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“hybrid spaces”, DeBevoise exceeds the common narrative of state control and rather explores the advantages of the coexistence of state and market.

The author’s professional experience in the Chinese art sector, which provides her with vast amounts of qualitative and quantitative data as well as connections, is an advantage. Using interviews, photos of venues, publications, as well as paintings she manages to visually engage the reader with the diverse spectra of the art world in China.

Despite the chosen timeframe DeBevoise does not limit the subject to this period but rather emphasizes the continuity of the art market and highlights the links between the production pre- and post-1989.

Responding to Deng Xiaoping’s programme of economic reform launched in 1978, the state-sponsored art system started to introduce commercial practices to the art sector.

Subsequently communities outside the establishment as well as those critical of the centralized control found new spaces for art production. Another effect was the establishment of alternative media and exhibition venues. DeBevoise expands from more traditional art history scholarship by analysing the socio-economic connections of the art production and consumption instead of style and quality of art works. As the author only briefly engages in theoretical debates and rather situates her work within the art historical and China studies realm, this analytical frame could have been based on a more comprehensive theoretical contextualization.

With the 1989 Tiananmen attack all hopes for support through the state by the community of “avant-garde” artists withered. Instead, DeBevoise argues, the experimental art sector found acknowledgement through commercial sponsors and in the market in the early nineties. The book clearly delineates that the comparative divisions between contemporary and state sponsored art as well as that of the pre- and post-1989 periods lack

complexity. Instead the author argues that the co-existence of state and market creates diverse and unique dynamics which eventually lead to a shift away from the centralized state controlled art production. This becomes particularly poignant in the second half of the book with its strong focus on contemporary art. Despite acknowledging the diversity of art forms within the art market in the first section of the book, DeBevoise here points out the limits of her research and the need to include the more traditional and realist styles in future studies (p. 271). Finally, she engages in a brief outlook into the importance of the overseas Chinese artists and investors as well as foreign curators.

DeBevoise’s book is a well written narrative of the recent developments of the connections between the state and the market in greater China.

It is aimed at a broad audience from art historians to social scientists and China scholars. It gives exhaustive introductions to particularities and thus is also well suited for undergraduate classes. With this ambitious project DeBevoise “[...]attempts to complicate the study of Chinese contemporary art in order to enrich our understanding of it” (p. 9).

Anna Julia Fiedler

Jia Gao, Catherine Ingram, Pookong Kee (eds.): Global Media and Public Diplomacy in Sino–Western Relations

London: Routledge, 2017. 204 S., 90 GBP

This most recent, ambitious, and densely written work on China’s global media and public diplomacy consists of eleven chapters. The contributions are products of the Melbourne Conference on China with the same title as the volume of May 2012. In the introduction (chapter 1), the volume’s editors Jia Gao (University of Melbourne), Catherine Ingram (University of Sydney),

and Pookong Kee (University of Melbourne) identify the year 2008 as a turning point in Chinese diplomacy with numerous events and incidents which promoted and impaired China's international image.

However, despite a clear contemporary focus, the contributions reach beyond the most recent public diplomacy attempts of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The five "different but interconnected themes" around which the chapters are organized cover contemporary and historical issues. Among them are: 1) Macro assessments of China's soft power (chapters 2 and 3); 2) practices and trends in Chinese public relations (chapters 4 and 5); 3) recent expansion of Chinese global media (chapters 5–7); 4) China's internal political dynamics and its public diplomacy (chapter 9); as well as historical and Chinese perspectives (chapters 10 and 11).

Discussing the analytical perspectives of research on China's approach to foreign policy, the editors identify three common views. First, the "offensive perspective" reads China's diplomatic ventures as "gradually assertive" towards foreign nations or as an "increasingly muscular position". The second, defensive perspective interprets China's diplomatic efforts as rooted in the principles of peaceful coexistence. This, unsurprisingly, is largely in line with official CCP/PRC propaganda. In contrast to these two essentially one-sided perspectives, the editors denote, as a third interactive perspective, an approach balancing elements of aggressiveness and defensiveness.

Gary D. Rawnsley provides a "mid-term assessment" of China's soft power (chapter 2) and suggests that culture and tradition, terms often associated with China's soft power, in fact, entail only limited soft-power capacity. In chapter 3, Juyan Zhang traces current trends and issues in China's public diplomacy. In what he calls the "fine-tuning" of public diplomacy he discusses the often highlighted China Dream as an attempt to

rebrand and promote the country. Zhang introduces important Chinese think tanks which contribute to the development of China's public diplomacy. He also discusses other individual aspects of new public diplomacy practices, such as gastrodiplo-macy, corporate public diplomacy, pop culture diplomacy, and faith diplomacy.

