing that they can comprehend. In China it’s easy to win support. That’s because China is now in a state of awakening, giving exposure to some opportunism. If you go to a mid-sized country to do things, that can be hard. But now in China there’s an unprecedented opportunity to do things that you cannot accomplish elsewhere. This can be a build-up but also a demonstration. So from this perspective, there is no ready-made formula. Each project must await its judgement day. Every time I accept a project, I adhere to my own work habits to judge the project based on the opportunities. I look at what opportunities are available out there; money, to me, is secondary. How much money can be made is not the key factor. Of course I need to make a living but that’s not the most important thing. What is most important is: what is the meaning of it all? And what would it mean in three, five years down the road? If you can clearly articulate this, support will come naturally. So in the end, employ a long-term strategy and adopt a political vision in place of make-a-quick-buck opportunism. I feel that with this kind of vision cultural exchanges can be smooth.

Shen: Can you tell us what the meaning of the 2001 exhibition was?

Hou: The 2001 exhibition was entirely a fluke. As with many things, expectations and outcomes are two different things, but this was still a process of mutual understanding. In 2001, Germany hosted the Chinese Cultural Festival in Berlin and it planned to mount an exhibition in the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum. But at that time the museum wanted to do a contemporary art exhibition so they sought me out. I represented the German side and China sent their then Cultural Attaché, Chen Ping. Germany asked me to handle the planning and the Chinese side charged Fan Di’an with the organising. China’s Ministry of Culture supported the project, which was the first time ever for the ministry to organise a Chinese contemporary art exhibition in a foreign country under its banner. So it was an interesting set-up. Although the exhibition ran only three to four months, the results were very good, as was the public response.

So then what was the significance of this project? The Ministry of Culture bore the responsibility for the project and came to the conclusion that “Supporting contemporary art is a good thing”. On the one hand, they gained credit for their accomplishment, and on the other hand, they gained self-confidence. Soon after, China attended the Venice Biennale with its China Pavilion. This is a chain reaction, and the chain has naturally been extended. Therefore, it is important to make an effort within the system. A project needs coordination from both inside and outside of the system. And that has much to do with
individual efforts. The success of the Shanghai Biennale was undeniably attributed to Xu Jiang. Cultural officials from China and the West need mutual trust and cooperation in order to influence the establishment of significant policies. When it comes to decision-making we need their input.

**Shen:** So is the situation now as it was in the past? Or are there new challenges?

**Hou:** I think this phase has passed. At that time they wanted to try new things, but now gradually they all want to make money. At this moment, the ‘significance’ of the beginning is over. So now here comes another challenge: how to make cultural and educational needs of a non-utilitarian nature palatable to society? Our next step will involve criticism of vested interest groups. Any meaningful cultural practice is a criticism of vested interests.

Of course, some people think such challenges are pointless and would rather focus on improving daily lives. But, for me, it’s become harder to find public and private resources to support these projects because we no longer share the same motivation. So you need a smarter way to find resources.

**Shen:** You actually have bigger ambitions. Art is the means by which you engage society.

**Hou:** Art is the means, and also the end. The thing about art is that it’s inseparable from real life in our society. But art will also form its own system of reality and exhibit its own authenticity. Criticism of social issues will form a reality and affect our real life. These are parallel and crossover relationships. Art, of course, is a means to engage society but it isn’t a material intervention, rather an intellectual intervention, a cultural intervention. Art is not merely a means for propaganda or criticism.

**Shen:** How do you find the right artists in China and Europe to collaborate with?

**Hou:** This is a product of academic research and a long-established process. For example, when I have a project, I first need to have a clear understanding of the development of the arts, the significant art works, the best artists out there, the most inspiring ones and the most moving ones. Then I go on to study them. During the process of study, I gradually get to know them and develop partnerships. This naturally forms a circle. Later on when I have a project, I’ll tap into this database and seek out the desirable partners, then develop the ideas for the project, consider the immediate and long-term significance and solicit some resources to realise this project.

For me, the raison d’être of an artist is to do everything he can to oppose his cultural context. The artist and his cultural context must stand in confrontation in order to promote changes. This is the meaning of an artist. Otherwise, he will become a lapdog. So even if an artist is at home, he shouldn’t feel at home but like in self-imposed exile. This is the natural state for intellectuals.

**Shen:** In your opinion, is language barrier a problem in promoting China’s contemporary art? If so, why?

**Hou:** It depends on how you look at it. Cai Guoqiang, for instance, deliberately doesn’t converse in English, so he turns the language barrier in his favour. He mystifies everything he does and everything requires translating, and that in turn makes him come across authoritative. So it all depends on how you use the disadvantages and advantages of the language barrier. The key is not whether you are good at languages, but whether you have substance in your thinking.

**Shen:** What prejudices does the Chinese cultural structure harbour against Europe’s cultural institutions?
Hou: The issue is not about prejudices. The problem facing China’s cultural institutions is how to accept their own responsibilities and mission. In a lot of collaborations the Chinese believe that it’s for the Europeans to dig into their pockets to do things, but the Chinese lack awareness and reflection on why they undertake such a project. So these are their own prejudices against themselves rather than Europe. China’s institutions should accept their own responsibilities.

Shen: What do you think are the prospects for Sino-European collaboration in art exhibitions?

Hou: Certainly there’ll be more and more projects, and the more definitely the better. After a certain quantity, a certain quality will emerge.

Shen: What experience from your long years of practice would you most want to share with us?

Hou: Appreciate good works of art, and do not think about too many things. Learning to appreciate a piece of art work is very fundamental, but it’s something not many people have mastered. Sometimes when I talk to my colleagues I find that they don’t quite understand many works of art. They only look for known artists. That’s a problematic attitude toward their line of work. In the business we’re in, if you do not fall in love with art, then quit. I always tell my Chinese colleagues to recover their true love. For my European colleagues, I’d say get beyond the superficial understanding of Chinese art, just like reporters who see art as only a cultural phenomenon but do not have a love affair with art. They also need to develop this love affair. Chinese artists also have to work hard to produce some lovely things for people to fall in love with; otherwise, art results in a shallow consumer relationship.
Creating Spaces – Art bridge between the EU and China

We talked to Marianna Kajantie of the City of Helsinki Cultural Office, who coordinated the project “Creating Spaces – Art bridge between EU and China”. This cultural cooperation project ran for two years 2008–2010 and linked 3 European cities – Helsinki, Tallinn and Stockholm – with Beijing through artists’ residencies and exchanges on the theme of environmental art. The project was funded under the EU Culture Programme 2007–2013 – Strand 1.3: Special actions – Cultural cooperation with and in third countries (EACEA 21/200774). In spite of problems establishing a genuine open collaboration at the start, the project partners learned from the process and established better communications for the selection criteria in the second phase.

Europe-China Compass (ECC): First of all, how did you get the idea for this project in China?

Marianna Kajantie (MK): The City of Helsinki has a history of projects with China – we hold an annual festival of Asian Art and celebrate the Chinese New Year in collaboration with the Chinese Embassy and Finnish-Chinese Society. The theme chosen was based on mobility programmes. We felt it was important to support exchanges on a personal level between the Baltic region (Finland-Sweden-Estonia) and China. We adapted the format from existing artists’ residencies and set up 3-month residencies in collaboration with universities. This gave selected artists a professional environment where they could integrate, they gave lectures and common projects emerged.

We chose the theme of environmental art as a neutral ground where the strong traditions of both cultures would not be too evident in the process.

ECC: What do you mean by that exactly? Did you try to avoid cultural differences in order to avoid potential conflicts? Was this a strategy of trying to start on a basis of commonalities?

MK: Painting, graphics and crafts have a strong tradition in the way they are taught in each country. We considered including photography, but felt that the process of working together for a common production might have been problematic. Environmental art gave a more open framework and was a fruitful base for discussions. This was the opinion of the professors on both sides.

We did not have a well-defined goal – rather, we wanted to find out what difficulties are involved in such collaboration. There were lessons learned both on individual and institutional levels. The project was a test-bed for future mobility actions seeking to bring together Chinese and European artists.

ECC: Which partners were involved in the project and how did the partnerships evolve?

MK: We didn’t do any special research to find partners. It was based on existing contacts between the universities and the coordinator’s knowledge, who had studied at Tsinghua University in Beijing. We had an institutional partnership with the Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University, developed through direct contacts with Professor Su Dan, the Director of the University. He has visited Helsinki, so he was the first link, and he speaks English.

The Beijing Cultural Bureau was our official partner in China. We needed them for the bureaucracy and the municipal level also seemed important for the university – this

74 This strand of the EU Culture Programme 2007-2013 takes one or more countries around the world as the focus for EU cultural cooperation projects. In 2007, the call was for EU projects with China and/or India – 13 projects were funded (10 with partners in China). Results: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/culture/funding/2007/selection/documents/selection_strand_13_2007/eacea_21_2007_results_en.pdf
is one difference in business culture. The Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture signed the agreement and helped with some of the funding.

**ECC:** Who were your European partners? How did the EU collaboration work?

**MK:** Through the City of Stockholm Cultural Department, we worked with Liljevalchs Art Museum, and in Tallinn with the City Cultural Office. The partners that we already knew before the project were strongly involved, whereas those who responded to a partner search seemed more distant in the preparation discussions. You had to have some knowledge about Chinese culture and an interest in learning more. The EU awarded the funding and was very rigorous with the financial administration. China could not be funded directly, but we could through service provision. We were asked to give a talk at a European Commission meeting in Brussels, presenting projects funded by the EU Culture Programme. We were the only project in Asia out of about a hundred presentations.

**ECC:** What challenges did you face in the process? And how did you deal with them?

**MK:** The selection of artists was made through the university professors. In general, the artists’ personal motivations to join the project were more distinctive for the artists from the Baltic region than for the Chinese artists.

The art projects had problems developing a genuine collaboration at the beginning. We found that the artists had decided what they wanted to do before they left to travel to the residency. So the actual original intention of creating a common result ended up with separate works in the final exhibition for the first round of residencies.

**ECC:** What do you think caused these problems? What would you do differently another time?

**MK:** We should have a thorough interview with the potential artists and explore their motivations. And not have a selection process based just on their work. So yes, that is a lesson learned. Just to give you an example, one of the artists – a wonderful environmental artist actually – wanted to go and heal the wounds of the Chinese caused by the terrible ending of the 1989 demonstration in Tiananmen Square.

The second phase of the project was far better, when the organisers could express their wishes more strongly in the selection. So, in the first round, we felt that the organisers had not communicated clearly enough and ‘checking interests and intentions’ was a lesson we learned for the second round.

**ECC:** How would you summarize the lessons learned from the project and what kind of tips would you like to share with others/newcomers?

**MK:** In a previous mobility project in the Baltic region, with an exchange of civil servants, it was evident that all partners should be very well aware of their responsibilities, both as sending and receiving partners. This was also true with the artists. When the project is about collaboration, you have to adjust to it… you have to want it and not have ready-made ideas you are not willing to share. It is not a study tour or a longer stay in a foreign country.

I do think that process was an excellent journey for everybody involved, but not in the same way for everyone. The project report gives a good picture and I would love to do it all over again.

Learn more:
- Creating Spaces: [http://www.creatingspaces.info](http://www.creatingspaces.info)
Artistic Recycling: nothing disappears, everything is transformed – a Spanish project in China

For David Ocón from the Instituto Cervantes in Beijing, Chinese language is crucial for successful projects in China. He says: “To get closer to Chinese audiences, translation into Chinese is key.” David also stresses the importance of social networking and the internet: “In a society as young and internet-savvy, promotion through blogs, mini-blogs, discussion forums is vital.” COMPASS editor Katja Hellkötter (KH) talked to David Ocón (DO) about a project on artistic recycling.

KH: Let’s talk first about how you got the idea for an Artistic Recycling project in China?

DO: We thought it was an innovative idea. The exhibition concept was to bring artworks made of recycled materials to China. And to establish a dialogue with works by Chinese artists to see differences, similarities, parallels etc. Our aim was to put together a contemporary exhibition, presenting a relevant topic and helping establish dialogue between Chinese and Spanish artists, which would also look beautiful. At Instituto Cervantes Pekin we try to bring to China exhibitions with the potential to present an attractive, contemporary topic to Chinese society, provoking discussion and critical thinking.

Costs were shared between Instituto Cervantes, the Embassy of Spain in PR China, the International Recycling Art Festival of Catalunya (Drap-Art) and, thanks to the support of some key art galleries in China who lent works free, there was a strong Chinese connection.

We didn’t do any actual audience research but there was a great deal of observation of our surroundings. We see in our daily reality the enormous transformation China is experiencing, the unstoppable growth. That growth of course also has costs, in many cases for the environment, the huge amount of metal, plastic, paper, etc. needed for that speed of economic and social development. In consequence there is also a huge production of waste. However in China, quite amazingly, almost everything can be recycled – iron, aluminium, plastic bottles, cans. Materials often have second, even third lives. But usually the recycling stage is ‘economic survival’ for groups in society who live on what others discard. And, although it somehow works, it is not a conscious recycling green movement. People haven’t been educated to recycle so, while someone might recycle a plastic bottle to get money back, the same person might throw rubbish on the streets or in the fields that has no value.

We also used our intuition with this exhibition. We felt it would be liked by Chinese audiences, especially young people.

KH: Which partners were involved in the project and how did your partnerships evolve?

DO: We had Spanish and Chinese partners. The main core of the exhibition was in collaboration with the International Recycling Art Festival of Catalunya (Drap-Art) who helped us to bring over works by artists from Spain and Latin America. One of the keys for the venture’s extraordinary success was the great involvement with our Chinese partners - three Beijing art galleries: Red Gate Gallery, Egg Gallery and Pékin Fine Arts. They helped us identify works by Chinese artists also exploring connections between art and recycling and using waste materials. Audiences were very surprised to discover their own Chinese artists at the exhibition and see the excellent quality of their work.

The selection process was both artistic and practical. We couldn’t bring huge works to China – too expensive and complicated. But through our collaboration partners, the largest pieces came from Beijing, lent by the Chinese galleries. Therefore transportation costs were minimal and we only had to pay insurance.
The exhibition was in two parts. First, a selection of works by Spanish and Latin American artists was exhibited at the ART Beijing International Contemporary Art Fair. Then all the works, including those by Chinese artists Bai Yiluo, Li Xiaofeng, Liu Guangyun and Sun Jiaxin, were presented at the Instituto Cervantes Pekín exhibition space.

KH: What challenges did you face and how did you deal with them?

DO: The main challenges were coordination to get everything ready on time, between our partners in Spain and Beijing. Then there were also transportation issues. Some of the works were very fragile, made of recycled elements already used once or twice before.

KH: How did you communicate and market the project to Chinese audiences?

DO: We translated all the exhibition information into Chinese. This is essential when working in China. While Instituto Cervantes’ aim is the promotion of Spanish language and culture in Spanish, in a country like China we cannot expect to achieve this with one-way communication. It is important to establish dialogue and exchange with Chinese society in order to achieve your goals. To get closer to Chinese audiences, translation to Chinese is key. It is a first step towards them, a gesture.

In a society as contemporary, young and internet-savvy, promotion through blogs, mini-blogs, discussion forums, etc. is vital. Our extensive database has over 8,000 contacts. That helps.

KH: What were the success factors in this project?

DO: The dialogue established between the Chinese and Spanish partners. I think the audience could feel in the show the curatorial exchange between the partners. The quality of the work, both Spanish and Chinese: visitors were very impressed by the artists’ ideas, by what artists could achieve with almost nothing, using waste materials. The layout in both spaces, ART Beijing and Instituto Cervantes Pekin, was very attractive and creative.

The communication and dissemination of information: we did dozens of interviews for radio, TV, internet platforms, which kept the ball rolling for almost two months while the show was on. The Chinese galleries also did a good job distributing exhibition information to their contacts.

KH: Anything new you learned about recycled art and eco-art through this project?

DO: Definitely. Firstly that almost anything can be recycled. A second life can be given to things that were considered as waste. Then, the importance of promoting creative thinking – something essential in a country like China, with its amazing exponential growth, that produces a proportional amount of waste. While recycling is often visible on the streets here, frequently due to economic reasons, there is not so much thinking about the environment. We wanted to tell people that recycling is a good thing and can also be fun. If you think creatively, you can even make artworks. Some of the exhibition pieces reached prices of US$ 150,000 - another important message for visitors. We got more than 10,000 exhibition visitors, including many schools and we did recycling workshops. The importance of communicating with local partners: we achieved a real dialogue with local audiences and enlarged our scope.

Learn more:

Instituto Cervantes Pekín: http://pekin.cervantes.es/FichasCultura/Ficha72419_64_1.htm
Drap-Art International Recycling Art Festival: www.drapart.org
LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

In depth structured interviews were carried out with the following people for the COMPASS project either orally in face to face meetings or by skype/phone or in writing via email between October 2010 and May 2011. This list does not include additional interviewees who were contacted by external COMPASS article authors who wrote for part II, III and IV of the COMPASS.

- Ellen Adriaanssen, Netherlands China Arts Foundation (The Netherlands)
- Dieter Baumann, choreographer & dancer, Rubato Dance Company, Berlin (Germany)
- Joanna Burke, Director China, British Council Beijing (UK/China)
- Farooq Chaudhry, dance producer and choreographer, Akram Khan Company (UK)
- CHEN Ping, Director, Division of West European Affairs, Bureau of External Cultural Relations, Ministry of Culture (China)
- CHEN Zhe, Vice Director, National Development and Reform Commission, International Cooperation Center, Research Institute for Creative Industries, Beijing (China)
- CUI Qiao, Arts and Cultural Manager, Beijing (China)
- DAI Xiaodong, Professor for Intercultural Communication, Shanghai Normal University (China)
- Julia Dautel, Head of International Cultural Exchange, Ministry of Culture and Media, Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg (Germany)
- Claire-Lise Dautry, Director, Sino-French Business College, Suzhou, China & former Director, Alliance Française, Shanghai (France/China)
- Kathrin Deventer, Secretary General, EFA – European Festivals Association, Brussels (Belgium)
- Mary Ann DeVlieg, Secretary General, IETM – International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts, Brussels (Belgium)
- DONG Junxin, Ministry of Culture, People’s Republic of China, former Cultural Attaché, Chinese Embassy Berlin (China)
- DONG Jinming, Nanjing International Jazz Festival (China)
- Wilfried Eckstein, Head of Culture and Education Section, German Consulate General Shanghai/Goethe-Institut, Germany (Germany / China)
- FAN Di’An, Director, National Art Museum of China, Beijing (China)
- FANG Tony, Professor of Business Administration, School of Business Stockholm University & Visiting Professor at Europe China Institute, Nyenrode Business University, The Netherlands (China/Sweden/The Netherlands)
- FENG Eva, External Communication Manager, Himalayas Art Museum, Shanghai (China)
- Nelson Fernandez, NFA International Arts and Culture (UK)
- Erika Fischer-Lichte, Professor of Drama, Humboldt University in Berlin (Germany)
- Alison Friedman, Director and Founder of Ping Pong Productions (USA)
- Gabriele Goldfuss, Dr., Head of Division, Department for International Cooperation of the City of Leipzig (Germany)
- Andreas Guder, Dr., Head of Department for Chinese Language Studies, East Asian Institute, Free University Berlin (Germany)
- Anke Haarmann, Dr., private curator, artist, philosopher, Hamburg (Germany)
- David Haley, Dr., ecological artist & Senior Research Fellow, Faculty of Art & Design, Manchester Metropolitan University (UK)
- Jutta Hell, choreographer & dancer, Rubato Dance Company (Germany)
- Marcus Hernig, Dr., author, trainer, Associate Professor, Cross-Cultural Studies, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou (Germany/China)
HOU Hanru, independent curator, Professor, San Francisco Art Institute & the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Antwerp (China / USA / Belgium)

Dieter Jaenicke, Artistic Director, HELLERAU – European Center for the Arts Dresden (Germany)

Michael Kahn-Ackermann, Director Goethe-Institut, China (Germany / China)

Simon Kirby, Director, Chambers Fine Art Gallery, Beijing (UK / China)

Monique Knappen, China Programme Director, SICA – Dutch Centre for International Cultural Activities (The Netherlands)

KWONG Wai-Lap, Programme Director, Guangdong Modern Dance Festival (China)

LAI Zhijin, Prof., Director, Confucius Institute Leipzig (China / Germany)

Charles Landry, Founder of Comedia, creative city expert and thinker (UK)

Kristina Leipold, cultural manager, finance management expert, Berlin/Beijing (Germany/China)

LI Fangxia, Government Officer, Europe & Africa Division, Foreign Affairs Office, City of Shanghai (China)

LI Xiangning, Ph.D., Assistant Dean & Director of International Programs, Associate Professor in History, Theory and Criticism, Tongji University College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Founding Director, Shanghai Contemporary Architectural Culture Center (China)

Georg Lindt, writer, producer (UK/Germany)

LIU Wei, Dr., Associate Professor, German Department, Fudan University (China)

MENG Hong, Prof. Dr., German Research Center, Renmin-University of China (China)

Eric Messerschmidt, Director, Danish Cultural Institute, Beijing (Denmark / China)

