

# China's public diplomacy: implications for Europe

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Madariaga Foundation (with Clingendael)  
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European Centre for Development  
Policy Management

*ecdpm*

# A few words about ECDPM

- Independent policy 'think and do' tank working on EU's international cooperation for more than 25 years
- Practical, policy-relevant analysis and support to stakeholders from developing countries and European stakeholders
- Our programme: 'Strengthen European External Action' looks at EU's external action at large
- Institutional support by 9 European States - Board and staff drawn from Africa, ACP and Europe

# Structure of the presentation

1. Introduction:
  - definitions and terms
  - Deconstructing China and Europe
  - Co-working on gaps
  - Few remarks on what I read on China's public diplomacy
2. EU preparatory action on culture in external relations: key messages
3. EU concepts and strategies: an enabling power and mirroring power
4. EU Policy-making, organisation, instruments: a bridge builder
5. EU statements, actions, programmes and projects: an enabler, interpreter, composer

# Introduction: definitions and terms

- Concepts I will mostly use today: cultural relations, enabling power, bridge builder, translator, composer, mirroring power.
- Questions of today: learning, convergence, stumbling blocks
- Three dimensions of what Europe can learn from Chinese practice and what it can do for:
  - its future relations with China
  - its relations with other countries, powers or societies
  - its own public diplomacy & cultural relations

# Introduction: deconstructing China and Europe

- China's public diplomacy for domestic consumption – the virtues of the anti-Western course – EU's internal public diplomacy?
- Which Chinese/China model(s) & European model(s)?
- Cultural diversity within China & Europe (EU PA on culture & external relations).
- The reality and the artefact of people to people contacts, Chinese “underground” soft power (S. Balme)
- → Plurality of actors and convergence – public diplomacies, and cultural relations

# Introduction: co-working: exploring and exploiting gaps and spaces (1)

- Cooperation is wide and deep (research and innovation) can it be culturally deeper?
- The importance of multidisciplinary approach in humanities
- Sinology as a decoding lens and interpretation tool:  
Between the “alterity debate” (orientalism), comparatism, the “internationalised capitalist China”, a “Chinesised world”, “Eastern humanism” and multifaceted confucianism (Anne Cheng).
- Working on gaps and spaces of meaning: Francois Jullien: the question of universalism and translations (beyond English and Chinese and beyond business & trade)

# co-working on perceptions



Photo: Damien Helly

# Introduction: exploring and exploiting gaps and spaces (2)

- Role of translation: because of language China is still largely inaccessible
- Risk of asymmetry in translation capacities and the need for Europe to invest in translation: a lost/wrong battle?
- EUNIC Europe China Cultural Compass Glossary
- Potential for re-categorisation / re-composition power (Bruno Latour)



# **Do We Always Mean the Same When We Say the Same? A Glossary**

Source: EUNIC Europe China  
Cultural Compass Glossary, Goethe  
Institut, 2011

# Introduction: exploring and exploiting gaps and spaces

**xuānchuán** [v | 动] propagate,  
public relations

宣传

propaganda

[n | 名] 宣传

Propaganda sounds quite negative to Westerners, especially to Germans, due to the role of political propaganda during the Third Reich as well as in the German Democratic Republic.

Chinese interviewee, EU China Cultural Compass Survey

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 公关” (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**

p.r.

Source: EUNIC Europe China Cultural Compass Glossary, Goethe Institut, 2011

# Introduction: exploring and exploiting gaps and spaces



Photo: Damien Helly

# Introduction: few remarks from what I read on China's public diplomacy

- Difficulty to know what the Chinese government's agenda is, understanding what is behind its public diplomacy requires deeper investment
- Europe part of the American world? (Robert Cooper)  
Implications for cultural relations.
- Is there still hope for a (European) narrative to be heard, beyond the horizon of capitalism and modernism? (Bruno Latour, *The affects of capitalism*)
- What about looking at the diversity of aspirations of all stakeholders, beyond public diplomacy masters? Cultural relations?

# Key messages from the EU preparatory action on culture in external relations (1)

1

Cultural relations have a **huge potential for enhancing European influence and attraction** – ‘soft power’ – in the rest of the world as well as for enhancing awareness of other cultures and the capacity to learn from them in Europe.

