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and Comparative Politics**

**Discourses of Transculturality:  
Ideas, Institutions and Practices in India and China**

**A special issue**

**Edited by**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPC	Communist Party of China
CPD	Central Propaganda Department
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CSC	Common Services Centre
CSDS	Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
DIT	Department of Information Technology
EPLSG	External Propaganda Leading Small Group
EPSG	External Propaganda Small Group
FALSG	Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group
GMD	Guomindang (Nationalist Party of China)
GoI	Government of India
IAS	Indian Administrative Service
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IFS	Indian Foreign Service
INA	Indian National Army
IPS	Indian Police Service
IT	Information Technology
JIH	Jamaati Islami-i-Hind
LSG	Leading Small Group
NASSCOM	National Association of Software and Services Companies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OEP	Office of External Propaganda

PBSC	Politburo Standing Committee
PRC	People's Republic of China
PTWLSG	Propaganda and Thought Work Leading Small Group
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SC	Scheduled Castes
SCA	Service Centre Agency
SCIO	State Council Information Office
SDA	State Designed Agency
SDPI	Social Democratic Party of India
SDSA	State of Democracy in South Asia
ST	Scheduled Tribes
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VLE	Village Level Entrepreneur
ZCC	Zonal Cultural Centre

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Transculturality is a conceptual novelty, and it is through discussion and exchanges in oral and written form that novel ideas are developed further and gather momentum and solidity. In this sense, we are grateful that we have been able to follow both paths: the articles that form this Special Issue of the *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics* were initially presented at the Joint Conference of the 'Association for Asian Studies' (AAS) and the 'International Convention of Asia Scholars' (ICAS) held at Honolulu, Hawaii, USA from 31 March to 3 April 2011. The presentations were given in the context of the panel 'Shifting Facets of Governance in Asia: A Transcultural Perspective', which was organized by the authors with the aim to scrutinize the concept of transculturality with meaning by the way of showing its applicability to different contexts, and to discuss its validity as a conceptual tool with an international academic audience.

We are grateful to Subrata K. Mitra for attending the conference panel, and for subsequently inviting us to consider the publication of the presentations in the form of a thematic issue of the *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics*. The journal is a forum that makes this research visible and which gives us the opportunity to engage in an extended discussion on the issue with a larger readership. Subrata K. Mitra and Radu Carciumaru, the Managing Editor of the *Heidelberg Papers* have been most helpful throughout the publication process and we would like to express our sincere gratitude towards them. An academic publication is not possible without the meticulous readings by critical reviewers: we are indebted to the two anonymous referees who have commented on our work and have thereby contributed to the further improvement of the papers, deserve our sincere gratitude. The diversity of cases discussed here, and the different academic subject backgrounds of the authors are a result of the fact that all the contributors to this issue are members of the Graduate Programme for Transcultural Studies (GPTS) of the Cluster of Excellence *Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows* at Heidelberg University, a research institution which brings together scholars of various disciplines and different areas of research spanning across the Asian continent. The Cluster is aimed at overcoming the methodological gap between the humanities and the social sciences, which renders possible comprehensive research into the processes of conceptual exchange between Asia and Europe, and the transformation these processes entail. Working together in this multi-disciplinary and multi-method environment has furthered our interest interdisciplinarity, of which this Special Issue is a result. We would like to thank the Cluster, its academic staff, and our colleagues for preparing the intellectual grounds on which this work could grow, and the Cluster administration for the financial support which enabled all of us to participate in the conference that marked the point of departure for this work. Transculturality is an important conceptualization that can help us to come to terms with the flows, shifts, and ruptures that not only affect, but increasingly constitute modern societies on all possible levels. With the help of case studies, this publication shows the broad applicability of transculturality, it emphasises the various facets that constitute it, and illustrates the dynamism inherent in the concept. *Discourses of Transculturality: Ideas, Institutions and Practices in India and China* thus constitutes an attempt to start a debate on the feasibility of linking theory with empirical studies spanning across regions and disciplines.

Heidelberg, April 2012  
Bidisha Chaudhuri and Lion König

## **Introduction: Discourses of Transculturality: Ideas, Institutions and Practices in India and China**

**Bidisha Chaudhuri and Lion König**

Most of the social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s have been heavily influenced by modernization theory, which focused on issues of economic growth, political development and social change, in order to develop a predictive model of linear progress for developing countries following a Western prototype. Most post-war policies were driven by this school of thought and somehow still continue to hold the undercurrent of the same philosophy. However, the realities and experiences of most of the non-Western countries did not truly reflect the predictions of modernization theory, and therefore prompted recent trends in social science disciplines to severely challenge the universalizing outlook of such a grand narrative. Transculturality, though conceptualized differently depending on the intellectual context, is broadly understood here as a research perspective that while challenging universalism, acknowledges the existence of ideas, institutions and practices across different cultural settings as a result of asymmetrical cultural flows. This perspective allows for transcending disciplinary boundaries by deploying concepts such as flow, asymmetry, hybridity, structure and agency as heuristic tools which are crucial in critically analyzing the meta-narratives of Euro-centrism and their implications for understanding non-Western societies in their own terms, rather than along the lines of Western parameters. Each of these conceptual categories becomes an important tool to address the particular contexts of a society in its entirety rather than fitting them into a given model. This does not imply a theoretical and methodological exoticism of non-Western societies, but constitutes an attempt to generalize from these societies in a more inclusive manner. As the title suggests, this special issue strives to comprehend discourses of transculturality as an emerging and alternative paradigm to analyze concrete concepts, such as citizenship, governance, identity, bureaucracy, diplomacy, and tourism networks in the specific contexts of India and China. These concepts, though already discussed earlier, will acquire a new edge when examined against the background of the analytical framework of transculturality. Bhabha's (1993) notion of the in-between, Clifford's (1997) trope of the traveller, and Pratt's (1991) techniques of the contact zone as discussed by Schröder (2005) are some of the theoretical points on the basis of which, by a combination of theory with empirically rich case studies, transculturality is conceptualized.