Ralf Moritz, Prof. (Emeritus), East Asian Institute, University of Leipzig & former Director, Confucius Institute Leipzig (Germany)

Peter Moser, Artistic Director, More Music (UK)

Ágota Révész, Consul for Culture and Education, Consulate General of the Republic of Hungary, Shanghai (Hungary / China)

Gergely Salát, Assistant Professor, Department of Chinese Studies, ELTE University, Budapest (Hungary)

Klaus Siebenhaar, Dr., Professor, Founder of the Institute for Arts and Media Management, Free University of Berlin (Germany)

Mark Siemons, Cultural Correspondent, FAZ – Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Beijing (Germany / China)

Richard Sobey, creative strategist, Director of IOU (UK)

Axel Tangerding, Director, Meta Theatre, Munich (Germany)

Richard Trappl, Prof. Dr., University of Vienna (Austria)

Bloeme van Roemburg, Artistic Coordinator for music/performing arts/film & literature, Europalia China, Europalia, Brussels (Belgium)

Katelijn Verstraete, Deputy Director Cultural Department, ASEF – Asia-Europe Foundation (Singapore/Belgium)

WANG Anyi, President, Shanghai Writers Association (China)

WANG Ge, Dr., philosopher, Fellow at the Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy for the Social Sciences (China)

WANG Hong Tu, Prof., Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Fudan University (China)

WANG Jing Bartz, Dr., Manager of Hachette-Phoenix Publishing Joint Venture, Beijing (China)

Neil Webb, Director Arts & Creative Industries – East Asia, British Council, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam & formerly British Council China (UK / Vietnam)

Roman Wilhelm, Graphic Designer, Member of the Multilingual Research Group, design2context Institute for Design Research, Zurich University of the Arts (Germany/Switzerland)

XU Jiang, Prof., Director, National Academy of Arts Hangzhou, Zhejiang (China)

YU Nick Rongjun, playwright, Deputy General Manager, Producer and Director of Studio & Arts Department, Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre (China)

Klaus Zehelein, Professor, Bavarian Theatre Academy, Munich (Germany)

ZHOU Bing, cultural manager, intercultural trainer, Beijing (China)
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These texts on selected art disciplines and thematic fields do not attempt to present a comprehensive overview, but rather a snapshot of what is happening in different cultural fields between Europe and China. This reflects the goal of the Compass publication, providing information on a broad range of knowledge areas crucial for Europe-China cultural cooperation: context knowledge, project process knowledge and knowledge of what is happening in Europe-China exchange in the art disciplines. For more perspectives from the arts disciplines see, for example, the 2011 publication commissioned by Goethe-Institut with The House of World Cultures, Berlin on Contemporary Artists from China, portraying 30 young Chinese artists from different disciplines – for German and Chinese language readers: Knopp, Hans-Georg, Odenthal, Johannes, Positionen 3: Zeitgenössische Künstler aus China (Positions 3: Contemporary Artists from China), commissioned by Goethe-Institut and Haus der Kulturen der Welt (The House of World Cultures, Berlin), Publishing House: Steidl, Goettingen, ISBN 978-3-86521-974-9, First Edition, 2011.
Dialogue is the Most Important Theme of Our Time — a retrospective view of Sino-European exchanges in visual culture and a look ahead

Shen Qilan


disciplines / themes: selected perspectives

History

Encounters between the visual cultures of China and Europe date back to the 17th century, when the Italian missionary Matteo Ricci had an audience with the Shenzong Emperor (reign: 1573–1620) of the Ming Dynasty. Among the tributes he offered to the Emperor were a few portraits. Due to this he was considered to be the first person to introduce Western art to China.

The eastward spread of Western art is a key term in the history of exchanges in visual cultures between China and Europe. The court painter academy was the main venue for exchanges in visual cultures between China and Europe. Initially such exchanges adopted a high society approach, which was also inextricably linked to the identities of those participating in such exchanges. They were often missionaries for whom the primary task was to win the confidence of the ruling elite in order to pave the way for further missionary work. Indeed they were able to achieve a certain level of exchange in visual arts. Matteo Ripa, who introduced the Western art of etching, and Giuseppe Castiglione, who promoted the technique of perspective in China, were two eminent examples. However, these well-known missionaries faced severe restrictions on their activities. Despite their high profile in historical records, their impact on painting was confined to the imperial palace, and was hardly felt in the visual art of the common people.

By the 19th century, when Shanghai was forced open as a trading port, Joannes Ferrer and Nicola Massa, two missionaries from Spain and Italy respectively, set up a studio in the city’s Xujiahui district (qu) to teach sculpture and painting. Their studio was to become known as the Institute of Arts and Crafts in T’ou-Se-We, the first institution to promote Western painting on a large scale in the history of Sino-Europe exchange in visual culture. Since then the eastward spread of Western art has undergone a process of systematisation. The public now had access to European oil painting by means of an art education.

The missionaries’ experience revealed the two poles of the tension in exchanges in visual culture between China and Europe, namely the Establishment and the Public. When the cultural institutions of an exchange programme tended to adopt a pro-establishment approach, their impact would barely be felt by the general public.

The Soviet Union was the main country taking part in exchanges in visual culture with China in the 1950s. K.M. Maksimov, a Soviet oil painter, was a professor at the China Central Academy of Fine Arts, where the classes under his tutelage were called the ‘Maksimov Training Class’, and were attended by many major Chinese artists of today, including Jin Shangyi and Hou Yimin. In addition, Eugen Popa, the Romanian oil painter, had a deep impact on a group of artists, including Luo Zhongli and Wang Guangyi, through his training class.

However, the exchanges in visual culture between China and Europe that really left an impact on the course of development of the history of contemporary Chinese art took place after the 1980s.
Phases of Sino-European exchange in visual culture

In an interview, Fan Di'an suggested that China's cultural exchanges post-1979 could be divided into phases. He said: "Since the opening up and reforms, artistic exchanges between China and Europe have taken on ever closer and more frequent relationships, especially in the category of visual art. Three trends can clearly be observed: firstly, a great many large-scale exhibitions of classical and modern Western art since China was opened up to the world, such as the landscape school from the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, German expressionist paintings, British watercolours, classical and modern Spanish art, etc. Such exhibitions provided Chinese artists with immediate opportunities of studying the history of Western art at close quarters, not only in terms of an art historical perspective, but also with inspiration from concrete techniques and styles, as evidenced by the then prevalent ambition to emulate Western art which was to dramatically transform the relationship between Chinese and World art. Secondly, since the 1990s, Documenta Kassel and the Venice Biennale have invited many Chinese artists to exhibit their works, mostly under the auspices of international curators. Regardless of the impression these artists made on Western audiences, we can safely conclude that at least an exchange mechanism for contemporary art on this level has been established between both sides. Thirdly, since the start of the 21st century, more channels of exchange such as galleries and art fairs have further perpetuated this trend. In Beijing and Shanghai there are many European galleries. They have brought contemporary art from Europe to China and Chinese contemporary art to the West. We're talking about the level of art characterised by consumption, namely collection and appreciation."

To get the full meaning of Fan Di'an's words, we need to understand a few important events and phases:

I. 1980s to early 1990s: Chinese contemporary art goes out to the world
Since the 1980s, some of the major artists started to travel overseas. In 1989, Gu Dexin, Huang Yong Ping and Yang Jiecang were invited to exhibit at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. In July 1990, the Chine Demain Pour Hier show, curated by Fei Dawei, took place in Pourrières. At the time it was the largest exhibition in the West devoted to Chinese contemporary Art.

1993 was a very important year. Hanart TZ in Hong Kong, presided over by Johnson Chang, staged China's New Art Post-1989, which was first housed in Hong Kong Art Centre before a tour around Australia. The exhibition featured over fifty artists. In June the same year, thirteen Chinese artists accepted the Italian art critic, Achille Bonito Oliva's invitation to participate in the 45th Venice Biennale. This was the first time that Chinese contemporary artists took part in such exhibition.

These two events marked the beginning of Chinese contemporary artists going out into the international art arena as a group. Chinese contemporary art has since been accepted en masse by the international art community. Chinese artists started to get acquainted with major international curators, critics, collectors, galleries and journalists and had regular opportunities in the art world. The efforts of Hanart Gallery and the presentation of those artists participating in the Venice Biennale shaped the Western world's modes of defining, accepting and interpreting Chinese contemporary art.
II. Late 1990s: Chinese contemporary art as the bridge to understanding China
Since 1993, exchanges in visual culture between China and Europe started to gather pace. Contemporary Chinese artists were touring the world. In 1998, Gao Minglu curated *Inside Out: New China Art* at the Asia Society in New York and MoMA PS1. The exhibition toured from New York to Los Angeles and Seattle, gaining considerable critical acclaim, with an emphasis on topical issues such as social transformation, modernity and the identity of contemporary art in China. Chinese contemporary art has gradually become a bridge to understanding China.

In 1999, Harald Szeemann invited more than twenty Chinese artists to take part in the 48th Venice Biennale. Cai Guoqiang’s Venice’s Rent Collection Courtyard won him a Golden Lion. This had a huge impact on China’s domestic art circles. Chinese artists came to realise the significance of ‘international art exhibitions’. The exchanges and exhibitions of this kind meant more attention and room for sustained development, and wider renown, as well as the right to discourse, which was considered rather precious and in short supply at the time.

The modes of defining, exhibiting and interpreting Chinese contemporary art constituted by such exchanges also had repercussions across Asia, Australasia and Africa in terms of exhibiting and critical approaches towards Chinese contemporary art. This was one of the upshots of Sino-European exchanges in visual art and culture.

III. Multi-level exchanges since 2000
Since 2000, Chinese contemporary art has completed the transformation from being marginalised to a greater level of official recognition and support. There have been several officially sanctioned grand exhibitions as well as collaborations between independent bodies and corporate institutions, which have furnished artists with more opportunities. As individuals, artists have also gradually got used to a more cosmopolitan society. The Shanghai Biennale no doubt provides a success story that has greatly improved the circumstances and prestige of contemporary art with the Chinese public.

As Fan Di’an has aptly put it, “Since 2000, the Chinese government has been actively engaged in promoting cultural exchanges, honouring them with an unprecedented place in its foreign affairs. The government has realised that the cultural platform could create a pleasant atmosphere of cultural exchange in which issues of political and economic significance and bilateral relations can unfold. We often say that culture is a good platform. When bilateral relations are relaxed, culture adds to the ease. When tensions arise, culture also provides a channel of communication.”

Thus in October 2001, Cai Guoqiang curated a multimedia landscape art fireworks show for the APEC summit in Shanghai, a first governmental attempt to combine official diplomacy with contemporary art. 2003 saw the Chinese government establish a China Pavilion at the 50th Venice Biennale, for the first time in the biennale’s history. This signalled an active attitude on the part of the Chinese government, which was just starting to take part in international art exhibitions. The fact that Chinese contemporary art has been integrated into the circulation and collecting mechanisms of global contemporary art is inextricable from the exchanges between China and Europe.

*Drivers of Sino-European exchanges in visual art: collecting, research and exhibition*
Many drivers have contributed greatly to the exchanges in visual art between China and Europe. Uli Sigg is the first European to systematically collect Chinese contemporary art.
When he realised that there was no private or institutional effort in China to collect or catalogue these art works systematically, he decided to fill the gap. Sigg's European mindset is reflected in the extremely thorough approach of his collection which ranges from painting, photography, video and installation to performance art. He founded the Chinese Contemporary Art Awards (CCAA) to promote Chinese artists on the global stage. His official position as the Swiss Ambassador to China also helped bring curators of international renown into contact with Chinese artists.

Through collecting, the Belgian Baron Guy Ullens has offered many young aspiring artists their first ever support, livelihood and encouragement to continue with creative work. In October 2002, Paris/Beijing: Chinese Contemporary Art Exhibition opened at the Pierre Cardin Art Centre in Paris. This was the largest exhibition of Chinese contemporary art in Europe of its time. He also founded Ullens Centre of Contemporary Art (UCCA), which was to become the centre of art and culture of Beijing.

Another form of Sino-European exchange is the introduction of the market mechanism. ShanghART Gallery, established by Lorenz Helbling, was for a time the only contemporary art gallery in Shanghai to which collectors both home and abroad would pay a visit. In 2000, ShanghART Gallery took part in Art Basel, a sure sign that China's contemporary art was making a formal entry into the global art market and gaining wide recognition. Needless to say, Helbling set a fine example for the gallery institution in Chinese contemporary art.

In addition, several European scholars and independent writers have been conducting research and writing about Chinese contemporary art. They pioneered the effort to provide considerable intellectual resources for anyone trying to understand Chinese contemporary art. In the mid-1980s, Hans van Dijk came to China to research and promote Chinese contemporary art as well as to curate exhibition tours in Europe, which greatly helped the integration of Chinese contemporary art into the global context. Since the 1980s, the Italian Monica Dematte has started to focus on Chinese contemporary art, been in close contact with Chinese artists and produced serious art criticism. The American Robert Bernell established the website 'Chinese Art Online', which was once the most professional website about Chinese art in English. These international 'drivers' will be remembered for their important roles in the history of artistic exchange. These would include also those who do not live in China but are committed to the promotion of Chinese contemporary art, such as the German Wolfger Poehlmann.

Outside China, international research groups have started to be established around the subject of Chinese contemporary art, with the art history departments of some European and American universities setting up archive centres devoted to Chinese contemporary art, thereby contributing to cultural exchanges in visual art between China and Europe.

In 2010, the annual meeting of CIMAM (International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art) was held in Shanghai, roughly at the same time as the 8th Shanghai Biennale. SH Contemporary has also become one of the most influential art fairs in Asia. All this heralds the advent of a new era of exchange.
Some scholars are convinced that ‘internationalisation’ is to blame for the passivity of Chinese contemporary art in the international setting – it is readily pinned down. They believe it is necessary to reflect on what ‘internationalisation’ – as constructed by the mainstream ideologies of the West and by the market – really means to the culture of a particular nation or country.

Fan Di’an holds the view that “Europe's overall expectation of Chinese art is closely associated with its own cultural imagination. In fact, the development of Chinese contemporary art follows a pattern characterised by diversity just like development in any other field. It interacts with society at large and changes accordingly, yet also raises its own views on social issues from a critical standpoint. It contains both the Chinese artist's singular pursuit of artistic language and reflections on themes and concepts. The same applies to Europe. It is inappropriate to simply assess that the tone of an artist is aligned with the government's line or is otherwise anti-government or not part of the mainstream. The evaluation system of Europe easily falls into the trap of applying a simplistic political spectrum to Chinese art, which is an obvious problem.”

When asked about the reason for such disparities in the exchanges between China and Europe, Fan Di’an offers the following, “Europeans are often wary of the nature of any culture from the outside. In the Classical era, there were close relations between Chinese and Western cultures with mutual impact on each other that formed a cultural imagination still effective today. European society's observation and expectation of Chinese art has more to do with social morphology and politics. As far as public opinion is concerned, it is more intent on discovering problems or even finding faults. Especially in terms of some fundamental issues of democratic politics, political system, environmental protection and intellectual property protection, such strongly critical stances have often prevented them from further understanding and analysis of China. The overriding concern about political correctness also has a negative impact on their judgement of Chinese art. Some curators, media and critics also go for certain types of Chinese art, mainly those laden with a strong critical perspective or ideological symbols, which they took as representative of Chinese contemporary art.”

In the process of exchanges in visual art between China and Europe, the cultural export of 'Chinese Spectacle' is a common occurrence. Western curators are often attracted to imageries and information about China that amuse and entertain them. For them, the different philosophical and artistic traditions in Chinese politics and culture make Chinese contemporary art particularly appealing in the international art system. So, Chinese contemporary art is a valuable cultural political issue. The Chinese contemporary art fever emerging in Europe and America after 1993 was heavily geared towards showcasing the political identities of Chinese contemporary art. The qualities of the 'China Spectacle' these curators were after included the people's distorted humanity and history in the context of the country’s political reality, the rebelliousness and awakening expressed against political dictatorship by the younger generation of Chinese artists, as well as the universality of Western modern and contemporary art and its influence on China.

The existence of such a Western audience has enticed some Chinese artists to tailor-make their art to criticism. They create ‘deliberate’ exchanges, which are linguistic spectacles designed for a particular audience in the West and Chinese symbols are supplied to those curators in search of Chinese elements. Such calculated design would certainly occasion cultural exchanges, yet it does not reflect the real creativity of Chinese contemporary art.
Disparities in artistic exchanges between China and Europe

In June 2004, le moine et le demon – Contemporary Chinese Art curated by Fei Dawei, was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon. In October that year, an exhibition entitled French Impressionists was exhibited in the National Art Museum of China in Beijing, with 51 works by Monet, Renoir, Degas and Manet. This proves Fan Di'an's view that, while China is busy introducing the outside world to its contemporary art, European modernist art has captured the imagination of the Chinese audience.

Fan explains, “The disparities in artistic exchanges between China and Europe are manifested through two factors. Firstly, the overall platforms that project modern and contemporary Chinese art into the view of Western public are few and on a small scale. We have held good exhibitions of modern and contemporary European art by well-known individuals, but Europe has had little exposure to Chinese art from the 20th century onwards. Neither Qi Baishi – a household name, nor Fang Lijun – who has done really well in the last couple of years, have had large-scale solo exhibitions in the West. There is more to be done on the construction of such platforms. Secondly, Chinese contemporary art has been extremely active, yet its inroads into Europe are more associated with individual curators and by extension their personal interest and commercial campaigns. There has not been enough dialogue and mutual understanding between cultural and artistic practitioners conducted under the auspices of cultural institutions. These disparities, I think, should be remedied today.”

For this very reason, Chinese curators have made great efforts to ‘reach out to the world’. In 2003, Fan Di'an was appointed Curator for the national pavilion of China at the Venice Biennale. In 2007, the same Biennale invited Hou Hanru to curate the national pavilion of China. In 2007, Zhu Qi curated the Contemporary Chinese Art Exhibition at La Galleria nazionale d’arte moderna e contemporanea in Rome.

Nowadays, Chinese curators and scholars are mulling over better ways of improving their position in the international exhibition system, so that China’s unique experience in modernity and aesthetic forms become part of the modern value system of the whole of humanity. This is also where the significance and mission of the cultural exchanges in visual art between China and Europe lie.

Fan Di'an suggests that “a constructive approach to foster exchanges between Chinese and European art should be adopted.” But sometimes both sides may be at variance in terms of the themes and contents of a particular exhibition, sometimes one can only ascribe this to the exclusiveness of European cultural psychology and its traditionally strong position. In general, the Chinese public and China’s art community are more ready to appreciate the realist tradition of classical European art, beautiful landscapes and certain explorations in the realm of modernity, yet there is room for improvement in terms of appreciating European contemporary art. This may also explain why the general public does not know enough about recent developments in European contemporary art. In addition, China’s artistic and intellectual communities are ill-prepared for European contemporary art. In this world of globalisation and free-flowing information, there are still not enough artistic exchanges between China and Europe, and between China and the world at large.

Even so, all the necessary conditions are in place for China and Europe to hold a dialogue. Both parties need to be enthusiastic about this rather than pursuing a Eurocentric or Chinese nationalist agenda. Both parties need to give up their wrong positions and
attach more importance to dialogue, the tenor of our time. Only through dialogue can we transform differences into agreement, in which we can look for differences in thinking and method together. Only in the endless cycle of difference can the cultural understanding of both parties converge to push forward the development of Chinese and European culture, which also helps coordinate the developments of cultures around the world.

Suggestions for future Sino-European exchanges in visual culture

- Sponsor scholars, small cultural institutions in their study of differentiated Chinese contemporary art
- Reflect critically on the ‘China Spectacle’
- Sponsor independent, non-official research
- Keep an open mind on new modes of communication
- Learn to listen and understand and maintain a reflective attitude towards one’s own perspectives and systems at the level of large-scale official communication

2012 will see Germany host ‘The Year of China’. Fan’s approach will reflect the points above. He says, “The theme of ‘The Year of China in Germany’ will be China’s urbanisation process and cultural innovation. China’s urbanisation is characterised by super speed and a cross-regional trend. China is not building isolated cities, but urban clusters, such as the Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta and North China etc. What kind of cultural issues will these models bring? What artistic fruits may they bear? What changes will they bring to the artistic ecology of the country? Here there are universalities as well as particularities. We are seeking ways to develop human society together. Germany criticises China for being a nation of copycats and pirate editions. In fact, the Chinese government is sparing no effort to protect copyrights. It cracks down on copyright breaches with as much force as it cracks down on drugs. Our culture and art sectors boast some forces and fruits of innovation and reflect Chinese artists’ desire to innovate in their ways of thinking.”

When we return to the early experiences of missionaries such as Matteo Ricci, we must remember the paths they trod. The way of the future is to coordinate all sorts of resources, both official and civil, in order to compensate for disparities and facilitate the constructive progress of Sino-European exchanges in visual culture. This is the mission of those devoted to the cause of such exchanges.