2

There is great **demand, in Europe as well as elsewhere, for more and better European cultural relations with the rest of the World** that can also deliver greater prosperity and human development for all.

3

But the European Union has **no cultural relations strategy**. Any future strategy, however, must recognise that people in the rest of the World are not entirely happy with the way Europe currently does the job. They want us to engage in a new way, **sharing and listening together**, rather than simply projecting our individual national cultures. Any future strategy also has to respond better to **the cultural interests and practices of young people**.

# Key messages from the EU preparatory action on culture in external relations (2)

4

EU institutions, national cultural relations agencies and cultural civil society need to work together to build a 'joined up' international cultural relations strategy based on the values of **reciprocity, mutuality and shared responsibility in a spirit of global cultural citizenship**.

5

Such a strategy requires **political will and commitment**. It also has to be **adequately funded** under the European Union's budget and **implemented mainly by cultural professionals**.

6

A series of **prototypes and pilot-projects** should be launched forthwith in order to inform and kick start the strategy. The projects selected should also trigger a process of transformative change in the way Europe's international cultural relations are conceived and carried out.

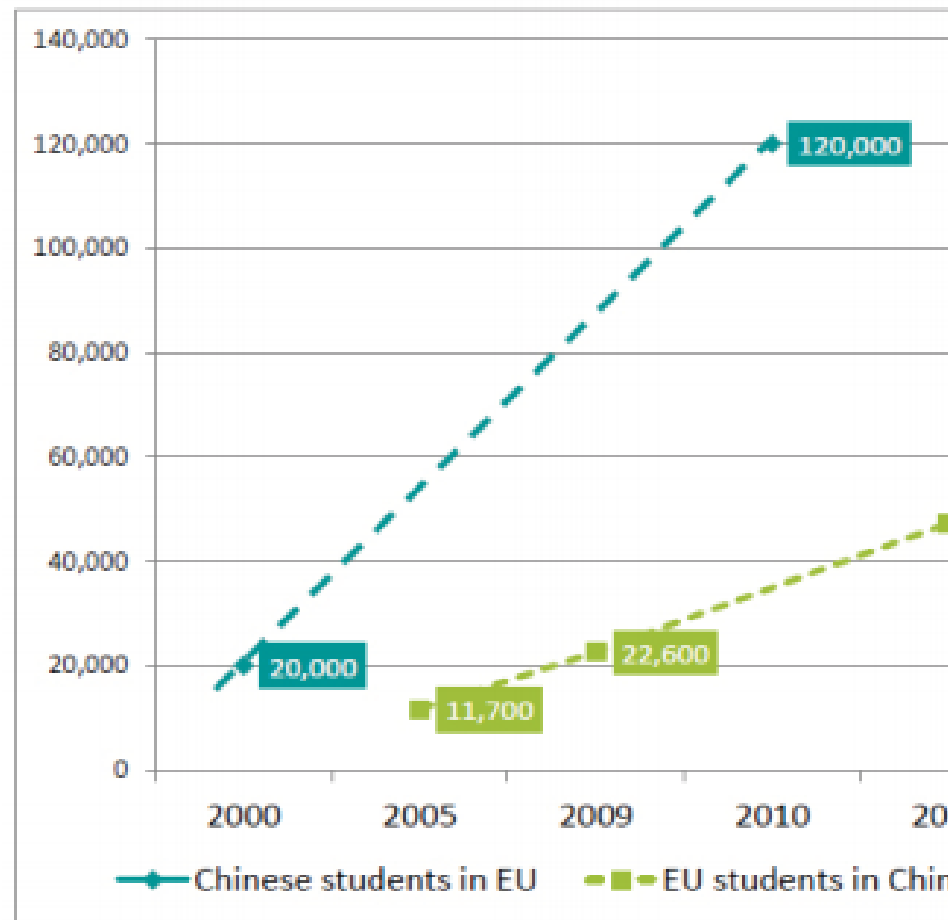
# Learning on concepts and strategies: the EU as an enabling and mirroring power?

- Act as a block following key principles
- Invest in a common European knowledge of the world (and China in particular) + internal own public diplomacy
- Don't be shy of doing "propaganda" but in a listening, respectful and discrete mode
- Build a collectively strategic common vision, and apply subsidiarity (Member states, cities): peer to peer and co-working

# A bridge builder

- 2014 Xi Jinping's speech in Bruges: "we need to build a bridge..."