The conditions of Cross-Strait Relations by the Taiwan Affairs Office of China's State Council during the Chen Shui-bian administration are at the core of Sow Keat Tok and Tianru Gao's analysis in chapter 4. Tok and Gao assert that the Taiwan question, considered a domestic matter, "became a pivotal showcase in Beijing's public diplomacy." Covering two of the five larger themes, Claire Seungeun Lee (chapter 5) discusses the influx of foreign (primarily US and Australian) capital in the Chinese media market. She concludes that (limited) foreign direct and cross-border investments in her case study, the film sector, are footed in not only economical, but political and instrumentalist reasoning.

Shixin Ivy Zhang takes on the impact of China's foreign policy on Chinese war reporting in chapter 6. Focusing on the Middle East, she discusses the coverage of the conflicts in Israel–Palestine, Libya, and Syria. According to Zhang, war coverage is directly influenced by China's foreign policy guidelines. On the basis of 23 interviews, she also explores the role of journalists as non-governmental diplomats. In contrast, Peter Cai presents a case study of Chinese state-owned media abroad in chapter 7. With the example of national and provincial Chinese state media in Australia, he shows how a variety of media players have entered the country. However, Cai identifies "little or no discernible impact on Australia's discourse about China, except when its journalists masquerade as genuine foreign reporters in China."

Yi Wang explains the quixotic quest of China's media diplomacy in Australia and beyond in chapter 8. Wang primarily draws

on his first-hand experience and observation as a media professional working in Australia and interacting with Chinese counterparts. He cautions against China's campaigning efforts, describing them as a "forced smile of a rising giant." In chapter 9, Chengju Huang revisits the *Global Times*, a Chinese daily which also appears in English language since 2009. The *Global Times*, also dubbed "China's Fox News" by *Foreign Policy*, is seen as the most influential platform for China's conservative elites. Huang states that the paper's nationalistic and highly conservative outlook rendered its reputation as a typical example of bad public diplomacy. Nevertheless, the *Global Times* actively engages in debates on, among others, important issues on foreign policy and relations. Huang also carefully suggests that the paper's conservative approach might enrich and vitalize the debate on a possible alternative Chinese modernity beyond the dominant Western model.

Shuge Wei's chapter (10) on the development of China's international propaganda from the Qing dynasty to the end of World War II is rooted in a larger study. She connects the earlier strategy of elites to rectify foreigners' misinterpretations of Chinese affairs through the establishment of English language presses to a later, more offensive propaganda policy. The debate on information control within the Nanjing government plays a key role in her argument. Finally, Jianguo Deng and Shaode Qin leave the field of policy analyses in the last chapter (11) as they discuss the history of international communication between China and the West since the late twelfth century up to the present. While the contribution is somewhat different from the rest of the volume, they provide valuable and insightful additional perspectives on "China in the eyes of its beholders". As Deng and Qin claim, it is often portrayed with a new bias ranging from flagrant insult to sycophantic flattery.

While not extensive in length, the individual contributions of this volume cover a wide

array of topics from various fields of research, which all seem to have received increased scholarly attention in recent years. At the same time, the volume's focus on both global media and public diplomacy leads to different, rapidly oscillating perspectives. As usual in volumes like this, overarching concluding remarks are missing. These would further enhance the interconnectedness of the individual contributions and increase the already revealing insights of this work.

Simon Preker

Susanne Bregnbæk (2016): *Fragile Elites. The Dilemmas of China's Top University Students*

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016.
184 S., 24,95 EUR

Susanne Bregnbæk's book *Fragile Elites* asks a series of highly pertinent questions about the role of China's new elites: how elite students experience the pressure they are exposed to, and how they negotiate the tensions between their biographical expectations, their parents and the government. It tries to understand Chinese elite students' struggles as an oedipal project on the "separation from the will of the parents and, by extension, the will of the state" (p.4). It therefore approaches a topic highly evident in Chinese student life that must urgently be debated in China studies to understand areas such as youth, family, middle class and political culture.

In writing about her own feelings and thoughts, the author displays a very high level of methodological reflection. In this respect, the work clearly surpasses existing ethnographies on China. The book introduces fascinating individuals and thick descriptions of the author's experiences in China. Rich in descriptive detail, the book however falls short of providing an analysis of the