Fan Di’an quotations are taken from an interview with him by Compass editor Yi Wen, and the author wishes to thank them both.
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About the Author
Shen Qilan obtained her PhD in Sociology of Religion and Philosophy at Muenster University, after receiving a Master’s degree in Philosophy. She has been a keen observer of Chinese contemporary art. Previous responsibilities as Overseas Reporter for All Art Magazine, Reporter for Art World magazine in Germany, saw her visit many museums and exhibitions in Europe. Dr. Shen currently works as a teacher at Shanghai Institute of Visual Art at Fudan University and is the director of editorial department of Art World magazine.
Performing Arts – changes and exchanges in and between China and Europe

Katelijn Verstraete

Introduction

In October 2006 I had the opportunity to organise the first IETM\(^8\) China-Europe Performing Arts Meeting\(^9\). This entirely civil society initiative was an opportunity for European and Chinese participants to exchange with the independent and official sector on one multilateral platform, something that rarely occurred. Many small European companies exploring China for contemporary work could not find a basis for exchange with the big Chinese organisations looking for immediate presentation opportunities for their huge ensembles in Europe. For the Chinese it was hard to understand the added value of cultural networks like IETM\(^10\), who have a long history of co-producing and co-presenting, as there were no such networks in China. Europeans were challenged in their understanding of the changes in the performing arts in China. There was a huge gap between both worlds.

In this article I briefly reflect on the main changes in the performing arts\(^11\) since 2006 and opportunities for exchange. I have done this by reconnecting with participants and partners of the 2006 IETM Meeting.

Changing context of the performing arts in Europe

In Europe, performing arts is quite mature in terms of the infrastructure and management. Obviously, as with China, Europe is not a monolithic cultural bloc. Cultural networks, associations and federations such as IETM, EFA\(^12\) and PEARLE\(^13\), as well as EU financial support, have played an important role in connecting Eastern and Western Europe. Online cultural information networks have also contributed, such as On-the-move.org\(^14\), which started in 2003 to provide mobility information for artists and publications about the performing arts sector. Co-productions and touring have transformed the European landscape in the past three decades.

While mobility is of high importance at EU level now, in parallel a lot of attention in the performing arts sector is now going to environmentally sustainable mobility with Green Mobility guides\(^15\).

Apart from the environment, the major force influencing the context of the performing arts in Europe at present is the economic crisis, since a large part of the arts depend on public funding. Public funding has been seen as a way of being ‘free’ from

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8 http://www.ietm.org International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts, Europe’s oldest and largest cultural network
9 http://www.ietm.org/upload/files/2_20061214180552.pdf
10 See article by Mary Ann DeVlieg on Networks in this publication.
11 For the reader’s clarity, the definition of performing arts here is restricted to dance, theatre and interdisciplinary performance forms (opera etc.) and not specifically the music sector.
12 European Festivals Association www.efaaef.eu/
13 Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe http://www.pearle.ws/
14 http://on-the-move.org/ Information about cross-border activities, projects and their funding in the areas of theatre, dance, and other performing arts disciplines.
commercial pressures and creating arts which, in Chinese eyes, might seem more ‘art for art’s sake’, innovative and experimental. Recent severe cuts in cultural budgets in a number of European countries might change this situation, as the sector can count less and less on public authorities even though, as Andreas Wiesand observes on culturalpolicies.net, “this has been adopted as one of the cornerstones of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions”. At the moment it seems that only the Nordic countries and some parts of Germany have escaped, but for how long? “The real issue is to find out whether the effects will lead to fundamental, lasting changes in Europe’s cultural environment” says Péter Inkei of The Budapest Observatory.

With crisis at national level, all eyes are even more on EU support. The European cultural sector is running the ‘We Are More’ campaign to advocate for more funds for culture in the next EU budget round starting in 2014. Even though the EU cultural budget is small, in the past five years it has supported many innovative performing arts collaborations across Europe. The cultural policy, which guides financial support for the performing arts at the level of the European Union (EU), has evolved over many years. Judith Staines describes this evolution in the article EU: performing arts cultural policy and funding.

Even though funding has been cut it seems, according to Alison Friedman, Director of Ping Pong Productions, that in the past five years a lot of investment went to China – especially from Scotland, the UK, The Netherlands, France and Spain. Much of that was linked to the Olympics and the Shanghai Expo. With general cuts at national level and no large international events in China, might international exchanges in the coming years decrease, or take different, smaller, more sustainable forms?

Changing context of the performing arts in China
As opposed to the European ‘We Are More’ campaign, in China it is all about ‘we want more’. “The main changes since 2006” says Alison Friedman, “are that there is just more of everything – more international performance groups touring China, more independent Chinese companies and performing artists springing up, more theatres being built, more festivals being organised, more options for audiences to see on any given night, more interest in international collaborations from outside artists, more – more – more”. China has placed itself firmly on the international cultural map. “It is a big time for the performing arts in China right now” says Nick Yu from the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center. “More and more private resources will focus on this area (especially investment in huaju or drama) and it will bring opportunities for collaboration between China and other countries.”

Towards a ‘free’ market for the performing arts
Compared to other sectors, the cultural sector in China is still very much controlled. The role of the government has changed since 2006. With the announcement of the 11th Five Year Plan, China has systematically reduced and altered its government support for performing arts troupes and performing arts venues. As such, they are encouraging these

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17 This website is an important research instrument which monitors cultural policy and trends in Europe, set up by ERICarts in cooperation with the Council of Europe http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/compendium-topics.php?aid=174
19 http://www.wearemore.eu/
21 http://www.pingpongarts.org/
groups to "enter the market", without there being a mature market for them to enter or having the capacity and knowledge to transform into a private enterprise. So, in judging what should be performed, commercial motives and marketability are generally now given more weight than political considerations. "Censorship" says Frank Kouwenhoven "may not play an overriding role in the Chinese performing arts today, but the country operates within a system of acknowledgement and a framework of legality which leaves its mark on the status of and practical possibilities for Chinese artists."22.

"The process of controlling the arts has gone from national to regional level" says Wai-Lap Kwong, Programme Director of the Guangdong Modern Dance Festival. In 2003 performance laws changed relating to licences for Chinese companies who stage Chinese performances with no foreigners involved. The city or local government takes on the monitoring of performances. One can only sell tickets with a performance licence. Once foreign nationals are involved, permission needs to be obtained at national level – a time-consuming and costly process.

In the past ten years the government has primarily invested in the hardware for the arts. Performing arts venues have been built all over China, supported by the national, provincial or local governments. These venues are equipped with state-of-the-art technology. Some – only very few – venues have an operating budget from the government but most rely entirely on sponsorship or investment for programming. There is, however, a need for good management of the venues and for independent programming. Most venues in China are just rental venues; only a few are starting actively to curate their own programmes. However, foreign investment is now permitted in cultural venues, projects and events, which is a major policy change.

While a lot of performing arts venues struggle to survive, public-sector companies like the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center have found a way to operate successfully by changing the management system, as explains Mr Yang Shao Lin, the Center’s General Manager in an interview with Performing Arts Network Japan.23

There are also newer ‘foundations’ established by local municipal governments, such as the Beijing Cultural Development Foundation to which smaller groups like Beijing Modern Dance Company and LDTX have both successfully applied for funding. The Beijing municipality now offers grants for ‘creation projects’. However, there is a strong emphasis on the institution and such grants are all for formally registered groups, not individual performing artists.

Independent initiatives in contemporary dance, like CaoChangdi Work Station in Beijing, cannot count on any government support, nor do they run as private commercial companies. Private philanthropy and foreign support was crucial for the development of this initiative explains Wu Wenguang in an interview.24 In Europe, these types of initiative would generally be partly funded by governments.

Differences in developments

There are clear differences in the development of the performing arts, in artistic forms as well as geographically and in terms of audiences.

22 Speech Frank Kouwenhoven at the 2006 IETM meeting in Beijing
24 Pioneers of China’s contemporary independent arts scene: CaoChangdi Work Station – Wu Wenguang (31.03.2008) http://www.performingarts.jp/E/pre_interview/0803/pre_interview0803e.pdf
In general, the contemporary theatre scene has developed most in China in Beijing and Shanghai. “There are more audiences and productions, and different styles … more interesting”, says Nick Yu. Shanghai is a city directly governed from Beijing (not part of a province) and has relatively more independence. There is quite a large middle class population in Shanghai, who like dramas depicting middle class love stories. Ticket prices are affordable, there are good audiences and there can be corporate sponsorship, mainly from multinational companies. In Beijing, small independent theatre companies are emerging who run their own independent festivals. In general, Beijing, being close to the national authorities and embassies, caters a lot to foreign audiences and government officials. People are less accustomed to paying for their tickets, although with changes in the market, audience attitudes are slowly changing too.

For contemporary dance it is still hard to attract a large audience. The scene has evolved in China but less quickly than in theatre. Apart from LDTX, Beijing Modern Dance Company, Guangdong Modern Dance Company and Jinxing Dance theatre, independent companies have emerged, such as Tao Dance Theatre. They struggle for survival but are very active in involving young audiences. Luqiang Qiao, deputy director of the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing, hopes that more contemporary arts productions will take place, as he says “young audiences are more interested in contemporary things”25.

Presentations of big musical shows are mushrooming. Joint ventures are set up to tour foreign musicals and create musicals with Chinese content. This entertainment business will certainly get a larger audience, but they are capital intensive and may not be so economically viable.

There is however a renewed interest in traditional art forms. The new trend is to look for the roots of one’s own culture. Traditional music and Chinese folk operas gain larger audiences than before.

Platforms for international networking and creation
The approach to professional networking in the performing arts in China has changed. Alison Friedman reports that, beside the big government-driven Shanghai International Arts Fair, there are a number of new initiatives to develop arts markets in the provinces. These are not well-tuned internationally yet. While in the past China seemed dismissive of international networks, now the Ministry of Culture and other government arts organisations very much see their value. Large government delegations now attend the Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) and CINARS. There is little interest from governmental and civil society in European networks, as they might seem less tuned-in commercially. However, a lot of exchanges take place between Chinese and European dance and theatre companies, more than with American companies.

There are more and more attempts to establish touring networks within China. The main ones are still the Poly Touring agency and China Performing Arts Agency. There is recognition that sharing costs over larger tours is more viable than having expensive international or even Chinese groups just come and do ‘one-off’ performances in one or two cities.

In China, ‘international’ festivals are still mostly government-run with little artistic

curation. They are often less relevant to international markets and audiences. Smaller festivals are growing. Wang Xiang from Peng Hao Theater in Beijing has a local theatre festival that runs for almost two months, in very small-scale venues but with a very broad reach. Places like 9 Theatre in Chaoyang Cultural Centre and Meng Jinghui have a theatre festival for college and young theatre-makers each year which is growing in influence. Lin Zhaohua produced an interesting festival in December 2010 that mostly showcased his own works. Guangzhou Modern Dance Festival grows in scale but not in budget so it still needs better curation of international works.

There are plenty of opportunities for foreign companies to present work in China, but at the same time the market is very competitive. Every foreign country wants to be in China, so presenters can pick and choose and mostly look at either pure cultural exchange programmes (non-profit) or extremely commercial performances which can make a lot of money.

The reverse is true too. China has presented a lot of work in Europe in the past five years, mainly through festivals but less than Europeans have done in China. Nick Yu finds that, even though there are many more tours and co-productions, festival programmers in Europe (e.g. Edinburgh Arts Festival) still do not seem very interested in contemporary Chinese theatre and would prefer to programme traditional Chinese opera.

Advice for exchanges between China and Europe in the performing arts

Given the different contexts in Europe and China, I would recommend setting up – or doing more of – the following activities:

○ Arts education and art-in-education exchange (e.g. the Erasmus Mundus programme for theatre26)

○ Mobility funds for visits, training, staff exchanges with professionals – managers, producers, agents, programmers embedded in structural exchanges between institutions (e.g. summer schools)

○ Mobility funds for longer-term artistic exchanges with residencies allowing for in-depth exchange (e.g. creative labs, focus on community arts projects in China)

○ Translation of good online platforms of China-Europe exchanges into Chinese

Ultimately it is better to have more smaller and continuous exchanges than a few one off large-scale operations. 

26 Erasmus Mundus in Performing Arts Studies: http://performingarts-mundus.eu
RESOURCES
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LabforCulture: www.labforculture.org
IETM: www.ietm.org
European Festivals Association: www.efa-aef.eu
Culture360.org: www.culture360.org

About the author:
Katelijn Verstraete is a sinologist with long-term experience in – and passion for – Asia-Europe cultural cooperation and cultural policy. She founded and co-managed the autonomous art space BizArt in Shanghai between 1999 and 2003. She then joined IETM and initiated their projects in Asia. She was project manager for www.on-the-move.org and closely involved in EU projects on mobility of artists. Since 2007, Katelijn has been Assistant Director of Cultural Exchange at the Asia-Europe Foundation (www.asef.org). Her work today allows her to develop multilateral projects between Asia and Europe in the areas of cultural policy, artistic exchange, capacity building and information exchange, such as the culture360.org online platform for arts and culture between and in Asia and Europe.
Design is everywhere. Stretching across all fields of everyday life, design appears in the products we use, the newspapers we read, the houses and communities we live in. Although we may not always be aware of the pervasiveness of design in our social environment, products have always been designed for certain purposes and target groups. Cultural standards are closely linked to design issues, cultural differences can be regarded as a result of multiple design processes, spanning thousands of years.

Ideally, design aims to improve or optimise the functionality of products, and is a key factor for pioneer technologies and concepts. Products are designed to be used or consumed by someone. An eco-friendly automotive concept is as much revolutionary, as it is about being accepted – which means being used – by the people. New ideas need to be realised through design. Most new ideas are dependent on design. Ideas and designs cannot be clearly divided from each other. Design is not done for the product but for the people.

As our world becomes progressively global, design practices of Asian, Latin and Arabic origin increasingly mingle with and influence one another. More and more we see transcultural design characterising the appearance of institutions, universities, trade fairs, transport hubs, web portals and urban landscapes. The coexistence of information that originates from different cultures challenges the principles of visual communication at a fundamental level. Defining these new foundations has now become a key issue for international design research institutions. Product designers have focused on global markets for a long time.

Contemporary design has increasingly come to be regarded as a transcultural affair. The growing demand for transcultural design strategies follows the proliferation of multilingual media. As cultural codes mesh, the need for heightened transcultural consciousness and responsibility emerges. How should designers meet these new requirements? How should traditional aspects be transferred and integrated into contemporary practice? What are the challenges and benefits resulting from the interaction of visual cultures?

**Visual cultures**

During their art project 'Delete!', for two weeks in summer 2005, Austrian artists Christoph Steinbrener and Rainer Dempf made all the advertisements, slogans, pictograms, company names and logos in Vienna's Neubaugasse disappear under a layer of yellow advertising tape. Now take a photograph of a random Hong Kong street. Use monochrome tape to erase all the written information you find in the picture, including symbols, logos and traffic signage. The result is a pretty blank image – the Hong Kong feeling will have disappeared, you might not even recognise the city.

A modern Chinese city features international (global) and local (traditional) elements. Starbucks Coffee branches have almost identical design around the globe, in that anyone who has been to Starbucks is familiar with the shop layout: the milk and sugar counter, toilets, armchairs, beverages, wallpaper, questions asked by staff. One has a feeling of deja vu, like being in exactly the same place over and over again, whatever the city
or time zone. But, for a foreigner entering a traditional Chinese pharmacy on the other side of the street, there are more questions: no English, difficult Chinese characters everywhere, expressing even more difficult themes, products derived from a different medical tradition. Even symptoms might be interpreted differently from what you know. Nonetheless, the staff will do their best to help cure your pain, only they are using methods unfamiliar to you.

These two opposing urban codes increasingly mingle, often expressed through visual languages: patterns, characters, symbols, colours… Walking through Shanghai’s Yu Gardens, a tourist finds themselves surrounded by modern architecture pretending to be Chinese – but the buildings actually resemble the style of Chinese restaurants abroad, the visual language having been reduced to an extremely simple level: dragons, the colour red, traditional roof shapes. This is what, at first sight, many people think is Chinese. Entering the real 16th century Yu Garden, considered one of the most beautiful of all Chinese gardens, the tourist abruptly finds themselves confronted with a mass of complex patterns, intangible symbols and codes, most of which require a certain expertise to be read properly. But this is the Yu Garden remembered by the tourist as remarkable, fascinating, stunning, exotic.

This all is closely related to design. One the one hand, design can target the commonalities of a globalised world. On the other, it can follow traditional, local aspects. But we cannot fail to deny the omnipresence of the visual codes that surround us every day.

Commonalities
International design institutions and studios increasingly consider design a transcultural matter. With the pressure to achieve global success, industries conduct intensive investigations of cultural differences in order to optimise their products for new markets. Designs and concepts are being adapted to the specific habits and expectations of potential users and clients, which makes these designs transcultural. On the other hand, entertainment industries in both East and West are working with subconscious signals that appeal to feelings and impulses common to all human beings, to ease the path to maximum global success for their productions. Multilingual media are often used for simultaneous communication of messages to different social groups – many channels, one voice, unisono. To give a historic example, the Rosetta Stone (Egypt, 196 B.C.) contains a decree written in Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs at the top, in Demotic in the middle and in Ancient Greek at the bottom. It aims to communicate clearly the content to everyone.

Differences
But focusing on global commonalities means that at the same time you exclude the majority of factors which define cultural identity and diversity. In terms of cultural standards, there can be a multitude of reasons for design conclusions and decisions. Similar problems can lead to different solutions and, by exploring and comparing their strategies and methodologies, we have an opportunity to view familiar things from an unusually wide angle.

Every year, 50 languages disappear from the world. Much hope has been invested in global languages such as English. But, on the contrary, the more languages there are, the more diversity we find in the conceptualisation of things. This idea is not at all new: the Biblia Polyglotta, printed by Christopher Plantin (Antwerp) in the late 16th century, features
the Hebrew original text with Latin translation in two columns on the left-hand side, while
the right page has the same text in Greek with its own Latin translation. Underneath these
columns there is an Aramaic version on the left-hand page and a Latin translation of this on
the right-hand side. This layout aims to help researchers explore the linguistic differences
between the translations. Do we mean the same when we say the same? Is the truth close
to the sum of all the different concepts? Or should we reduce them to a substrate, if this is
indeed possible? Now we see that multilingual media are also used to celebrate diversity
and to make it a basis for understanding – multiple channels, multiple voices, polyphony.

Objects can also embed cultural codes. Why do the Chinese use chopsticks? Be-
cause knives and forks were banished to the kitchen, all cutting was to be done by the
cook, not by the guest. In return, chopstick design, optimised over the centuries in terms
of functionality and aesthetic values, helped to heighten their significance. In Thailand,
where forks and spoons are common, chopsticks are only used for dishes historically
imported from China – mainly noodle soups. In this case, a designed product (the
chopstick) serves as a cultural signifier.

Polyphony
It is obvious that the Chinese writing system is intrinsically different to the Latin alpha-
et, not only in terms of linguistic, semiotic and philosophical issues, but also regarding
its formal aspects. Traditionally written with a brush rather than a flat pen, the design
of Chinese characters follows guidelines significantly different from those of Latin type-
faces. Stroke weights vary, depending on the number of strokes in a character. There is no
baseline, no word spacing. The most ancient books were written vertically on flat bamboo
sticks bound together by textiles, rather like sushi rolling mats. Even today, traditional
books feature vertical lines that allude to these ancient bamboo books, a cultural code still
relevant to contemporary design methodology and practice. Today’s multilingual media
designers are obliged to meet visual standards relating to several cultures, they must be
aware of various cultural contexts. This aspect in particular makes multilingual media
design a transcultural affair. Creativity is needed to arouse interest from more than one
side: multiple channels, multiple voices, multiple listeners, multiple interaction.

A transcultural medium aims to address the following questions: Does it meet the
standards and habits of all sides? If so, does it still appear as a coherent unit? Finally, is it
aesthetically appealing to all sides?

Transcultural, multilingual communication is a way to help the recipient see from
a third, multi-channel perspective. You can now imagine how designers working on this
level are concerned with problems different from those you learn about in the average
design education. In addition, there is a knowledge gap between China and the West:
while many Chinese kids start learning English and studying Western culture from a
young age, schools in the West still treat China as a comparatively marginal subject. One
simple example: if you look at any average Chinese typography or graphic design reference
book you will find at least one chapter about Western typography. Needless to say, Western
media rarely feature anything on Chinese characters.

This is about to change. International design research increasingly aims to mediate
Chinese perspectives on transcultural design issues and the interaction of typographic
design concepts from the East and the West. For example, students on the MA Typeface
Design Programme at the University of Reading (UK) are encouraged to design
simultaneously Latin and non-Latin (Hindi, Arabic, Hebrew, Chinese …) typefaces to kick engrained habits, open their eyes and let ‘strange’ shapes have an impact on the designs.

Mutual impact
But this might change the perception of things over time. Continuous multiple interaction on a transcultural level naturally has an impact on the foundations of design thinking, to the point where designers and researchers start discussing what generally defines a medium, instead of how to design it. It is no longer seen as sufficient to impose habitual concepts on a different cultural context. Contemporary discourse has now reached the point where third, transcultural concepts become progressively familiar to international designers and researchers.