**Number of Chinese students in the EU and EU students in China (2000-2011)**



Sources: GHK Consulting and Renmin University (2011). *EU-China student and academic situation and future developments*. Zhou Zhong (2013). *China's View on the European Situation*. Presentation held at Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013. International Conference "European Higher Education in the World. Vilnius, 5-6 September 2013."



# EU policy-making, organisation, instruments: a bridge builder

- Reach out to Chinese population in Chinese : still not easy because of media landscape but important to reach out for the sake of mutual understanding.
- Continue to invest in future relations: larger scale multilingual European media, the youth, cultural, student and scientific/ technical exchanges and cooperation.
- Invest massively in Internet-based media assets (beyond Euronews and in cooperation with Member States -- pooling and sharing in the cultural – Cinema co-production and diffusion)
- Invest in better joint knowledge of current and old Chinese trends of expression and thought

Less  
bureaucracy,  
more  
compositions?



Source: Alrequin navigue en Chine,  
Asphodèles, Lyon, 2008

<http://www.ideesgo.com/agenda/arlequin-navigue-en-chine-2>

Digital flows and physical encounters for common multilingual co-creation spaces in science, ecology, arts, creative industries

# Statements, actions, programmes and projects: EU as an enabler, interpreter and composer

- How to make convergence possible in practice?  
Composition (Latour), co-working, consortia.
- Continue to invest in cultural relations (from cinema to arts, high education and language) and mainstreaming cultural and scientific components in business and international relations.
- Subsidiarity: working with cities and local authorities
- (Chinese-speaking) ambassadors of European cultures and interpreters of Chinese culture.
- EU institutions' strategic communication: using Chinese sayings and translation bridges.

# Europe's public diplomacy towards China: “A mountain of documents, a sea of conferences”

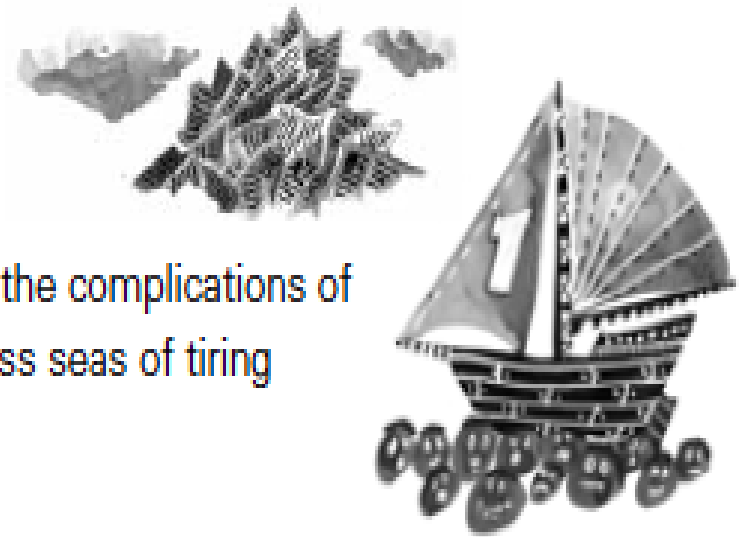
**文山会海 wén shān huì hǎi**

**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



Source: EUNIC Europe  
China Cultural Compass  
Glossary, Goethe  
Institut, 2011

# Europe's public diplomacy towards China: What Europe doesn't control

- The size of the Chinese market is one variable to explain Europeans' diverse interests, competition, as well as weaknesses of Europe as a block
- Chinese authorities' anti-Western rhetorics, possibly used for internal consumption when the ruling party's legitimacy is questioned, cannot be avoided by the EU, despite public diplomacy.
- Access to the media, social media and large public in Chinese language remains a challenge

# Conclusions on EU's ~~public diplomacy~~, cultural relations: Invest to become an enabling power, an interpreter and a composer

- Act as a block with an external cultural strategy and use subsidiarity in cultural relations beyond the traditional public diplomacy model.
- Continue to invest in exchanges (scientific cooperation) and co-working to compose new common spaces with Chinese counterparts
- Create a **European Foundation for external cultural relations** at arm's length from the EU institutions and Member States.

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