In both East and West, it is desirable that issues of transcultural design become better integrated into the curricula of international design institutions. Traditions are about to be completely re-oriented. Transcultural designing is not an ‘ethnic’ niche, and it is no luxury. But it is the only way to position designers in a progressively interwoven world, globalised by exchange, not by dominance, where differing design concepts can coexist and complement one another.

FURTHER READING
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http://www.design2context.ch/
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Trends in Sino-European Literature Exchange –
the need for space and self-determination within a
well structured environment

Julia Dautel

New programmes and formats for literature exchange have been set up in China and Europe recently, created by a fresh enthusiasm for international exchange on both sides. This article gives a brief overview of the current situation and evaluates some of the factors important for a fruitful exchange.

Starting points in Europe and China
In Europe, historical periods such as classicism and romanticism created a world of literature and an interested reading public. Modernism aimed to awaken the mind and brought a politically engaged literature that flourished in the 1970s and 80s. A post-modern trend towards the personal, the ironic, has created a situation today where literature committed to the art of language and existential human questions is being dominated in the market by largely superficial works of entertainment. Serious literature mainly survives with grants and other support, not generally through market demand. European identity is discussed and fostered by such programmes, often leaving writers sceptical about whether such ‘togetherness’ actually exists.

In China, the pre-conditions are rather different. During the Republic authors were looking for a new language, for a modern way of writing. This ended in 1949 and literature was subordinated to class struggle. A reawakening started at the beginning of the 80s, when poets like Bei Dao attracted thousands of listeners to their readings. Women’s literature flourished and brought fame to highly talented female authors. The generation born in the 1980s created an avant-garde style. The 90s tended towards an American influenced neo-realism with a focus on the human body, sexual passion and daily life in a consumer-oriented society. Today, as Wang Anyi, writer and President of the Shanghai Writers’ Association says, “literary life in China is less enthusiastic than it was about 10 or 20 years ago, which is partly due to growing materialism. But the need for an intellectual life is still there, even if hidden at the moment. Globalisation has reduced the differences between Europe and China – and yet they are not the same. In my opinion, the important point in Europe is a development towards a rather academic – or let’s say conceptual – literature, whereas in China society is experiencing a huge transformation. Many problems exist and writers cannot avoid seeing them. Therefore, Chinese literature today contains all sorts of experiences and emotions.”

Reading habits have changed in both worlds. The hunger for books after the Cultural Revolution in China and the awakening of a political mind in literature in the Western world in the 1970s have largely been replaced by a world in which entertainment can be found anywhere. At the same time, digitisation of text and the “entire creation, distribution and criticism process” is a powerful tool for change. (Rüdiger Wischenbart, Diversity Report 2008)
Translation – the true language of exchange

“Presenting yourself in another country with poor translations makes you feel as if amputated and ashamed of it. And it is a very frustrating experience to meet other writers and be unable to get an impression of their writing.” As the German writer Tina Uebel, who stayed in Shanghai in 2010 as author-in-residence, emphasizes, true exchange in literature does not happen without good translations – and therefore often doesn’t happen at all. One reason is that many publishing houses and organisers avoid the cost of professional translators and hire students or non-professional agencies to do the work. Support and grant measures that include training and exchange of translators are essential in this situation.

In China today translation is often not seen as an art form. Prof. Wolfgang Kubin, sinologist, poet and translator himself, compares the situations in China and Germany. Whereas after the Second World War German writers like Heinrich Böll felt the need to reinvent language after its abuse, and therefore translated foreign literature, Chinese writers today rarely speak foreign languages and also seldom translate. This is a strong contrast with the translation enthusiasm of Chinese writers before 1949. To foster more translation work in China, Kubin maintains that: “a whole mindset that concentrates on its own background and language needs to be changed or at least expanded.” Prof. Huang Liaoyu from Beijing University, who has presented several widely acclaimed translations from contemporary German literature, could play a leading role in this change of mindset, along with others active in the field.

Also Germany, long regarded as ‘world master’ in translation, has lost its pole position to Spain and France, which now have the highest numbers of translators of European literature. Official institutions, associations and supporters need to focus more on translation and offer financial and organisational support. This includes the involvement of sinologists in translation award juries for a more balanced assessment process.

The interest of the two worlds in each other

Following a period of primarily exotic interest in the Chinese world, European readers now also focus on its literature. Compared to literature from the USA, UK, France or Sweden, interest in Chinese literature is still low, but it is increasing. On the other hand, contemporary European literature, rather than classical, is barely present in China. “Particularly those works that play with language, a trend in European literature, do not easily transfer into an entirely different language system such as Chinese.” (Wolfgang Schömel, German author) Moreover, an audience that increasingly appreciates action and Americanised themes will not readily consume the rather ‘slow’ literature style found in many European countries today.

Chen Danyan, the Shanghai writer, states that “knowledge about classical European literature in China is a lot higher than it is in Europe about Chinese literature.” In general, works that find a market abroad are not necessarily those that the literature scene in the country itself values. Wang Anyi expressed her disappointment at the sudden success some Shanghai scandal writers focussing on sexual issues have achieved on the European market, which in her eyes gives the wrong impression about the scene itself. “In spite of the welcome Chinese literature receives in Europe, it is surely far from the reception European literature meets in China. Since the beginning of the last century, the Chinese have passionately embraced the West, originating from a longing for modernism. While,
as I understand it, Chinese literature is mainly received in Europe out of an interest in China's society and curiosity about a Communist country."

One important issue is the topic literature deals with. Many European writers traditionally focus on urban issues, whereas Chinese literature has long concentrated on themes linked to the countryside. Even today this dominates, although some Chinese writers have shifted to urban topics. In an interview in Beijing, Li Jingze, Editor in Chief of Renmin Wenxue (People's Literature), named some of the authors who introduce urbanism into Chinese literature (Wang Anyi, Bi Feiyu, Zhu Wen, Li Er and Li Feng). These authors might convey the “more globalised feeling that is often missing and deal with topics that are not specifically Chinese and thereby restricted to an audience particularly interested in China.” (Tina Uebel)

The debate on censorship and freedom of expression that is always present in Sino-European exchange often arises in international literature awards, especially the Nobel Prizes for Literature (Gao Xingjian, 2000) and Peace (Liu Xiaobo, 2010). Within this discussion we need to maintain a sober view of the current Chinese literature scene, which shows that some choices correlate with a long term appreciation within the particular context (Liu Xiaobo) and others might be slightly disconnected with it (Gao Xingjian). An open discussion on these issues is much needed, both in Europe and China.

*Book fairs, literature festivals, residencies: seeking suitable exchange formats*

The international presentation of many writers, improved translation opportunities, public lectures and coverage in relevant media: this dream situation often persuades the focus country of international book fairs. But experience has shown that these countries encounter a rush of sudden popularity with lots of translations flooding the market – and are then forgotten. This flash in the pan experience has been the case for Frankfurt Book Fair focus countries such as Greece, Korea, Catalonia, Turkey and, in 2009, China. Most writers agree with British writer Adam Thorpe that “the Fair’s frantic transnational interaction is something of an illusion; back in the bookshops of Europe, the majority of offerings are either national, or translated from American English.” During China’s presence at the Frankfurt Book Fair though, one positive lesson was learned: literature centres across Germany collaborated in summer 2009 to present Chinese poetry on public walls in eleven cities. This helped to carry the ideas into city space and public awareness – even though it didn’t help prevent the focus country’s difficult information and censorship situation from creating negative headlines during the Fair.

A more flexible and potentially more sustainable format is the literature festival. The setting can vary and may already in itself be attractive to a large mixed audience. Two examples are the annual Shanghai Literature Festival taking place in the bar M on the Bund and the Harbour Front Literature Festival held in sites in Hamburg harbour. “People appreciate the bar's decor, the style, the food and drink in addition to the literary offerings”, explains Tina Kanagaratnam, the Shanghai festival organiser. In Hamburg, the desire to discover new places in their home town often brings an audience that would not initially have been interested in the lectures. However, both festivals provoke criticism, and both have been accused of being disconnected. While in Hamburg the first year’s festival tried to reinvent a literature scene disconnected from all existing literary circles (changed in subsequent years by involving the latter as partners), the festival in Shanghai tends to be made by foreigners for foreigners (and is highly appreciated by these as well as by overseas
Chinese) and exists with no connection to any official or private Chinese literary circles. This might allow a wider freedom in terms of content, but at the same time it makes the festival largely irrelevant for the scene itself.

Brigitta Lindqvist, a Swedish writer who lived in China in the 1960s and recently participated in an author-in-residence programme in Shanghai, can envisage even more flexibility for such festivals: "literary festivals should focus on young people and take place in free open public spaces. There should be a mix of music and readings. The readings should be done by authors who love to perform – yes, they do exist!" As well as suitable professional translation during these festivals it is crucial to have a knowledgeable moderator to guide the audience through a reading to avoid being confronted with a one-way presentation.

Author-in-residence programmes have gained more importance recently, also within Chinese organisations. The Shanghai Writers' Association, for example, set up a programme in 2007. Every year an increasing number of international writers are invited to live and work in Shanghai for 3 months, all expenses covered. Most authors who have participated in this and in comparable programmes appreciate them as a catalyst for creativity, a widening of experience and a chance for a new and deeper understanding of the host country.

Some factors should be taken into account in designing a successful programme. The crucial question is the proportion of scheduled and free time and how the schedule itself is planned. Writers Chen Danyan (China), Brigitta Lindqvist (Sweden) and Tina Uebel (Germany) have all experienced author-in-residence programmes in various places and agree that most important thing is to provide a residency setting that allows the writer to freely connect with the local literature scene (and also with ‘ordinary people’). “Especially at the beginning, facilitating friendships with locals is necessary and later on writers can freely design their time with the help of their new friends, if needed.” (Chen)

Tina Uebel recommends reducing to an absolute minimum sightseeing and official meetings “they never transcended beyond a rather formal setting and feeling”, whereas “a lot of free space, time and self-determination is fundamentally important. Meetings with local writers/artists should take place in the least formal setting, at parties and picnics rather than lectures and discussion panels.” In general, writers should not be obliged to produce a text during their stay, as literary writing is (or should be) a very complex process and cannot be forced. Once the basis of understanding and the desire for exchange are awakened in visiting writers, they often come up with ideas and successfully design joint publications (e.g. Rude Trip, a publication by American and German writers after a residency programme between Chicago and Hamburg).

Residency programmes may also bring entirely different views on literature, life, and of the host country itself, just through the choice of writers. Whereas one should be careful not to treat writers simply as ambassadors of their country, one should always try to look through their eyes as human beings with a different personal and cultural background. This might be the reason for the Shanghai Writers’ Association’s decision to invite more writers from Eastern Europe, Central Asia and West Asia, since, as President Wang Anyi puts it, “the voice of European literature is loud and clear, we now want to listen to voices less present.”

Literary criticism should also be considered. German sinologist and translator Martina Hasse recommends an exchange between literary critics by giving them a weekly
column in a prominent magazine in order to allow the public to learn more about the current situation in the other country. This might also enable new developments in literary criticism especially in China where this field currently does not play the role it deserves.

Often partners on the Chinese side complain about the difficulty of finding suitable partners for exchange in Europe. “Since no associations like ours exist in Europe, the only way for us to learn about European writers is through their work.” (Wang Anyi) Here, European literature circles and writers’ associations may need to become better connected to be part of international exchange programmes, a good example being the HALMA network of European literature centres.

Recommendations for successful exchange formats

Even in a globalised world differences endure. As British poet and novelist Adam Thorpe pointed out in the Culture Report, “literature thrives on differences, not similarity. Its primary gift is to enable us to enter the being of those who are not ourselves, and who are even entirely other.” This should be taken as a basic approach for developing cultural exchange.

Based on this motto and summarizing the above thoughts, one can identify elements that allow for a fruitful exchange:

- An understanding of the relevant circumstances that lead to the work itself in order to open it up for a different audience
- A sensitive and open discussion on different cultural backgrounds (including the issue of censorship and freedom of expression)
- Identification of works that an audience abroad might connect with and that are also respected by the local scene (for example through an exchange of literary critics)
- Basic support for professional translation and supervision of the process
- Adapting programmes to the needs of writers by choosing offbeat and unconventional settings
- An open mindset that does not take an author to be an ambassador of his/her country but primarily as an artist and a writer
- Identification of target groups and suitable partners on both sides such as writers associations and networks of literature centres (e.g. HALMA in Europe)
FURTHER READING

● STUDIES


Institut fur Auslandsbeziehungen / Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations – ifa & Robert Bosch Foundation, in cooperation with the British Council, the Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation, Pro Helvetia & Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.


KEA European Affairs on behalf of the European Union and the People’s Republic of China.

On books, translations, publishing sector and cultural diversity, Rüdiger Wischenbart: [www.booklab.info](http://www.booklab.info)

● NETWORKS

*Platform on Chinese-German cultural exchange*: [http://www.de-cn.net/mag/lit/deindex.htm](http://www.de-cn.net/mag/lit/deindex.htm)

Goethe-Institute and Robert Bosch Stiftung


● LITERATURE FESTIVALS

Hamburg: [www.harbourfront-hamburg.com](http://www.harbourfront-hamburg.com)

Shanghai: [www.m-restaurantgroup.com/mbund/literary-festival.html](http://www.m-restaurantgroup.com/mbund/literary-festival.html)

● INTERNATIONAL BOOKFAIRS

Beijing: [www.bibf.net/WebSiteEn/home/Default.aspx](http://www.bibf.net/WebSiteEn/home/Default.aspx)


London: [www.londonbookfair.co.uk](http://www.londonbookfair.co.uk/)

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**About the author:**

After studies in Sinology and German literature in Marburg, Shanghai and Berlin, Julia Dautel developed interdisciplinary projects between partner cities in the Hamburg Liaison Office in Shanghai. She is currently responsible for international exchange programmes in the Ministry of Culture Hamburg. Her Master’s thesis was on Shanghai’s literature scene, with a special focus on the works of Chen Danyan. Her work today allows her to develop international literature exchange through residencies and festival programmes.
Sino-European publishing collaboration has made giant strides in just a few decades. From a restricted selection of ‘ideology-free’ science and technology publications to a place at the top table, as guest of honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair, China now recognises the value of publishing and translation as a route for its culture to reach out to the world.

Chinese publishers who were involved in international publishing since the early 1980s fondly recall their experience of working with Springer Publishing Company. At that time, Springer was among the first European publishers in the field of science and technology publishing to come to China. Its staff took the initiative to get to know Chinese publishers and invited them to visit Springer’s headquarters as part of a year-round training programme the publishing house developed for China. In those days, visiting Europe was rare enough for the Chinese and learning at a European press was even rarer.

Springer’s strategic long-term investment won the trust of the Chinese government and the Chinese publishers, setting the stage for rapid growth in the country for the three decades since. Today, Springer enjoys not only robust exports of science and technology journals but also of paperbacks, electronic journals and databases. Its author pool of outstanding Chinese scientists and scholars gives the press a strategic advantage.

Even today the publishing industry in China is still strongly influenced by ideology. However, the first Sino-European collaboration in publishing was achieved in the fields of science and technology. The reason is that these two fields are least likely to be influenced by ideology.

In the early 1980s, Chinese publishers first visited the Frankfurt Book Fair. Their mission was to trade science and technology journals. However, by 2009 Sino-European collaboration has evolved to a new level. China had become the book fair’s guest of honour with their delegation led by Vice President Xi Jinping. A total of more than 2,300 officials, publishers, writers, artists and members of the media from China participated in the world’s largest book fair. In addition to science and technology publishing, mass market publishing also dominated the scene: China sold the overseas licensing rights to a massive 2,700 Chinese-language books. The delegation sponsored over 800 Chinese cultural events in Frankfurt, capturing the attention of the German and international media. In the area of mass market publishing, Sino-European joint efforts involved either copyright or import/export transactions. The General Administration of Press and Publication (GAPP), the administrative agency responsible for disseminating all regulations in China, releases an official publication of statistical data every summer.

The latest GAPP figures show that in 2009 China published 811,265 imported titles, including books, newspapers and periodicals totalling 27,945,300 copies with a value of US$245,052,700. This represented a growth of 15.27% in the number of titles and a growth

of 1.84% in total value, but a 19.06% reduction in the number of copies compared to the previous year. In terms of import value, in 2009, books accounted for US$83,166,500, periodicals US$136,614,700, and newspapers US$25,271,500. Among books, the import value of natural sciences and technical titles amounted to US$32,328,800, making it the most valuable subject area; philosophy and social sciences came in second with an import value of US$18,563,400.

It should be noted that importing books into China requires a licence. Libraries and bookstores cannot import books, newspapers or journals independently, only through a licensed importer. Just 40 state-owned companies are approved as licensed book-importers in China, amongst which China National Publications Export & Import Corporation is the largest.

In the area of publishing exports, China reached a total value of US$34,377,200 in 2009, of which books accounted for US$29,620,300, periodicals US$3,511,300 and newspapers US$1,245,600. In copyright trade, in 2009 China bought the rights to 12,914 international book titles. China’s largest trading partner is the United States, from which China purchased 4,533 titles. In Europe, UK titles accounted for the highest number, totalling 1,847 in 2009. Also worth mentioning is Germany (693 titles) and France (414 titles). As a mainstream language, English inevitably dominates the copyright trade. However, few people in China are fluent in German or French. The fact that Germany and France can maintain their publishing exports to China reflects the success of the countries’ longstanding cultural exchange policies.

As early as 1997, Germany’s Foreign Ministry and the Frankfurt Book Fair jointly installed the German Book Information Center (BIZ)² within the Goethe Institute in Beijing. It was intended to be a direct route for cultural exchange and publishing business interactions with their Chinese peers in the country’s challenging marketplace. Meanwhile, having learned from the experience of the Frankfurt Book Fair, from 2006 Beijing International Book Fair (China’s largest) made France, Germany, Spain and other countries their guests of honour. After more than 20 years of arduous negotiations, in 2009 China finally became the guest of honour at Frankfurt. All this can be attributed to BIZ’s local efforts.

Meanwhile, the cultural and scientific section at the French Embassy in China has promoted a regular translation programme named after the late renowned French-Chinese translator Fu Lei³. This programme vigorously promotes French books and French translation in China. However, statistics released in 2005 gave the Chinese government some cause for concern. In 2004, China bought more than 600 German titles but exported only one Chinese title to Germany.

Shortly afterwards, the Chinese government introduced a new cultural policy called “Chinese culture goes out to the world.” As part of the policy, GAPP requires all state-owned publishing houses to export the rights for a minimum percentage of original Chinese titles, in order to maximise the reach of the country’s cultural soft power abroad. To that end, the State Council Information Office, the central government’s publicity organ, launched a promotion programme called ‘China Book International’⁴.

It was a major achievement when, in 2009 under GAPP’s watch, China was chosen as

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² BIZ, http://www.biz-beijing.org
³ http://fulei.faguowenhua.com
⁴ http://www.cbi.gov.cn/wisework/content/10000.html
guest of honour at Frankfurt. According to GAPP statistics, in that year China sold a total of 3,103 book titles to the international market, including 220 to the UK, 173 to Germany and 26 to France.

While exports to Germany went from a single title in 2004 to 173 titles by 2009 – a significant increase, the Chinese still think they have a long road ahead. Experts, domestic and international alike, often are invited to share their thoughts in newspapers and on TV on how to overcome the barriers to greater global exports of Chinese publications.

In 2008 a significant event shook China's publishing industry. Bertelsmann withdrew from the domestic book market in China. This included shutting down its 13-year old book club, its chain of 38 stores which it operated with Chinese partners and other related businesses.

After this, foreign publishing groups took on board the lessons learned. Even Chinese publishers began to cast a critical eye on mistakes made by the global giants in the country's market. Yet, there is no lack of success stories. For example, the first ever Sino-European joint venture: Children Fun, established in 1994 by Denmark's Egmont and China's Posts & Telecom Press, is today a major publisher in the children's book market in China.

A survey conducted during the 2009 Frankfurt Book Fair of international publishers showed that the Chinese market is widely viewed as the future of publishing. In recent years, major European publishers, Penguin and HarperCollins, have established representative offices in Beijing to handle book and copyright trade. Chinese law bars foreign investors from engaging in independent publishing; even local private enterprises must co-publish with state-owned publishers who oversee official publication numbers.

In 2010, in a new round of exploratory talks in the Sino-European publishing community, Europe's largest mass market publisher Hachette Book Group and China's reigning publishing powerhouse Jiangsu Phoenix Publishing & Media Group set up a joint venture known as Hachette-Phoenix Culture Development (Beijing) Company Limited. This was the first ever capital-pool partnership. Although this is a complex model of cooperation, given the current operating environment in China, it could potentially be superior to the conventional representative office model.

E-book publishing in China has been a hot topic. Tremendous business opportunities lie in technical and legal solutions, as well as in copyright trade and new marketing and distribution models. Sino-European publishing cooperation can expect to see a breakthrough in this arena.

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**About the author:**
Dr. Jing Bartz, of German-Chinese origin, was born in 1968 in Beijing. From 2003 to 2010, she headed the German Book Office of Frankfurt Book Fair in China and has successfully created and implemented many international projects in/with China. Since April 2010 she has been general manager of Hachette-Phoenix and is responsible for setting up its brand new joint venture.
Music Exchange and Cooperation between Europe and China

Maja Linnemann

A review of music exchange between Europe and China in the past decade demonstrates breathtaking diversity and a huge number of activities. Without aiming to cover all aspects and genres, one first notes the many players in the field: national cultural institutes, music conservatories, private commercial entities, local governments, academics, composers and musicians and countless individuals. This article aims to present a representative overview of the players and events.

China in Europe
In 2010, the three month Swiss cultural festival CULTURESCAPES chose China as the focus. There were almost twenty music presentations covering a wide range of styles and formats.

The 2009 edition of the bi-annual international arts festival Europalia, held in Belgium and surrounding countries, also chose China as guest country. This introduced Chinese cultural heritage and contemporary arts, including twenty music events, to audiences of over one million.

In 2008, a six month festival of Chinese culture, China Now, was held in Britain while France organised a China Year in 2003/2004. In return, a France Year was held in China in 2005 and UK Now will be organised there in 2012.

A 2012 Chinese Culture Year in Germany is in preparation by the Chinese Ministry of Culture. One element is participation in well-established music festivals, for example the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, Young Euro Classic in Berlin, Munich Music Biennale and the Ruhrtriennale.

Europe in China
Since 2006, the French embassy in Beijing has organised an annual cultural festival Croisements. Music performances and exchange are a major part. The Alliance Française also brings French musicians to China each year.

One music exchange highlight was the week long pop music festivals held in seven mainland cities between 2007 and 2010 as part of the “Germany and China – Moving Ahead Together” project. These events were organised by the Goethe-Institute and Germany’s Federal Foreign Office. Festivals were held in public spaces and concerts were free of charge. According to Udo Hoffmann, the festival curator, one of the major benefits of this mega event was that “we opened up public space in Chinese cities for the first time on such a grand scale. People from all strata of society, age and income groups enjoyed the performances.”

The UK Now 2012 programme in China will be managed by the British Council, with corporate partners. The London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and others will be involved. There is also a plan to bring British musicians of different genres to second-tier cities in China for six weeks to create work with local musicians.
Academic Exchange

There are said to be eighty million music students in China. A good number have studied abroad, some attaining worldwide fame, like composers Tan Dun and Chen Qigang or pianists Lang Lang and Li Yundi. Those who return to China are in an ideal position to serve as bridges between cultures. For example, the composer and professor Jia Guoping from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, who studied in Stuttgart; among many other activities, Jia is a key figure in setting up a new professional contemporary music ensemble – Beijing contempo primo, which debuted in Beijing in May 2011. The participating musicians are students from the Central Conservatory of Music and start-up financing has come from the Siemens Foundation. The new ensemble combines Western and Chinese instruments. Accompanied in the initial phase by Frankfurt’s Ensemble Modern, it is due to perform in Germany during the Chinese Culture Year 2012.

Another interesting example of academic exchange is the ten-year cooperation between the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich and Shanghai Conservatory of Music, nowadays entirely financed by the Chinese side. Two major personalities of this exchange are Dr. Wolfgang Mastnak from Austria and Prof. Yang Yanyi, who was awarded her PhD in Germany in 1995 on music education in China. Mastnak regularly holds seminars in Shanghai on Western concepts of music education, therapy and psychology and teaches Chinese music ethnology in Munich.

A huge discrepancy exists, though, in terms of student exchanges. Whereas large numbers of Chinese study music in Europe, far fewer young Europeans come to China. In spring 2011, there was one single Italian student of composition studying with famous composer Guo Wenjing at the Central Conservatory of Music.

Two of the rare personalities who moved in the opposite direction, are the German composers Karsten Gundermann, who studied Peking Opera at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts in 1992, and Robert Zollitsch, who studied Chinese traditional music and the Chinese zither Guqin in Shanghai. Zollitsch now lives and works in China, composing contemporary Chinese music and producing under his own label, KuKu Music.

Music promotion environment in China

If we look at popular music like rock, pop and jazz and other genres that mostly flourish outside the officially acknowledged and supported cultural scene, today we find a large number of privately run venues and clubs in many cities, e.g. Yugongyishan, 2 Kolegas, D-22 and Tango in Beijing, Yuyintang and Mao Livehouse5 in Shanghai or C:union in Kanton. These scenes are well connected through the internet6. Many international DJs tour these places, with quite a few foreign promoters from Northern Europe.

Since the late 1990s, many cities in China have built concert halls and performance venues, a wave which gained momentum in 2006 when the cultural industries were given a major role in the economic development of China. Following the opening of the National Center for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Beijing in late 2007, at least 30 cities followed suit, including the Guangzhou Opera House designed by renowned British architect Zaha Hadid, as well as Chongqing, Hangzhou, Ningbo, Qingdao, Wuhan, Taiyuan, Shaoxing and less developed places like Luoyang. Unfortunately, some share the fate of the

5 http://www.zjdreams.com
6 For example via www.Douban.com.cn
Shenzhen Grand Theater, vacant for two-thirds of the year over the past three years. Many observers point out that, while the hardware is in place, the artistic concepts have yet to be developed.

This gap between existing hardware and missing content may slowly be bridged in future as more institutions of higher learning offer cultural management training, including the Central Academy of Art and Peking University. The short training programme ‘Culture Management in China’ (Goethe-Institute/Free University Berlin/Mercator Foundation), launched in 2009, targets this demand and provides new impetus for the professional development of young Chinese culture managers.

Beijing and Shanghai now have large world class venues as a legacy of the 2008 Olympic Games and the 2010 EXPO: the MasterCard Center (former Wukesong Stadium), and the Mercedes-Benz Arena (formerly Shanghai World Expo Culture Center) can both seat 18,000 people and are co-managed by US company AEG (Anschutz Entertainment Group).

What is only now developing is the more intimate and affordable format of chamber music. Jeffrey Roberts, composer and artistic director of Yishu 8 Art Space in Beijing points out: “Most concert projects in Beijing are large-scale endeavours for large concert halls and [there is] little to no funding for smaller projects. Unlike Europe and the United States, where musicians can turn to local, state and federal funding, this support structure does not exist for chamber music in Beijing. Patronage in Europe and the US is a long-held tradition for music enthusiasts to financially support chamber music concerts, but because these types of audiences in Beijing are underdeveloped and the concept of patronage is not common in China, these inhibit the development of a local chamber music community. Therefore, Yishu 8 aims to simultaneously cultivate a Chinese audience for chamber music and encourage patronage from the new Chinese middle class (both corporate and individual) to participate in and support local chamber music groups and their concert series.”

There are a few other initiatives promoting chamber music: the Siemens Music Foundation and the Goethe-Institute initiated a series of international chamber music master classes in 2007 with the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. And within its programme ‘China-UK Connection through Culture’, the British Council organised a UK study tour on chamber music for Chinese agents, promoters and venue programmers in March 2011.

Music Festivals

In recent years, festivals have mushroomed all over China with around sixty multi-day events in 2010. The MIDI Peking is the longest running (since 2000), but is now in competition with Strawberries Festival, set up in 2009 and held the same weekend in Beijing/Tongzhou. Music Fun Hill Festival launched in autumn 2010 in Fangshan/Beijing and a new festival promoted by Gehua Group in Pinggu/Beijing is planned. Another long-running event is the Nanjing Jazz and World Music Festival (since 2002). Then there is Zebra Music Festival in Chengdu (since 2009) and Hangzhou (2010), whose executive Scarlett Li hopes to reach other Chinese cities, too. In a Forbes.com article, Nick Frisch characterises the industry as having “huge potential, eye-popping expansion, rampant imitation, meddling government officials.”

Festivals are a way to promote a locality and generate income for local businesses. “Nowadays, music festivals are not only supported but also often initiated and financed by local
government agencies and real estate developers”, says *China Daily* music editor, Mu Qian.

Udo Hoffmann, who started the Beijing Jazz Festival in 1993, comments on the quality of the recent festival boom: “Festival curators often choose gigs according to name and fame, not necessarily according to how a band comes across on stage. The participation of foreign bands is rather limited, even at the MIDI festival. Here the question is: what can be financed?”

However, the music festival boom reflects one remarkable change: the former underground culture is becoming mainstream youth culture. During this transition, music tastes will further diversify and distinct fan groups and markets will form. It remains to be seen which of the many new festivals survive and grow and – most importantly – develop their own uniqueness.

*Chinese Music in Europe*

In 2009, the composer of contemporary Chinese music and producer Robert Zollitsch wrote: “The interest in Chinese music has definitely increased in Europe in recent years. But what one hears and likes in Europe differs tremendously from what is appreciated in China and also differs from what Chinese think Europeans might like.”

Maybe these mismatched perceptions can be illustrated by the “Sa Dinding phenomenon” described by Mu Qian in *China Daily* in April 2010: “Several European friends have asked me, ‘Sa was promoted as the most successful singer in China when she performed in Europe. Is that true?’ I told them she was not and that her name is known in China because she is promoted in China as ‘the Chinese singer who is most successful in the West’.”

Many Chinese musicians who perform in Europe live there, reducing two major obstacles to exchange between China and Europe: language and travel costs. On the other hand, these artists may not be the best and, in some cases, have already adapted to the tastes of European audiences. Compared to their mainland colleagues they have another advantage: they easily acquire performance routines thanks to the many small stages in most European cities.

But of course music artists from China also make it to Europe. The Qing Mei Jing Yue quartet, playing traditional Chinese instruments, Kazak musician Mamer and the Mongolian band Hanggai, for example, all participated in the Warsaw Cross-Culture Festival 2010.

Dutch expert on traditional Chinese music, Frank Kouwenhoven from the European Foundation for Chinese Music Research (CHIME) points out the advantages of festivals: “Chinese music wrapped in a festival format attracts more audiences than as part of a regular concert series.” Kouwenhoven, who from early on was a consultant to the Chinese Ministry of Culture on what kind of Chinese music to present abroad, strongly supports long-term, meaningful exchange. In the format of a festival, artists could “come over to Europe for a longer period of time, show more of their repertoire, do public workshops, be ‘in residence’ for a period of time, and – if properly prepared – they might even be able to do cooperative projects with Western musical ensembles. All this would be of merit to the Western side but also to the Chinese artists, who (except in Taiwan) are too isolated from international developments.”

Looking at the commercial side of music exchange, one must mention Wu Promotion, the most important private player in the field of professional music exchange. Wu Promotion started the traditional Chinese New Year concert in Vienna in 1998 and now
has twenty years’ experience of bringing Chinese orchestras abroad – mainly to Europe – and taking European orchestras and performers to China. The company’s business and artistic range focuses on orchestras and choirs, chamber music, jazz and piano and covers all of Europe. Despite its obvious success, the company owner and general manager, Wu Jiaotong, says: “It is not easy to make money in this kind of business. I could earn much more if I did real estate.” Public and corporate sponsorship will therefore remain an essential part of music exchange.

Whereas Wu Promotion can rely on its extensive experience and established network, smaller players and newcomers will find it more difficult to promote Chinese music in Europe. Peter Wiedehage from the consultancy Sinica in Düsseldorf reports little interest from German concert halls: “When Germans think of Chinese music, they associate Peking Opera and a lot of screeching. A German town concert hall may invite a Chinese ensemble once, but they see it as a risk and are not interested in taking this risk often.” Wiedehage hopes that in future, Chinese business people and local Chinese communities could play a bigger role in bringing sophisticated Chinese music culture to Europe.

The current Chinese drive to build up ‘soft power’ will probably sustain Chinese music going abroad. But as Kouwenhoven points out, the artists selected to go abroad and represent China are not always selected purely according to artistic criteria: “Chinese cultural officials have a clear preference for stage-directed large, prestigious events, light-shows, acrobatics and the like, … but that represents just one side of China’s musical riches.” It is therefore necessary to maintain dialogue with Chinese decision-makers in the cultural field “to open up the exchange to a broad variety of different (e.g. traditional, classical, folk, professional) realms of achievement.”

However, both Kouwenhoven and Zollitsch observe a strong vibrancy in the field of traditional Chinese music and anticipate exciting developments. But as long as there is no equivalent in China to the French ‘bureauexport’, a “non-profit organisation and network, that helps French and international music professionals work together to develop French-produced music around the world and to promote professional exchange between France and other territories”, individual initiatives and expertise will continue to dominate the scene. Any attempt to connect these could be welcome.

Future Perspectives and Ideas
A recurrent request from experts involved in the field is greater sustainability, more long-term thinking and planning and less emphasis on individual large prestige projects.

Thus, Jeffrey Roberts from Yishu 8 dreams of support for a five-year festival project with concert events, workshops and lectures. In his opinion, five years are needed “to help root the mentality of local grassroots chamber music in the music community of Beijing. The international exchange aspect of this project would also be important to circulate chamber music by Chinese composers to different parts of the world.”

As for stage events and tours, Udo Hoffmann thinks that the industry in China will become more professional. He also suggests that the cultural plurality the EU represents is a great asset and very attractive for China. Hoffmann would love to curate a European-Chinese music festival. Han Xiaoming, director of the NCPA orchestra in Beijing, even suggests establishing a European cultural centre in Beijing.

Several experts see a growing interest and openness in China for different and new
styles – jazz and world music, but also ethnic and local groups from within China. A group from Guangdong, Wutiaoren who sing in local dialect won the award for Best Folk Musicians at the 2010 Chinese Music Media Awards. The Shanghai World Music Week, started in 2008, and Beishan World Music Festival 2011 (Zhuhai) may also be trendsetters in this respect.

Udo Hoffmann, George Lindt from Fly Fast Records, Berlin, and Zhang Kexin from Chanson Culture Communications Co Ltd in Beijing all recommend that to successfully introduce to a new audience singers and groups who are not well known or very idiosyncratic, they could be matched with a suitable well-established artist.

George Lindt, who made Chinese rock and punk visible in Europe with the 2007 documentary film *Beijing Bubbles*, about five Beijing punk, folk and rock bands, has done exactly that with another innovative project ‘Poptastic Conversation China’. On this CD, popular German bands each sing one of their favourite songs in Chinese and Chinese bands sing in German. According to Lindt, the project was well received in the German media, and also in France and Italy. However, Chinese official media gave it little attention, supporting Lindt’s observation that official Chinese culture policy is still rather conservative.

**Conclusion**

Music is often presented as a global language which overcomes all language barriers. Perhaps this is not the case. Robert Zollitsch suggests that those involved should engage more in basic exchange activities and study differences between Chinese and Western music more thoroughly to facilitate more successful communication.

For composer Karsten Gundermann, the most important agents for cultural exchange now and in the foreseeable future are those artists who grow up in one cultural sphere and then move to another cultural environment and work with local artists. Obviously, there is currently a strong imbalance with large numbers of Chinese musicians who settle in Europe, learn the language and either pursue a career overseas or go back to China and act as cultural bridge makers, with few Europeans to match them.

Perhaps this is a good starting point to work on?
FURTHER READING

*China Music Radar: An insider’s look at the music industry in China* (Blog, English):
http://www.chinamusicradar.com/

Information on the underground/independent music scene in China (English):
http://www.rockinchina.com/

*A Critic Abroad Symphony of Millions Taking stock of the Chinese music boom* (Alex Ross, New Yorker, 7 July 2008),
http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2008/07/07/080707crat_atlarge_ross/

Bureau export: your partner for French music around the world (English, French):
http://www.french-music.org/

Wu Promotion (English, Chinese, French, Italian, German): http://www.wupromotion.com/


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About the author:

Since 2008, Maja Linnemann has been editor-in-chief of the bilingual website *German-Chinese Culture Net* (www.de-cn.net), a project initiated and financed by the German Goethe Institute and Robert Bosch Foundation. She has lived in China for more than 12 years (Chengdu & Beijing).
The Search for Cultures of Sustainability is Not an Easy Journey

Sacha Kagan, in dialogue with Ada Wong and other cultural practitioners

Engagements with issues of sustainability and ecology are becoming increasingly relevant and noticed across the world, including in the fields of the arts and culture. To gain a comparative China-Europe perspective on this thematic area, I consulted with a dozen Asian, European and American cultural practitioners, including Ada Wong, director of the Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture, as well as several internationally renowned ecological artists.

In China, as well as in Europe, advocacy for ecology and sustainable development is more predominant among environmentalist activists than in the art worlds. In Europe, a thriving civil society (NGOs, foundations and informal networks) as well as green political parties are contributing to a rising ecological awareness. But too often, awareness of ecological issues does not convert into experimentation with more sustainable livelihoods. However, good practices are emerging, such as for example the permaculture and ‘transition towns’ movements in several major European cities, i.e. self organised neighbourhood initiatives aiming to transform everyday life with the goal of overcoming their ‘addiction’ to fossil fuels. The interest of these initiatives lies in their daily creativity and in the fact that they address lifestyle changes beyond mere ‘green technology’ innovations and limited energy saving measures. Transition initiatives spread out from the UK to the rest of Europe, North America, Brazil, Oceania and Japan in recent years.

The situation in China bears less comparison. As Ada Wong says:

“In China, there are now more green groups and environmentalists but not that many ecological artists. SEE (Society of Entrepreneurs and Ecology) is one of the more influential groups comprising business people who care about ecological issues. Their main concern has been desertification in Inner Mongolia and they fund NGOs to do community advocacies. Friends of Nature is one of the earliest NGO green groups in China and one of its founders, architect and intellectual, Liang Cong-jie (梁从诫), is a grandson of Liang Qi-qiao, an icon of the May 4 Movement in China.”

China does not have ‘transition towns’ but has several top-down initiatives aiming to experiment with ecological planning in urban development (e.g. some projects in partnership with the firm Arup, and some exemplary projects developed by Turenscape). However, by comparison with Europe, ecological awareness is less developed in ‘public opinion,’ partly because the mainstream media in China do not report accurately the seriousness of the country’s ecological crises (unlike for example the WWF). As observed by Ada Wong: “The majority of Chinese people have not awakened to the fact that there are grave ecological issues that everyone as a global citizen must tackle. And indeed, ‘development’ (by building more property, factories, axing more trees and harming the environment) is still seen as a must for progress and economic expansion.”

Focusing more specifically on artistic responses, there are again relatively few points of comparison between Europe and China.

In Europe and North America, artistic movements known as ‘ecological art,’ ‘envi-
nvironmental art’ and ‘art in nature’ appeared in the 1970s. They address issues such as the inter-relatedness of ecological and social crises, relationships between culture and nature, the recovery of an ecological sensitivity numbed by modernity, and more specific topics (e.g. water pollution, ecosystem improvement, conversion of landfill sites, etc.). The ‘social sculpture’ movement initiated by the German artist Joseph Beuys, links social, cultural and ecological issues and engages communities into creative experiments for alternative lifestyles (e.g. see the Social Sculpture Research Unit at Oxford Brookes University). Starting in the 1990s, some artists collectives (such as Wochenklausur in Austria) developed a practice of ‘intervention art’ aiming to identify and resolve specific, small- and medium-scale social and/or ecological issues autonomously, with direct interventions in society.

But so far, ecological art, social sculpture, intervention art and the like have remained relatively marginal movements in the European art landscape. However, ecological art has gained more attention in recent years, alongside a rapidly growing, albeit more superficial, interest in issues of ecology and sustainable development among both some contemporary art ‘elites’ and some popular artists. Most spectacular in recent years has been the surge of interest in issues related to climate change and to changing unsustainable practices in the arts and cultural industries across Europe (with concrete ideas to reduce the ecological footprint of arts organisations). Among the many initiatives in the past decade, can be mentioned:

- The UK-based Cape Farewell (a series of expeditions to the Arctic on a sail boat, gathering climate scientists and artists, hoping to inspire the invited artists to engage with climate change), Tipping Point (an ‘Open Space’ conference format gathering climate scientists, artists and other cultural workers, and a series of commissioned art projects about climate change) and Julie’s Bicycle, as well as UK-specific online resources on ecological art such as most recently eco/art/scot/land.

- In Germany, several projects experiment with social-ecological transformations in urban as well as rural contexts, e.g. in Berlin with ‘Culture is it!’, initiated by Hildegard Kurt in 2005, and with ‘Ueber Lebenskunst’ since 2010, a framework initiated by the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. Groups such as ‘slap’ (social land art projects) and Cultura21 advocate for ‘cultures of sustainability’.

- Based in Hungary, curators Maja and Reuben Fowkes (translocal.org) foster curatorial discourses and practices related to ‘sustainable art’ within the field of contemporary art across Europe. In France, the organisation COAL (coalition for art and sustainable development) follows similar aims.

- Internationally, inter- and trans-disciplinary platforms gathering scientists, artists, and diverse professionals, such as Cultura21, are networking these initiatives. Professional networks with similar aims, focusing on specific art sectors, also developed themselves, such as Imagine2020 which gathers several European theatres in a commitment to ecological issues and sustainable practices.

The interest in climate change issues in the European contemporary art scene peaked in late 2009, with several prestigious art institutions in Copenhagen and elsewhere opening exhibitions on the topic, and with Culture | Futures (a conference gathering several European cultural institutions) alongside the UN COP15 conference. However, in 2010, the level of interest dropped. Besides, many of these initiatives by major art institutions were superficial, unreflective and short-lived.
In reviewing the themes which are currently predominant in Chinese art, Ada Wong observes that ecological issues are apparently viewed as less imminent than current social and political issues:

“Some contemporary artists’ works are characterised by a spirit of rebelliousness and how people face up to the impenetrable walls of authority. Others are socially engaged and incorporate political and historical references in their works. Some capture the edginess of contemporary society, how society is under assault from all quarters while others are concerned with their history being taken away and investigate the place of tradition in contemporary China. They are preoccupied with ‘speed,’ that the Chinese experience has happened so quickly, from a drab and colourless society in the mid-1970s to the very materialistic and 24-hour assault of light and noise we now see in Beijing and other big cities.”

Despite being even more marginal than in Europe, artistic practices concerning ecology have also emerged in China. At one level, Ada Wong mentions the cultural practitioners whose works aim to raise awareness of ecological issues in the general population: “Some photographers and filmmakers can be called ecological cultural practitioners. Filmmaker Chen Lu is concerned with Kekexili (可可西里), a nature conservation zone in the Qinghai highlands at over 4,000 metres altitude. The touching film told the story of conservationists and village officials who died while protecting Tibetan antelopes in danger of being extinct because of illegal hunting activities (as their skins are very precious). Photographer Xi Zhi-nung (奚志农) from Yunnan province is one of the most well known “ecological photographers” and has won much acclaim in his use of images to foster his vision of a more ecological and environment friendly society. His photographs have been featured in Photographing China and the National Geographic and were instrumental to various campaigns to save forests and rare species of birds and monkeys. He is also a documentary filmmaker and his film on 滇金丝猴 (a rare species of monkey) has caught the attention of government and in the end helped to protect the species.”

Such practices also exist in Europe, where a documentary tradition exists with environmentalist concerns (its most widely popular practitioner being the French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand). But, for all their qualities, these practices do not fully constitute ‘ecological’ or ‘sustainable’ art, unless they address the complex relationships between different dimensions of ecological, social, cultural and political issues constituting unsustainable human development. However, in the Chinese context, “there is a fine line between acceptable advocacy (such as what Xi is doing) and overstepping into sensitive issues” – which can unfortunately lead to personal consequences for the artists. Artistic engagement with sustainability is thus especially difficult to practise in China, but a few examples can be mentioned: Several Chinese artists worked in ecological art projects in the past two decades, e.g. in exchanges with the US American ecological artist Betsy Damon, starting with the project The Living Water Garden (1995–1998) for the city of Chengdu in the Sichuan province of China (cleaning some of the water from the Fu and Nan rivers and educating visitors about issues of water treatment). An interdisciplinary collaboration with Chinese experts (including hydrologists and a microbiologist), this park includes constructed wetlands with different water-purifying plants and flow forms. The first phase of Betsy Damon’s work, before the realization of this park, consisted of a “pilgrimage to the headwaters of the river, in Tibet” and, back in Chengdu, in a performance (Washing Silk, where she rinsed white silk in the Fu-nan River, and the silk went brown-grey with the pollution).

Linked to Damon’s project, further artistic works were realized by about 25 artists
in Chengdu in 1995 and 30 artists in Lhasa in 1996. Damon continues to work in China and elsewhere on the Keepers of the Waters project, which involves art, science and community involvement around water sources. Further projects in China include the Wenyu River planning project, the Olympic Forest Park project and the TongZhou ecological park in Beijing. In Chengdu, Damon is supporting with CURA, the Chengdu Urban Rivers Association, the Model Village Project, conducted by Tian Jun and Duncan Cheung. They work with the villagers (in An Long village, Pi County) to create proper waste streams, restore rivers, protect the watershed and improve the standard of living by producing organic food. Among the Chinese artists who worked with Betsy Damon in Chengdu were Song Dong, Dai Guangyu, Wang Lian, Yin Xiuzhen, He Qichao, Ci Ren La Na and Ang Sang. In her 1995 performance Washing River in Chengdu, Yin Xiuzhen “had 10 cubic meters of polluted river water frozen into ice. These ice blocks were placed at the riverbank and then she asked passers-by to clean these blocks of ice until they turned into water.” (Berghuis 2006, p. 253)

In Lhasa in 1996, the ‘water preservationists’ art events organised by the American artist Norman Bates and the Chinese scholar Zhu Xiaofeng constituted “one of the first large scale international performance art movements” in China, and “was designed to show artists’ commitment to the environment, nature, life and spirit by means of performance art, installation art and other media.” (ibid., p. 256) Among the participating artists were Liu Chengying, Zhang Xin, Zhang Shengquan, Zhang Lei, Ruan Haiying and also some invited artists from Switzerland. At that event, Song Dong performed Water, using a large seal with the character for water, and repeatedly stamping it onto the water surface of the lake in Lhasa. This and other performances by Song Dong (including since January 1st 1995 his “writing diary with water” – whereby he writes his daily diary on a stone with water, leaving no traces) evoke a Taoist poetic sensibility to the human relationship with nature. At the event in Lhasa, Li Xijiang performed Antibiotic: Injection into (Qinghai-Xizang) – literally pouring antibiotics into polluted water, wearing a hospital uniform. Other ecological art works dealing with water were produced at an event in Beijing in 2003: ‘Water 0.03%’ performed in Houhai, with works by Wang Peng, Nianchao Shang, Zhao Liang, Rania Ho, Wang Wei, and Zhang Hui.

Zhang Wei, a curator based in Guangzhou, director of Vitamin Creative Space since 2002, developed a project in collaboration with a community and a property developer, to save a mountain from the extraction industry. In a 2006 UK-based publication (ed. Andrews 2006), Hu Fang of Vitamin Creative Space interviewed artists and authors such as Feng Yuan, Zheng Guogu (initiator of the Empire Time land art project since 2004 near the city of Yangjiang) and Jiang Jun, offering critical perspectives on the unsustainability of Chinese land reforms, from Mao’s rural land reforms to contemporary urbanisation and its superficial, image-driven architectural plans. Other Chinese artists make incursions into specific issues of (un-)sustainability, such as Wang Jianwei with the video Living Elsewhere (1999–2000 – addressing urbanisation and migrations) and the installation Spectacle (2005 – referring to consumerism and pollution).

A sensibility to the complexities of human-nature relationships implies a creative openness to disturbances, an “autoecopoietic sensibility” as I argue elsewhere (cf. Kagan 2011).27

27 An autoecopoietic system is creatively open, and sensitive, to environmental disturbances, whereas a merely autopoietic system can only be disturbed by already recognised environmental irritations. Autoecopoiesis allows ‘emergence’, in other words, the unexpected.
This also involves exploring human inner nature, as e.g. in Chen Lingyang’s works (e.g. Twelve Flower Months in 1999–2000, Periodical Fairy in 2002) where she echoes the ecological cycles in the autopoietic cycles of her own body.

In Hong Kong, in the past year, “several artists joined a movement against the wiping out of Choi Yuen village (a small farming village) in order to build a hi-speed rail link between mainland China and Hong Kong. The village was later used as the venue for site specific art installations, photographic works and marathon concerts and rallies, and many artists, especially younger ones, were core members of the movement. Artists, planners and architects are now helping villagers to build a new eco village and organic farm with proper treatment of rain water. They recently attended lectures on permaculture, and are also advocating slow food and a ‘slow experience’.”

Also in Hong Kong, Ada Wong has organised the annual MaD (make a difference) forum since 2010: “MaD is a platform for young people in Asia to create personal, social and environmental changes. It believes in young people to lead change and bring about positive, social and environmental impact with their energy and passion. The theme of ecology and sustainability is very important at the annual MaD forum (comprising talks, workshops and chat rooms) held in January each year. There are events throughout the year to ensure that young people do not sit back on their dreams but follow up with action. ‘Change in Action’ is an ongoing initiative (under MaD) which provides seed money to teams of 4-5 young people. These projects could be social or environmental and should bring about small but positive impact. I have hired a young team of artists, art historians and administrators to oversee the various MaD projects and they are inspired by Joseph Beuys, using social sculpture to promote ecological awareness.”

Ada Wong and her colleagues are organising further exemplary initiatives which cannot be considered in detail here. In particular, the HKICC School of Creativity, where questions of sustainability are integrated in the curriculum, and which could be an example for others to follow in China and Europe.

As well as arts education, another area which can only be mentioned briefly is landscape architecture and garden design, where exemplary ecological projects are developed both in Europe (e.g. the gardens of Gilles Clément) and China (e.g. the projects by Kongjian Yu of Turenscape, such as the Shenyang Architectural University Campus, integrating agricultural and urban landscapes).

In the past few years, several China-Europe exchanges have addressed issues linking sustainability/ecology and the arts and culture:

○ In the UK in 2004, Alan Boldon invited Zhang Wei to the Desire Lines conference (Dartington College of Arts), and later brought together several UK art institutions to organise a visit by British artists and architects to the Pearl River Delta, meeting their Chinese hosts around the theme of alternative urban models.

○ In October 2008, the Asia-Europe Foundation organised the Asia-Europe Dialogue on Arts, Culture and Climate Change in Beijing, which included a residency by Insa Winkler and Oleg Koefoed at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (working with students of the Experimental Art Department) and an international conference.

○ Further exchange examples include residencies by the English ecological artist David Haley at several art universities in the north and south of China.

In general, my analysis is that a culture of sustainability must base itself on a culture of complexity, i.e. opening itself to ecological and cultural complexities, in order to nourish
perspectives of resilience for human societies. The ecological artist David Haley insists that “we must learn, not to be afraid of complexity”. I think that this requires the development of an aesthetic sensibility to complexity. This is linked to balancing plurality and unity, conflicts and compromises, and to valuing diversity. Valuing diversity is relevant, not only at the biological and ecological levels, but also at the level of cultural diversity, and at the social and political levels.

However, fostering such a sensibility is very difficult. That difficulty has different characteristics in Europe and in China. In Europe, the practice of pluralism and “polyarchy28” (cf. Kagan 2011, chapter 7) is helpful. However, the disjunctive tradition of European modernity (reducing the properties of wholes to the properties of their constituting parts, fragmenting our knowledge of reality), and the holistic simplification of some ‘green’ discourses (over-emphasizing the ecological harmony of wholes, ignoring the important roles of conflicts and tensions among the parts) constitute risks.

In China, the Taoist tradition and knowledge of practices such as traditional Chinese medicine constitute potential bases for aesthetics of complexity. However, the political climate remains insufficiently appreciative of diversity because, instead of recognising harmony in diversity (as in the Taoist or Heraclitean traditions), the ruling system tries to impose harmony through establishing a uniform consensus in society. Besides, in both Europe and China, a naive belief in green technologies, mistaking complicated cybernetics for the deeper complexity of ecologies, is impoverishing our search for sustainable futures.

The search for cultures of sustainability is not an easy journey, but it is a fascinating one. We can learn from some of the examples mentioned in the present article. Building upon these examples, further transformations are required in the fields of arts and culture, as well as in culture at large.

FURTHER READING
A complete list of references is online at:
http://www.cultura21.net/dokuwiki/doku.php/orange:eu_china_compass_article

About the author:
Research Associate at the Institute of Cultural Theory, Research, and the Arts (IKKK), Leuphana University Lüneburg (Germany), Sacha Kagan founded the international level of Cultura21, Network for Cultures of Sustainability, as well as the International Summer School of Arts and Sciences for Sustainability in Social Transformation (ASSiST). The focus of his research and cultural work lies in the transdisciplinary field of arts and (un-) sustainability. http://www.sachakagan.wordpress.com

28 A polyarchy is a regime of authority that allows various non-hierarchical political configurations. The term is borrowed from Robert Dahl.
Are the Chinese all pragmatic, do they believe in authority, always put community before the individual and shy away from direct conflict? This is what the introductory texts on China say. Stereotyping and mutual misunderstanding are still widespread between Europe and China. That does not only hold for the broad general public but includes the cultural sector and political elites. While explanatory and educational discourse about the other culture tries to improve the situation, it sometimes only reinforces reductionist patterns of perception. Wang Ge, philosopher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, sees no easy way out of the circle of preconception and self-correction. This is just the way understanding works, as long as preconceptions do not become fixed and dogmatic. Even negative images can become productive in this process. Starting as a meta-conversation about European-Chinese dialogue the talk itself develops into a direct dialogue, when Ralph Obermauer asks her about individuality, religion, popular culture and consumerism in contemporary China.

RO: Intercultural orientation discourse has the following difficulty: if knowledge about the other culture is scarce, it needs to be simplified and therefore runs the risk of homogenisation and essentialisation (i.e. claiming that the foreign culture has an essence, unchangeable and fixed, behind the appearance of changes) of the other. In the case of China, trying to find the lowest common denominator often makes these discourses miss the incredibly diverse and complicated reality of today’s China. Do you see that danger in current European discourse on China?

WG: There are always preconceptions. They are a necessary point of departure. It is not possible to encounter another culture in a directly proportional structure of knowledge. However, the pre-given horizon must not be fixed, it must not dogmatically stand in the way. The framework of stereotypes and concepts used to understand a foreign culture needs to be adjustable and adaptable. But in any event, I do not think there is such a thing as a concrete, unified image of a certain culture. This always depends on a person’s characteristic experiences and encounters, which form the image of a country.

RO: But one does find stereotyping statements in theoretical texts as well. Even deconstructionist authors such as François Jullien or Byung-Chul Han cannot avoid phrases such as “Chinese thought as such does X” or “The Far East does not know Y”. Regarding the complexity of contemporary China, do you still consider such language is appropriate?

WG: François Jullien has a certain method. In his account of Chinese thought he tries to avoid both Western and Eastern concepts, since especially the Western ones are heavily burdened with connotations and misunderstandings. He does indeed try to level the field before re-cultivation in order to then introduce new concepts with the help of certain classics. For example, he uses the notion of 势 (shi) (Position, Circonstances, Pouvoir, Potentiel – Position, Circumstances, Power, Potential) in order to explain the Chinese concept of immanence. And after all, the ultimate aim of his method is located in the West itself.
He wants to reflect on himself through the eyes of a foreign culture. He might be criticised for a typological approach to cultures but that is due to his method.

**RO:** *In certain interviews at least, we can find him jumping to conclusions on the sociological level though, for example when the ancient Chinese thought figure of ‘silent transformation’ is applied to China’s reform period of the past 30 years. Can we really understand today’s China through recourses like that?*

**WG:** Thinking patterns like that always involve both sides. Leibniz for example still praised China as a country that honours natural right much better before China became the land of despotism in Montesquieu, Kant and Hegel. The contradiction is resolved when one takes into account modifications in the concept of natural law in the West. Dislocation takes place not only in the image of the other but also in the changed concepts of self. That holds true almost always, when we speak of different types of thought. For instance, Heidegger criticises occidental thought for exclusively focusing on Being and neglecting Becoming. However, Being and Becoming are both comprised in both Western and Eastern thinking. One is not even conceivable without the other. If one adheres to one pole as point of origin for a while, then certain patterns of thinking can be initiated, but that is always only valid within a certain structure.

**RO:** *How would you then interpret the changes in the image of China in Germany and Europe, with regard to changes on the side of the viewers?*

**WG:** That is hard to answer in such a general way. After diplomatic relations were initiated, there was at first sympathy for China. One had compassion for the victims of the Cultural Revolution. And China was considered a mysterious land with a very special history. Maybe benevolence was due to the fact that China eased cold war tensions between the USA and the USSR. 1989 was the turning point towards the human rights angle. At first, only the Chinese government was questioned, the Chinese people were seen as innocent and misguided. But little by little, the West also became disillusioned with the Chinese people. Nowadays they are seen as copyright thieves, bad quality producers, environmental polluters, politically immature people. Of course, the West has its favourite children among the Chinese: artists, intellectuals, dissidents; but dissidence is an absolute precondition for this mercy. By now, the image has become extremely bad and tensions are rising. Personally, I even welcome this negative image – it also is a kind of pre-knowledge which can help change and understanding. Encounter is not just adaptation but also participation and disagreement.

**RO:** *Do Chinese intellectuals sometimes feel pushed into the roles of government speaker or dissident? Often they are addressed critically by Westerners in panel discussions. Often these Westerners mainly do this to satisfy their own audience at home.*

**WG:** A question can be a question or a form of pressure to coerce the other into taking sides, into making a commitment. Many Chinese artists and intellectuals are very sensitive in that regard. They want to articulate complexity, not confirm pre-existing judgments. Asking questions in a binary way, unambiguously attaching ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to politically correct expectations does not show willingness to truly engage in intercultural communication. The necessary unease with one’s own pre-conceptions is lacking.

**RO:** *Do you even see a symmetrical ‘dialogue’? In most of these conversations the topic is China, it’s rarely Europe.*

**WG:** That is simply due to the fact that Chinese intellectuals know more about the West than vice versa. I am sorry I have to put it that way…
RO: Why is that?

WG: It is not necessarily a matter of arrogance. The West is simply strong and highly developed. That is a fact. We even notice that in our own language use, for example the fact that the Chinese feel the pressure to explain and justify themselves. Why is it that the Chinese government is so nervous and confused regarding the human rights critique or the critique of environmental pollution? During the Tang dynasty they wouldn’t even have blinked! Now they need to concern themselves seriously with this. These are clear indications that Western values are already dominant worldwide. Nothing is balanced here and it need not be. If there are good universal values they should be promoted. But there are of course always also interests that are silently transported with these value requirements.

RO: Considering that strong Western influence pervades contemporary Chinese society, how appropriate is the persistently recurrent recourse to “Confucian Values” in the orientation for outside observers? Is there a really strong presence of Confucianism in the ethical practices of today’s Chinese society, beyond ideological function and nationalist folklore?

WG: There are two Confucianisms. One is used by the government. It is very vague and does not play an important role. The other, dating back to Confucius and his followers, with a certain affinity to science, has in fact left many traces in everyday life. One has even forgotten to ascribe some of these practices to Confucius, for instance the desire to save one’s face and the face of the other at the same time. I do think that is still very important, in Japan too, by the way. One can distinguish between the West’s culture of sin and the East’s culture of shame. In a culture of shame the point of departure is not subjectivity but inter-subjectivity, commonality, togetherness. I read and know myself through the other. I think that can indeed be shown systematically.

RO: As an observer one can have a hard time figuring out how this fits with the consumerist surface of contemporary Chinese cities. Is the influence of the US cultural model of neo-liberalism, growth euphoria, Western popular culture and individualism becoming more important than Confucian traditions these days?

WG: There is no individuality in China today – nor is there any true collectivity. It is a state in between, neither one nor the other. A true individual is lacking because enlightenment is lacking. An ‘I’ who simply acts – arbitrary, excessive and irresponsible – is not an individual for me.

RO: You are referring to the idea of subjectivity, maybe even so-called ‘authentic’ subjectivity. An idea which is deeply inscribed / engrained in Western popular culture: “Just listen to yourself and you will find the deep truth about yourself.” Don’t you think that is imported into China with Western consumerist and popular culture?

WG: I am a pessimist in that regard. After the foundation of the People’s Republic religions were pushed aside. The old values including Confucian ones were done away with and replaced by the new state doctrine. In the beginning, many intellectuals did believe in Mao’s ideas as well. They believed with all their heart and soul that one can find a free and equal society without exploitation and alienation by way of revolution. Of course people were deeply disappointed by events. The new doctrine had also failed and now we have a vacuum of values, as is often said correctly. After the Cultural Revolution, the intellectuals quickly absorbed existentialism and Western philosophy. On the popular level, people tried to fill the void and regain spirituality with Qi Gong and shallow spirituality. Sects like Falun Gong would never have thrived had the party not repressed Buddhism, Daoism, Catholicism and Protestantism. Many of the founders of these sects
were charlatans anyway – they did no more than take a few elements from Buddhism and Daoism and expand on them.

**RO:** So you are saying that religion is a necessary source for the modern Western self-consciousness?

**WG:** Belief in science and reason is also a belief. Yes, I think some transcendent corrective – or something similar – is needed in order to guarantee morality. ‘Übermenschen’ do not need that but, unfortunately, we only have very few ‘Übermenschen’.

**RO:** Legitimisation of morality is a different task from the creation of Western subjectivity, or as you called it, true individuality. However, consider that both modern conceptions of morality and expressive freedom of the individual are also historically associated with the struggle against religion.

**WG:** That was crucial in the European Enlightenment but in China the context is entirely different. Besides, European Enlightenment thinkers were strongly influenced by religion, even while they contested it. Many were ambivalent towards religion, for example Kant, Fichte, Hegel. That is a topic for years of study. In any event, atheism in China is not allied with reason. Religion was removed without any interesting or equally fit candidate to replace it. Now we have widespread absence of values, even ruthlessness, look at our scandals such as the case of the poisoned milk powder.

**RO:** In the West this is a deeply conservative argument. Claiming that there cannot be solidarity, morality, values without religion is not only contrary to enlightenment, it is also empirically questionable. Do you really see no chance for the emergence of an enlightened and mature individuality in China without religion?

**WG:** That is not what I said. I diagnosed our situation. There are different kinds of treatment. Religiosity is one of them, a very strong one indeed, but there are others. Sure, there are good reasons for critiques of religion or critiques of reason, but both have great achievements to show for them, historically. At the beginning of the 20th century one already tried to change China by means of aesthetic education in the spirit of Humboldtian ideals of ‘Bildung.’ That was only influential among the elites. Unfortunately, we have to take social strata and hierarchies of knowledge into account, especially since the inequalities continue to grow. The level of education varies dramatically between city and countryside, coastal and other regions, old and young, etc. We cannot afford to rule out an entire area of potential remedy for the situation. A tolerant discursive public sphere should be allowed to emerge. Buddhism or Protestantism too can contribute to the emergence of small areas of civil society. I do not think we can expect an enlightened society that is exclusively legitimised in a secular way.

**RO:** In the post-war decades, popular culture, fashion, films and music contributed strongly to the modernisation and also the democratisation of Western societies. Why are you so pessimistic that the practices and values associated with it might finally arrive in China by way of its cultural opening up?

**WG:** Because I was in Germany and saw that there are not only American commercial movies but there is also arthouse cinema. In China there is almost only commercial cinema, whether American or Chinese…

**RO:** …popular culture is almost always commercial and can still communicate something, arthouse cineastes are a very small minority anyway…

**WG:** …of course, I can see that. And I am not only disappointed in Chinese young people. In the West, in Japan or Korea that holds as well. They are swamped by
consumerism everywhere. Certainly, the formula of consumption in the West might be a little more elevated than here. The commercialisation of China is simply overwhelming. In the days of Mao we had permanent politicisation. Now we have the total opposite, complete de-politicisation. That is not at all harmless – it is not just the friendly result of a harmless free market. Consumerist society is an ideology. In this society of consumption there is no public sphere. In the period you are talking about, popular culture included a form of commonality, solidarity, transgression, civil disobedience. Now we have consumption without commonality, without communication, without public sphere.

**RO:** *In the West, the term ‘post-democracy’ was recently coined for the de-politicisation of society, the shrinking of the public sphere and the management of economic and social affairs by a small elite of technocratic and economic decision makers. The majority of the population is withdrawn in private life and drowned in isolated consumption while a small management elite runs things. When looking at matters from this angle, the difference between European and Chinese societies seems to shrink, despite the difference between the political party systems.*

**WG:** *For me, the political party system has become questionable for a long time, whether in the West or in our system. Representativity is completely questionable. How can we redesign and newly constitute the spiritual and cultural life – that is the essential question. That is a huge responsibility. It is not about making money in the culture industry. This is about participating in the making of culture and politics.*

**RO:** *Cultural production in China seems to have exploded in the recent decades, in art, in film, in literature. Is that not a sign for an awakening civil society, articulating itself in culture?*

**WG:** *During the Cultural Revolution there was so-called ‘8 model theatre’. Apart from these models, everything else was forbidden. Given all the necessary critiques, one aspect we need to acknowledge is that this theatre was fully integrated in everyday life. In this cultural dictatorship, the entire people participated. We may not wish to call this Bildung, rather a form of aesthetic politicisation, but what do we have now? Artists relate to the masses just like oil swimming on the water. They posture as if defending the people but they don’t understand the people at all. This cultural boom you are talking about is an illusion. It only serves the marketing purpose of elite artists. What is going on in society on the ground is not much better than during the Cultural Revolution. People slave away like ants and they have no culture! But we, the petty bourgeoisie, we decorate our days with beautiful things, pretty cafes... Pardon me for sharpening things this way, one should not generalise all of this, but it is an important aspect of our situation.*

**RO:** *The type of culture you mean also seems strongly integrated into the semantic web of a globalised cultural vocabulary. In cultural milieus the national category of perception is no less popular than in the general public, but do you consider the quest for the authentically Chinese in Chinese culture still appropriate?*

**WG:** *That depends. My point is this: Chinese films have won many prizes in the past 30 years. But the Chinese don’t watch these films. Why not? Because filmmakers think twice before they make a film for Chinese audiences. They would rather make films for international festivals and international reputation. In literature, I see another problem: our best writers mostly deal with rural and historical topics. There is a complete lack of narrative for contemporary urban life except for some dull erotic stories. Literature and film in China are not as mature as one tends to think. There is also a severe lack of good*
critics in China in all these areas. We have a lot of adulation and flattery. Obviously that is due to the vanishing public sphere in general and the lack of freedom of the press. Regarding international influence, that varies strongly. Some writers are less attuned to that – Yan Lianke, Jia Pingwa and Mo Yan. Others try to orient themselves more strongly in that direction. Some people are now attempting to reintegrate the old Chinese language into contemporary writing. Paradoxically though, I think that is mostly motivated by the Western regard for the traditionally Chinese. It is complicated.

**RO:** Finally, could you name areas where you see an especially high demand for European-Chinese cultural cooperation?

**WG:** Most of all, one should stop making great things for small elites. One should search for other target groups, go to the countryside. I myself have developed a project for the dialogue programme accompanying the Enlightenment exhibition in the National Museum, which unfortunately was not realized. I suggested turning some of the Beijing parks into thematic parks and have artistic performances in them followed by discussions. For example, you invite some poets to recite new texts and encourage public discussions about them. You invite professional musicians, add a few amateurs, and let people in the parks discuss contemporary music. The same with paintings. After these forums have run successfully for a while, the high point of the project is realised: Agora, public debates in parks about politics, the Polis-Park. That is enlightenment! And it could change many things in China. If someone wants to actually do this with me, come forward, I want nothing for it! But I want to say one last thing to Europeans coming to China: be open, don't bring to too much admiration or too much expectation and do not bring too many preconceived correct ideas. Empty your heart, before you come to China!

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**Ralph Obermauer, Ph.D.,** is a philosopher, journalist and political consultant from Berlin. He studied philosophy and worked as a cultural journalist in Cologne and New York. For the past eight years he has been working as a political advisor at the Federal German Parliament in Berlin.
Part V - Art Disciplines/Themes: Selected Perspectives
The resources chapter was a collaborative work. Links and book recommendations provided by all of the COMPASS authors are integrated in the list below; the majority of online resources related to cultural cooperation and the arts disciplines were compiled in cooperation with or on the basis of information provided by Culture.360.org – the online arts and culture platform of the Asia-Europe Foundation, and the German-Chinese Culture Net of the Goethe-Institut and the Robert Bosch Foundation. COMPASS team member Kerstin Gal, a researcher for cultural learning at Leipzig University, gave major input, especially from the academic field.
CONTEX KNOWLEDGE: CHINA

- BOOKS / ARTICLES
  - Han, Byung-Chul Shanzhai (2011): Dekonstruktion auf Chinesisch (in German). Merve Verlag
  - French: Traité de l’efficacité, Editeur : Le Livre de Poche (5 juin 2002), Collection : Biblio Essais
○ Volland, Nicolai (2004): The Control of the Media in the People’s Republic of China, PhD dissertation, University of Heidelberg


○ Watts, Jonathan (2010): When a Billion Chinese Jump – How China will save mankind, or destroy it. Faber


● ONLINE RESOURCES

○ Caijing (business analysis): http://english.caijing.com.cn/

○ China Dialogue (environmental debate): www.chinadialogue.net


○ Chinese Media Net: http://www.chinesemedianet.com/

○ China Media Project (developments in the Chinese media): http://cmp.hku.hk/

○ China News Digest: www.cnd.org


○ China Perspectives: http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/


○ Chinasmack: http://www.chinasmack.com/

○ Danwei: formerly an online site on Chinese media and internet (archives at: http://danwei.org/); new web magazine about China with themed issues was launched June 2011 at: http://www.danwei.com/

○ Global Times English (official Chinese perspective news & analysis): http://www.globaltimes.cn/


○ The China Beat (academic debate): http://www.thechinabeat.org/

○ Paper Republic Paperrepublic.org

○ Shanghaiist http://shanghaiist.com/

● CHINA THINK TANKS

○ Academica Sinica, Taiwan: http://www.sinica.edu.tw/main_e.shtml

○ Asia Pacific Research Center, Stanford University: http://aparc.stanford.edu/

○ Asia Society New York: http://asiasociety.org/

○ Australian National University China Heritage Project: http://www.chinaheritagequarterly.org/

○ Brussels Institute for Contemporary China Studies: http://www.vub.ac.be/biccs/site/

○ Center for Chinese Culture and Arts in Budapest: http://www.kinainfo.hu/


○ Eurasia Foundation Washington: http://eurasia.org/

○ European Institute for Asian Studies: http://www.eias.org/index.php

○ For more institutes see: http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/iiasn4/guide/instit.html
Free University of Berlin: [http://www.geschult.fu-berlin.de/e/oas/sinologie/](http://www.geschult.fu-berlin.de/e/oas/sinologie/)
Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen Nürnberg: [http://www.lssin.uni-erlangen.de/](http://www.lssin.uni-erlangen.de/)
International Institute of Asian Studies: [http://www.iias.nl/about-iias](http://www.iias.nl/about-iias)
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven: [http://www2.arts.kuleuven.be/info/RU_sinologie](http://www2.arts.kuleuven.be/info/RU_sinologie)
Modern East Asia Research Center at University of Leiden: [http://www.mearc.eu/](http://www.mearc.eu/)
Paris Diderot University: [http://www.univ-paris-diderot.fr/sc/site.php?bc=LCAO&np=accueil&g=m](http://www.univ-paris-diderot.fr/sc/site.php?bc=LCAO&np=accueil&g=m)
Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, Taiwan: [http://www.rchss.sinica.edu.tw/english/](http://www.rchss.sinica.edu.tw/english/)
Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelms Universität Bonn: [http://www.ioa.uni-bonn.de/abteilungen/sinologie](http://www.ioa.uni-bonn.de/abteilungen/sinologie)
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona: [http://pagines.uab.cat/asiaoriental/en](http://pagines.uab.cat/asiaoriental/en)
University of Cambridge: [http://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/](http://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/)
University of Heidelberg: [http://www.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/e-index.html](http://www.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/e-index.html)
University of Lausanne: [http://www.unil.ch/orient](http://www.unil.ch/orient)
University of Leipzig: [http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~ostasien/en/](http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~ostasien/en/)
University of London School of Oriental and African Studies: [http://www.soas.ac.uk/about](http://www.soas.ac.uk/about)
University of Nottingham China Policy Institute: [http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cpi](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cpi)
University of Oxford China Centre: [http://www.chinacentre.ox.ac.uk/](http://www.chinacentre.ox.ac.uk/)
University of Salamanca: [http://asiaoential.usal.es/](http://asiaoential.usal.es/)
University of Sheffield: [http://www.shef.ac.uk/secs/](http://www.shef.ac.uk/secs/)
University of Venice: [http://www.unive.it/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=6694](http://www.unive.it/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=6694)
University of Vienna: [http://www.univie.ac.at/Sinologie/](http://www.univie.ac.at/Sinologie/)

**SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE CITY Magazines & WEBSITES**
- City Weekend: (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou) [http://www.cityweekend.com.cn/beijing/](http://www.cityweekend.com.cn/beijing/)
- Smart Shanghai: [http://www.smartshanghai.com/](http://www.smartshanghai.com/)

**RELEVANT CHINESE MEDIA FOR CULTURAL MARKETING**
○ City Pictorial: http://www.citypictorial.com.cn/
○ Douban.com: http://www.douban.com
○ Modern Weekly: http://www.modernweekly.com/

© CONTEXT KNOWLEDGE: EUROPE

● BOOKS / ARTICLES
○ Scott, C. P. (2002): Comments are free, but facts are sacred (1921), The Guardian, November 29, www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2002/nov/29/1
○ Trappel, Josef; Meier, Werner A.; D’Haenens, Leen (ed) (2011): Media in Europe Today, Intellect (UK)

● ONLINE RESOURCES AND THINK TANKS ON EUROPE IN EUROPE
○ Centre for European Policy Studies – CEPS (Brussels): http://www.ceps.eu/home
○ Council of Europe Culture Committee and Secretariat: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/default_en.asp
○ Demos – general think tank: http://www.demos.co.uk/
○ ERICarts European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research: http://www.ericarts.org/web/index.php
○ European Institute London School of Economics: http://www2.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/home.aspx
○ French Institute of International Relations, Ifri (Paris): http://www.ifri.org/
○ Friends of Europe (Brussels): http://www.friendsofeurope.org/
○ Fundacion Alternativas (Madrid): http://www.falternativas.org/
○ Institute of European Studies Brussels: http://www.ulb.ac.be/iee/en/
○ Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung: http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/
○ Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’ (The Hague): http://www.clingendael.nl/
○ Publication on European studies by the Center for Applied Policy Research (C·A·P) at the University of Munich: http://www.cap-imu.de/publikationen/european-studies.php

● EUROPEAN STUDY CENTRES IN CHINA
○ There are several European Study Centres in China, most established with support from the European Commission, e.g. in the frame of the EU-CHINA Higher Education Co-operation Programme: http://esia.asef.org/directory_asia.html
○ Fudan University Shanghai – Centre for European Studies: http://www.cesfd.org.cn/index_en.html
○ JiLin University – Centre of European Studies: http://esc.jlu.edu.cn/english/englishnews.html
○ Shandong University – Centre for European Studies: http://www.europe.sdu.edu.cn/english/en.php
○ Sichuan University – Centre for European Studies: http://flc.scu.edu.cn/sceu/yingwen/introduction.htm
○ Zhejiang University – Centre of European Studies: http://www.zjces.org/en/zxjj.asp

○ EU-CHINA RELATIONS

● STUDIES AND ARTICLES ON EU-CHINA RELATIONS
○ Hauser, Gunther; Kernic, Franz (Hg.) (2009): China. The rising power. Frankfurt am Main; New York, Peter Lang
○ Holland, Martin (Hg.) (2007): The EU through the eyes of Asia. Media, public and elite perceptions in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand. Singapore; Warsaw, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydzialu Zarz dzania Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego
○ Holland, Martin; Chaban, Natalia (2006): The EU through the Eyes of Asia, a study by the Asia-Europe Foundation http://esia.asef.org/documents/ESiA2ndInterimReport.PDF
○ Kerr, David (2007): The international politics of EU-China relations. Oxford Univ. Press (British Academy occasional paper, 10).
In: China 7 (2), S. 227–254.


● EU-CHINA POLICY, PROGRAMMES & ONLINE RESOURCES

○ 2011 EU-China Year of Youth: http://2011euchinayouth.eu/

○ EU-China High-Level Cultural Forum:

Full programme: http://www.euchina-hl-culturalforum.net/

Selection results:


○ EU China Civil Society Forum: http://www.eu-china.net/english/About-Us/About-us.html


○ EU Pavilion at Shanghai World Expo 2010: http://www.euatshanghai2010.eu/

© CULTURAL SECTOR (CHINA AND EUROPE)

● ARTICLES / BOOKS


London: Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA)


○ Boorsma, Peter B.; van Hemel, Annemoon; van der Wielen, Niki (1998): Privatization and culture. Experiences in the arts, heritage and cultural industries in Europe.

Boston, Ma: Kluwer Academic.

○ Dematté, Monica: Art – An Individual Research.


○ Han, Byung-Chul (2005): *Hyperkulturalität. Kultur und Globalisierung*; (in German) Merve, Berlin


○ Kern, Philippe; Smits, Yolanda; Wang, Dana (2011): *Mapping the Cultural and Creative Sectors in the EU and China: A Working Paper in support to the development of an EU-China Cultural and Creative Industries’ (CCIs) platform*.

○ Knopp, Hans-Georg, Odenthal, Johannes (2011): *Positionen 3. Zeitgenössische Künstler aus China (Positions No. 3: Contemporary Artists from China)*; commissioned by Goethe-Institut and Haus der Kulturen der Welt (House of World Cultures Berlin); Goettingen: Steidl


○ Liu Fengshu (2011): *Urban Youth in China: Modernity, the Internet and the Self*; Routledge, New York


○ Nitschke, Uwe; Siebenhaar, Klaus (2010): *Culture Management in China – A German Perspective on Chinese Practice with a Feedback by young Chinese Cultural Managers*; B & S Siebenhaar Verlag, Berlin/Kassel


○ Sarikakis, Katharine (2007): *Media and cultural policy in the European Union*; Amsterdam,
Rodopi (European studies, 24)

○ Schneider-Roos, Katharina; Thiedig, Stefanie: CULTURE SCAPES, Chinas Kulturszene ab 2000 (in German), Merian. http://www.culturescapes.ch/publication_112


● ONLINE RESOURCES CULTURAL SECTOR: CHINA

○ BCDF – Beijing Culture Development Foundation: http://www.bcdf.org.cn/


○ China Culture (by Ministry of Culture, PRC): http://www.chinaculture.org/index.html

○ Chinese Culture – Confucius Institute: http://culture.chinese.cn/

○ Chinese Cultural Policy: http://www.ifa.de/?id=5786&L=1

○ Hanban: http://www.hanban.edu.cn/

○ Ministry of Culture PRC: http://www.mcprc.gov.cn/


○ SCDF – Shanghai Culture Development Foundation: http://shcdf.eastday.com

● CREATIVE INDUSTRIES RESEARCH & STATISTICS: CHINA

● ONLINE RESOURCES CULTURAL SECTOR: EUROPE
  ○ Boekman Foundation (cultural policy): http://www.boekman.nl/EN/index.html
  ○ Budapest Observatory (cultural policy): http://www.budobs.org/
  ○ Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe: www.culturalpolicies.net
  ○ Council of Europe: www.coe.int
  ○ Culture360.org - connecting Asia and Europe through Arts and Culture: http://culture360.org
  ○ Culture Action Europe: www.cultureactioneurope.org/lang-en/
  ○ Culture is it! (& id22): http://id22.net/culture-is-it
  ○ ENCATC (European network of cultural administration training centres): http://www.encatc.org/pages/index.php
  ○ ERIICarts – European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research: http://www.ericarts.org/web/index.php
  ○ EUCLID – European & international information services for arts & culture: http://www.euclid.info/
  ○ EUNIC – The Network of European Union Cultural Relations Institutes : www.eunic-online.eu
  ○ European Audiovisual Observatory (cultural policy): http://www.obs.coe.int/
  ○ European Commission DG Education & Culture: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index_en.htm
  ○ IFACCA – International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies: www.ifacca.org
  ○ Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (German Institute for International Relations): http://www.ifa.de/
  ○ Interarts (cultural policy): http://www.interarts.net/es/
  ○ LabforCulture: www.labforculture.org
LEARNING / TRAINING / EDUCATION

- BOOKS AND ARTICLES ON CROSS-CULTURAL AND CULTURAL LEARNING / TRAINING

- An, Ran; Cui, Shuhui (2010): Wen hua de dui hua. Han yu wen hua yu kua wen hua chuan bo. 文化的对话: 汉语文化与跨文化传播. Di 1 ban. 北京: 北京大学出版社


- Bond, Michael Harris (ca.1998): Beyond the Chinese Face. Insights from Psychology. 10. impr. 香港: 欧洲大学出版社


- Earley, P. Christopher, Angy Soon; Tan Joo-Seng (2006): CQ: Developing Cultural Intelligence at Work. 纽约: 斯坦福大学出版社


Lay, G. Tradescant; Squier, E. G.; Jones, George; Beach, Moses Yale; Zieber, George B.; Taylor, William; Munsell, Joel (1843): The Chinese as they are: Their moral and social character, manners, customs, language: with remarks on their art and sciences, medical skill, the extent of missionary enterprise, etc. Albany, [New York], [Boston], [Philadelphia], [Baltimore]: Published by George Jones, Museum Building; Burgess and Stringer, and M.Y. Beach, New York; Redding and Co. Boston; G.B. Zieber [i.e., Zieber], Philadelphia; Wm. Taylor, Baltimore.

Moodien, Michael A. (Ed.) (2009): Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence. Los Angeles [u.a.]: SAGE.

Tian, Min (2008): The poetics of difference and displacement. Twentieth-century Chinese-Western intercultural theatre. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Univ. Press.


LEARNING / TRANSFORMATION


Schein, Ed: Kurt Lewin’s Change Theory in the Field and in the Classroom: Notes Toward a Model of Managed Learning: http://www.solonline.org/res/wp/10006.html#three_aae


Trungpa, Chogyam; Gimian, Carolyn Rose (2003): *Shambhala: the sacred path of the warrior*. Boston, Mass: Shambhala (Shambhala library)

**PRACTICES (TRAINING / LEARNING)**

Appreciative Inquiry (AI): Project facilitation and/or management tool. It is a cooperative search for the best in people, their organisations, and the world around them. It involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to heighten positive potential, and encourages participants to stay positive and appreciative of what is. Learn more: Cooperrieder, D.L. & Whitney, D.: *Appreciative Inquiry: a positive revolution in change*. P. Holman & T. Devane (eds.), The Change Handbook, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., pages 245–263.


Further Information and Literature by William J. Starosta: http://en.scientificcommons.org/william_j_starosta

Further Information and Literature by Guo-ming Chen: http://en.scientificcommons.org/guo-ming_chen

Intercultural Conflict Style (ICS) Inventory is an assessment tool for identifying fundamental approaches for resolving conflict across cultural differences developed by Mitch Hammer, Ph.D. http://www.icsinventory.com


Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) is a conflict style inventory, a tool developed to measure an individual’s response to conflict situations. It is designed to assess an individual’s behaviour in conflict situations, i.e. situations in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible.

**CULTURAL EXCHANGE**

**INTERNET PLATFORMS FOR EUROPE-CHINA CULTURAL EXCHANGE**

Asia-Europe Foundation: http://www.asef.org/

China-Norway Cultural Exchange: http://www.norway.cn/News_and_events/Culture/

China-Sweden exchange: http://www.sweden.cn/

Part VI – Resources
○ Chinese-French cultural and science exchange [http://www.aurore-sciences.org/fr]
  (Page of the Hanban about international cultural exchange and cooperation)
○ Culture360.org - Connecting Asia and Europe through Arts and Culture: [www.Culture360.org]
○ EU-China Year of Youth 2011: [http://2011euchinayouth.eu/]
○ German Chinese Culture Net: [http://www.de-cn.net/mag/lit/deindex.htm], A platform on Chinese-German exchange in culture; by Goethe-Institut and Robert Bosch Foundation
○ SinOptic China-Switzerland platform: [http://www.sinoptic.ch/]

● CHINA CULTURAL CENTERS IN EUROPE (CHINESE MINISTRY OF CULTURE)
○ CCC website: [http://www.cccweb.org/en/]
○ Chinese Cultural Centre, Berlin: [http://berlin.cccweb.org/de/]
○ Chinese Cultural Centre, Paris: [http://paris.cccweb.org/fr/]
○ Chinese Cultural Centre, Malta: [http://malta.cccweb.org/mt/]

● EUROPEAN-CHINESE BLOGS (IN CHINESE)
○ Douban (Chinese Lifestyle and Culture): [http://www.douban.com/]
○ QQ (EU in China): [http://t.qq.com/eu-in-china]
○ t.63 (EU in China): [http://t.163.com/euinchina]

● LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS
○ Association for Chinese as a Foreign Language: [http://www.fachverband-chinesisch.de/index.php]
○ Cross Asia: [http://crossasia.org/en/home.html] (Virtual library with databases to Doctoral Dissertations Full-text Database, Masters’ Theses Full-text Database, China Yearbooks Full-text Database)
○ Sino-Western Glossary of Intercultural Terms, Richard Trappl, University of Vienna (to be published)
ART DISCIPLINES / THEMES

● PERFORMING ARTS
  ○ China Culture Information: http://english.ccnt.com.cn/
  ○ ENICPA - European Network of Information Centres for the Performing Arts: www.enicpa.net
  ○ European Festivals Association: http://www.efa-aef.eu/
  ○ IETM International network for contemporary performing arts: http://www.ietm.org/
  ○ NCPA – National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing: http://www.chncpa.org
  ○ Pearle – Performing Arts Employers Associations League Europe: http://www.pearle.ws/
  ○ Poly: http://www.polytheatre.com/
  ○ Propel: http://www.propel.cn/

● VISUAL ARTS
  ○ Artcn (Info on Chinese art including design): http://www.de-cn.net/ift/lin/bku/deindex.htm (Chinese)
  ○ Artintern: http://www.artintern.net/ (Chinese)
  ○ ArtHub Asia: http://arthubasia.org/
  ○ Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong: http://www.aaa.org.hk/home.aspx
  ○ Cartoonwin (Chinese Cartoons): http://www.cartoonwin.com/
  ○ China Academy of Art: http://www.chinaacademyofart.com/
  ○ Chinese Art Online: www.chinese-art.com
  ○ ELIA – European League of Institutes of the Arts: http://www.elia-artschools.org/
  ○ German-Chinese Art Association: http://www.d-c-k-v.de/
  ○ Himalayas Art Museum Shanghai: http://www.himalayasart.cn/
  ○ Hong Kong International Art Fair: http://www.hongkongartfair.com/
  ○ ICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity (HKSC): http://www.creativehk.edu.hk/
  ○ Minsheng Art Museum: http://www.minshengart.com/
  ○ Overseas Chinese Art Terminal: http://www.ocat.com.cn/
  ○ Reshaping History/ Today Art Museum: http://www.reshapinghistory.org/
  ○ SH Art – Asia Pacific Contemporary Art Fair, Shanghai: http://www.shcontemporary.info/en/
  ○ Sinopop.org (blog): http://www.sinopop.org/
  ○ The Pacific Contemporary Art Fair, Shanghai: http://www.shcontemporary.info/en/
  ○ Today Art Museum: http://www.todayartmuseum.com/
MUSIC
- Bureau export: Partner for French music around the world: http://www.french-music.org/
- Chime European Foundation for Chinese Music Research: http://home.planet.nl/~chime/
- China Music Radar: an insider’s look at the music industry in China (Blog in English): http://www.chinanusicradar.com/
- Information on the underground/independent music scene in China (English): http://www.rockinchina.com/
- Shanghai Conservatory of Music: http://www.shcmusic.edu.cn/

LITERATURE
- Beijing Lady Book Saloon: http://www.yufeng.cc/
- BIZ German Book Information Centre, Beijing: http://www.biz-beijing.org
- China Book International: www.cbi.gov.cn/wisework/content/10000.html
- Chinese literature network: http://www.literature.org.cn/
- Chinese lyric database: http://www.shigeku.com/
- Faguo Wenhua (French Literature in Chinese): fulei.faguowenhua.com/
- Literature exchange on Chinese-German Culture Net by Goethe-Institut: http://www.de-cn.net/mag/lit/deindex.htm
- One Way Street library, Peking: http://www.onewaystreet.cn/%280g1dth455d0rjgqnzcip1u55%29/newweb/default.aspx
- Shanghai Writers Association: http://lit.eastday.com/

DESIGN
- Research project – Multilingual Typography: http://www.multilingual-typography.com/
  by the design2context Institute of Design Research, Zurich University of the Arts: http://www.design2context.ch/
- The Information Design Lab at the School of Design, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University: http://www.sd.polyu.edu.hk/web/Research/InformationDesignLab/
- Transcultural Design Studies, China Design Campus, L’Ecole de design Nantes Atlantique (France): http://www.lecolededesign.cn/
- The German Society of Design History (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Designgeschichte): http://www.gfdg.org/
- DCKD Deutsch-Chinesischer Kulturaustausch für Kunst und Design (German-Chinese Cultural Exchange for Art and Design): http://www.dckd.org/
● ART & SUSTAINABILITY


○ Cape Farewell: [http://www.capefarewell.com](http://www.capefarewell.com)

○ Coal: [http://www.projetcoal.fr](http://www.projetcoal.fr)

○ Connect2culture: [http://connect2culture.culture360.org](http://connect2culture.culture360.org)


○ Cultural mobility information network: [http://on-the-move.org/library/60/green-mobility](http://on-the-move.org/library/60/green-mobility)

○ Culture|Futures: [http://www.culturefutures.org](http://www.culturefutures.org)

○ Dialogue on art, science and climate change: [http://artandclimatechange.culture360.org](http://artandclimatechange.culture360.org)

○ Eco/art/scot/land: [http://ecoartscotland.net](http://ecoartscotland.net)


○ Julie’s Bicycle: [http://www.juliesbicycle.com](http://www.juliesbicycle.com)

○ MaD (Make a Difference): [http://www.mad.asia](http://www.mad.asia)

○ Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation: [http://www.rhfamilyfoundation.org](http://www.rhfamilyfoundation.org)

○ Shan Shui Conservation Center: [http://www.shanshui.org](http://www.shanshui.org)

○ Tipping Point: [http://www.tippingpoint.org.uk](http://www.tippingpoint.org.uk)

○ Transition Towns Network: [http://transitionnetwork.org](http://transitionnetwork.org)

○ und. Institut für Kunst, Kultur und Zukunftsfähigkeit (Institute for Art, Culture and Sustainability): [http://und-institut.de](http://und-institut.de)

○ Vitamin Creative Space: [http://www.vitamincreativespace.com](http://www.vitamincreativespace.com)
ABOUT THE COMPASS CORE TEAM

Katja Hellkötter is an independent consultant and project facilitator with more than 15 years of professional experience in Europe-China cooperation. She has worked in different positions, as expert, manager and entrepreneur, e.g. as a consultant for the China programme development at the headquarters of the Goethe-Institut, as a Chief Representative and sister-city cooperation manager for the City of Hamburg in Shanghai, and as a partnership manager for European-Chinese environmental projects. She has a background in China Studies, Chinese and Business Studies. She is the founder of CONSTELLATIONS Shanghai, an agency offering ideas, development and management across sectors and cultures, with a focus on culture, education and sustainable development.

Yi Wen is a communication expert who works as an independent journalist and communication consultant. She has a background in Fine Arts (Anhui Normal University) and in Communication Studies (UdK – Berlin University of Arts). Communication – both practice and theory – is her focus. She has worked for example as head of communication for the large-scale Goethe-Institut project in Beijing under the patronage of Federal President Horst Köhler and State President Hu Jintao “Germany and China – Moving Ahead Together” (2008). Together with the communication expert Prof. Manfred Bruhm, she translated Communication Policy (Kommunikationspolitik, Verlag Vahlen, Munich) into Chinese, a publication which received the Annual Industry Publication Editor’s Choice Award in China in 2005.

Katelijn Verstraete from Belgium, is a Sinologist with long-term experience in – and passion for – Asia-Europe cultural cooperation and cultural policy. She founded and co-managed the autonomous art space BizArt in Shanghai between 1999 and 2003. She then joined IETM and initiated their projects in Asia. She was project manager for On-the-Move and closely involved in EU projects on mobility of artists. Since 2007, Katelijn has been Assistant Director of Cultural Exchange at the Asia-Europe Foundation. Her work today allows her to develop multilateral projects between Asia and Europe in the areas of cultural policy, artistic exchange, capacity building and information exchange, such as the culture360.org online platform for arts and culture between and in Asia and Europe.

SHEN Qilan (Dr) is a graduate of Westfälische Wilhelms-University Münster, Germany in Culture and Religion. She is a lecturer at the Shanghai Institute of Visual Art of Fu Dan University. Currently director of the Chinese magazine Art World’s editorial department, where she was an overseas journalist 2008-2010, she is a keen observer of global contemporary art. As project director for large-scale Art World Expo special project “Page the World – 2010 International Art Media Sharing Platform”, she managed cooperation with international art media from Germany, Switzerland and ARTE TV. She was responsible for the education programme of the 2011 project “Future Pass – Collateral Event of the 54th Venice Biennial” involving over 100 international artists and is a speaker in 5th World Summit on Arts and Culture in Melbourne, Australia.

Judith Staines is a freelance arts consultant, researcher and professional editor based in the UK. She is Europe Editor of Culture360.org, the Asia-Europe cultural cooperation platform of the Asia-Europe Foundation and, in 2011 she co-authored The International Co-production Manual for IETM and Korea Arts Management Service. She was formerly Editor of the IETM international cultural mobility web portal On-the-Move. She is well respected for her knowledge and expertise in cultural mobility matters and cultural networks in Europe and works as an evaluation expert on EU culture and development programmes around the world.
**Tao Yang** is a freelance editor based in Beijing. After earning a BA in German Language and Literature from Beijing University she began her career at China Radio International (CRI) where she was a deputy director, presenter and editor for German Programme. After ten years with CRI she moved to Germany for 5 years where she was a senior Chinese programme editor, presenter and journalist for Deutsche Welle. Among her many accomplishments is her work as the chief editor on a three-year project for the German Foreign Ministry titled, “Germany and China – Moving Ahead Together,” where she earned high praise from the German Ambassador to China. Tao Yang also works as a professional media marketing consultant sharing her expertise with many organisations, foreign and domestic.

**Roman Wilhelm** is a graphic and typeface designer from Germany, a specialist for cultural interaction between China and the West. Besides his job as a creative director for the Berlin- and Beijing-based communication agency *INSIDE A Communications AG*, he works as a member of the “Multilingual Research Group” at the *design2context* Institute for Design Research, Haute Ecole d’Art et de Design, Geneva. As well as numerous workshops and lectures in China, he teaches hand lettering at the Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design Halle. The Glossary was elaborated as part of Roman Wilhelm’s work for *INSIDE A* and with the support of Song Xinyan, *INSIDE A*’s founder.

**Kerstin Gal** is a researcher and PhD student from Germany, focusing on cultural learning at Leibzig University. She is a graduate of Sinology and German studies, and has worked as a German language Teaching Assistant for Chinese students at Fudan University in Shanghai in the context of a programme run by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). She also worked as a project management assistant for the head of the DAAD office in Shanghai, organising intercultural exchange programmes such as the “DAAD Children’s University”. Since Sept 2011, Kerstin is working again at Shanghai University of Science and Technology as DAAD lecturer.

**Emilie Wang** has worked with the Shanghai Grand Theatre Arts Group as Director of the International Cooperation Department for four years, responsible for the Group’s international communication and development. Prior to this, she worked at the Foreign Affairs Office of Shanghai Municipality for six years as an interpreter for the Mayor and other top city officials. She has a BA in English Language and Literature from Shanghai International Studies University and an MA in Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics from Beijing Foreign Studies University. She is currently based in London, studying at LSE (London School of Economics) for an MSc in Social and Public Communication. For her dissertation she is researching the “Communication Challenges in East-West Opera Collaboration”.

**Irene Oehler** is a Sinologist from Austria who specialises in intercultural consulting and executive coaching with a focus on cooperation with China. She has been involved in human resource development for the last 18 years, living and working on four continents. Until 2004, she worked in Shanghai as project manager in major training and change management projects for multinational clients and later as executive coach, mainly to Chinese executives. She then moved to Brazil where she specialised in facilitating Brazil-Chinese business relationships. In 2007 she founded the boutique intercultural consultancy, iglobal coaching ltd, which she currently runs from New Zealand, while maintaining a strong network in the Shanghai leadership development market.
The Goethe-Institut is the cultural institution of the Federal Republic of Germany, operating worldwide. When the Goethe-Institut Beijing was established on 1 November 1988, it was the first foreign cultural centre in the PRC. From the beginning, it devoted itself to the promotion of the use of the German language, to provide access to knowledge and information about Germany, and to present Germany’s cultural life. With the progressive opening of China, the opportunity to travel abroad and the development of internet culture, it is now much easier to obtain information about the cultural, political and social life in the world.

"Under these conditions it is our first task to strengthen the network of the art world and the exploration of common interests", says Peter Anders, Director of the Goethe-Institut China. “Therefore we are cooperating with partners from various fields, from national institutions as well as on the communal and private level.”

Peter Anders, who transferred to Beijing in May 2011, has worked in many other regions in the world, such as Africa and Latin America. “I am very excited to be in China now, after having worked in other BRICS countries and having witnessed the growing south-south collaboration in cultural spheres. For me it’s very interesting to link this with European or Western culture. I do believe that the extremely rich cultural tradition in China will have a huge impact on international exchange.”

The Goethe-Institut not only invites German artists and experts from the fields of education, art and culture to come to China, but also invites Chinese artists, specialists and journalists to Germany to experience Germany on a personal level. The residence programmes have been underway for many years, generating long-lasting effects.

Under the macro circumstances represented by the restructuring of state-owned museums, the fast expansion in the field of performing arts, the rush into large-scale projects such as international festivals and creative industries, the need for talents in the field of culture and art management is rapidly growing in China. It was for these reasons that the Goethe-Institut initiated the advanced training and study programme called ‘Culture Management’ in 2009, which aims to further qualify young and upcoming managers, to broaden their international perspectives and offer international experience to Chinese cultural institutions.

Speaking of the differences within Chinese-European cultural cooperation, Peter Anders commented that the differences are of course the different systems of reference, the different traditions, different history. “I’m totally convinced of the necessity of personal encounters. By fostering these encounters we can observe and learn from different ways of approach. Our objective at the Goethe-Institut is therefore to facilitate these personal encounters and work on creating better conditions for international exchange.”

www.goethe.de/china
The British Council is the UK’s international organisation for cultural and educational relations. Working in over 100 countries worldwide, its aims are to create international opportunities and build trust and understanding between people in the UK and in other countries through the exchange of knowledge and ideas, and through sharing the UK’s assets in Arts, English and Education.

The British Council opened its first office in China in 1943. The British Council’s Director in China, Joanna Burke, who is also the Cultural Counsellor at the British Embassy explains: “We re-opened in Beijing in 1979 and we now work in five cities in China. In Beijing we operate as the Cultural and Education Section of the British Embassy. In Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing we operate as the Cultural and Education Section of the respective British Consulates-General. In Hong Kong we are known as the British Council.” At the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, the British Council developed and managed the UK’s programme of public events. As well as entertaining many of the 8 million visitors to the UK Pavilion with a daily programme of events, collaboration and the development of longer-term cultural links lay at the heart of the programme.

The British Council owns the world’s largest collection of British modern and contemporary art. In 2011, working with Chinese curators, the works will be shared with Chinese audiences through an exhibition from the collection called Made in Britain which will tour to four Chinese cities.

In 2012 to celebrate the UK’s Olympic year and to strengthen connections between the UK and China in the arts, the British Council will lead a major festival of arts and creative industries in China called UK Now. As well as a programme of over 100 events taking place across China, the programme will include four UK-China joint initiatives, in cultural management, cultural heritage, technical skills training and the creative economy. The British Council will also be promoting Chinese writing and translation through the China Market Focus at the 2012 London Book Fair.

Connections through Culture (http://ctc.britishcouncil.org.cn/) is an ongoing British Council project which facilitates connections between over a thousand Chinese and UK arts institutions through study visits, development grants, networking events and a web platform.

Joanna Burke, who has lived and worked in China for 16 of the past 30 years, believes that developing strong people to people connections between China and Europe has never been so important as it is now, and that the opportunities have never been so great. “Through the arts, we are always looking for new ways of connecting with and seeing each other. This can be through presenting new work to new audiences in China and in Europe, supporting emerging artists with their first international encounters or adding an international dimension to their work, building creative entrepreneurship or cultural leadership skills, to give just a few examples. The EU China Year of Cultural Dialogue in 2012 also presents us with many new opportunities.”

www.britishcouncil.org.cn
THE DANISH CULTURAL INSTITUTE

The Danish Cultural Institute promotes cultural exchanges between Denmark and the rest of the world. It supports projects aimed at long-term cooperation between foreign and Danish cultural institutions, artists and other professionals. The current Secretary General is Finn Andersen.

The Beijing office of the Danish Cultural Institute was established in the autumn of 2005 following the worldwide celebrations of the bicentennial of Hans Christian Andersen. It supports projects that aim at long-term cooperation between Chinese and Danish cultural and educational institutions, artists and other professionals within the field of creative industries.

Its activities range from presenting art and artists through exhibitions, concerts and stage performances to holding conferences and seminars on cultural and social issues as well as organising study tours on subjects such as social matters and educational and cultural politics.

Eric Messerschmidt, Head of the Danish Cultural Institute in China says “Our mission is to improve the quality of dialogue. I think for a better dialogue with China it would be better to pull out all political and strategic elements in cooperation. With the DCI activities in Beijing, we are also trying to integrate history more into cultural cooperation. We think this enhances understanding, as the Chinese have a more historical perspective.”

http://www.danishculture.cn/en
http://weibo.com/2027174211
ABOUT EUNIC

EUNIC stands for European Union National Institutes for Culture. It is a partnership of national institutions for culture, engaged beyond their national borders and operating with a degree of autonomy from their governments. Founded in 2006, the EUNIC membership currently includes organisations from 26 EU countries and it is intended that this will grow to include institutes from all the member states of the European Union. With the resources of the member institutions are combined, EUNIC has an impressive reach. More than 50,000 staff, working out of about 8,000 offices in more than 200 countries.

The purpose of EUNIC is to create effective partnerships and networks between the participating organisations, and hereby to improve and promote cultural diversity and understanding between European societies, and to strengthen international dialogue and cooperation with countries outside Europe.

The work of EUNIC is centered around four strategic sectors: Multilingualism; Intercultural Dialogue; Culture, Climate and Ecology; International Cultural Co-operation and Management. Each of these sectors is carried through with a project based approach which reflects diversity in all its forms while at the same time recognizing the importance of Europe’s common cultural heritage.

EUNIC operates at two complementary levels:

- The first level consists of the Heads or Directors General of the national institutions.
- The second level comprises clusters of national institutions for culture, based in cities around the world, cooperating together in common projects.

At present, EUNIC comprises more than 50 international clusters distributed in all continents none of which represent the interests of any specific cultural sector. The cluster activities include projects in the arts, education, language, civil society among others. The EUNIC China cluster was established in 2008 and holds around 20 member institutions at present. All over the world, EUNIC encourages its members to engage in a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. Such projects require the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. It is a completely new approach for the cultural institutes, one that is based on encounters and engagements bringing participants together to build a level of trust. When that happens, we may be able to reach those who stand at the edge of society to that they can become included and be part of the social and cultural cohesion, which is the trademark of European civilization.

http://www.eunic-online.eu
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