In this vein, all the papers in this issue strive to deal with the following basic research questions:

1. What are the structural asymmetries that exist between Western discourses and the realities of the non-Western world?
2. How do these asymmetries manifest themselves in the ideas, institutions and practices that are underlying the cases under consideration, and following from that, in how far do they shape our understanding of social science disciplines and their analytical frameworks and how can they lead to a reconsideration of these frameworks?



3. How do non-Western societies, in this case China and India, practice their agency to negotiate these asymmetrical conceptual flows in order to gain legitimacy in their own societies as well as with their Western counterparts?
4. How do these contextual realities connect to wider theoretical generalizations and in how far do they help to develop alternative discourses of transculturality to overcome Euro-centrism in all conceptual underpinnings?

The first two papers in this special issue deal with the concept of citizenship albeit in different analytical contexts and by using different theoretical approaches. The first paper entitled *Cultural Citizenship in the Age of the Mass Media: From Theory to Policy* by Lion König starts from the idea of citizenship as understood in ancient Greece. The author traces the journey of this dynamic concept much through the Western political and sociological thought and finally arrives at the context of postcolonial India. In his paper, König focuses on the particular notion of ‘cultural citizenship’ to emphasise the close connection between identity formations and mass media within heterogeneous realities of the Indian society. Drawing on the diverse approaches of political science, cultural studies and media analysis, König discusses the validity of the concept of ‘cultural citizenship’ both as a heuristic tool and as a hybridising strategy to improve a policy framework aimed at the management of diverse societies not only in the Indian, or Asian context but also in its Western counterparts.

In the second paper, *Being a Governed Muslim in a Non-Muslim State: Indian Muslims and Citizenship* Julten Abdelhalim provides yet another investigation into the context of minority politics and citizen identity in postcolonial India. The paper grapples with the predicament of fitting Islam and citizenship within a democratic set up. Taking an anti-essentialist view on Muslim politics in India, the author explores the entangled nature of the citizenship concept by traversing through modern political theory, Islamic political thought and the postcolonial context of its adaptation. Following a distinctive methodological mixture of statistics and thick descriptions, Indian Muslims and their political agency are presented here as a unique case to confront the Eurocentric bias inherent in the modern conceptualisation of citizenship. Furthermore, Abdelhalim effectively puts forward possibilities of accommodating alternative paradigms of citizenship based on transcultural perspectives.

Bidisha Chaudhuri in her paper *Good Governance in a Transcultural Context: A Case Study of E-Governance Initiatives in India*, which is also the last paper on India, explores the ‘good governance’ paradigm as an asymmetrical conceptual flow being implemented in the post-liberalised Indian context. Taking a critical stance against the inherent Western bias and modernising tendency of the concept, Chaudhuri focuses on the e-governance initiatives taken up by the Government of India as a step towards achieving ‘good governance’. In dealing with the continuous interplay of the normative structures of governance and the agency of the affected actors, the author takes recourse to the analytical categories of asymmetry and hybridity to enhance the understanding of the process of negotiations embodied in such interactions.

Travelling further East, China is the context under consideration in the following two papers. The first one by Mareike Ohlberg titled ‘*A Transnational Concept with Chinese Characteristics: The Changing Structure of the Chinese External Propaganda Apparatus*’ investigates the conceptual flow of ‘public diplomacy’ to the Chinese institutional structure and bureaucracy as being

profoundly influenced by the Western debates. By deconstructing the Chinese concept of external propaganda and delving deep into the external propaganda apparatus of the Chinese government, Ohlberg seeks to establish a diachronic account of the same navigating through its entanglement in the transnational contexts of beliefs and practices. While connecting external propaganda with domestic concerns within a wider reform agenda, the author further explicates how asymmetrical flows of ideas, institutions and practices get absorbed and adapted into the Chinese context and in turn add to an alternative transcultural perspective on 'public diplomacy'.

Moving from diplomacy to tourism imaginaries, the last paper *Shifting Tourism Images: The World Heritage Site Lijiang, China* by Yujie Zhu sets out to understand tourism discourse as a transcultural process which inexorably blends homogenising forces of uniformity and sameness with that of asymmetry and hybridity. Understanding the history of Lijiang as a story of transformation from a historical trade town to a commercial heritage site, Yujie Zhu in his paper effectively captures the processes in which continuous, yet non-linear flows of actors, such as international organisations, in this case UNESCO, Western and Chinese tourists, national policy makers, local governments, the local community, and the media deploy their agency and eventually alter the structures of tourism networks and imaginaries.

The papers brought together in this Special Issue are all part of ongoing doctoral research at the Cluster of Excellence *Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows* at Heidelberg University. Every author thus makes use of new empirical data collected in the course of their fieldwork in Asia, which is why this special issue presents its readers with new intellectual approaches to study non-Western societies with a renewed scholarly focus on the structure-agency interaction along with its crucial parameters of culture, power and governance.

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# Cultural Citizenship in the Age of the Mass Media: From Theory to Policy

Lion König

*Keywords: Citizenship, Culture, Media, Identity, Hybridity*

## ABSTRACT:

*This paper traces the conceptual evolution of citizenship from its origin in ancient Greece to its recent compound form of 'cultural citizenship'. Citizenship, seen as the outcome of processes of adaptation is here understood as an avenue to enhance the understanding of transculturality, whereas 'cultural citizenship' with its link to the media sphere is meant to underline the multi-discursive nature of both citizenship and culture. The understanding of 'culture' in the official Indian discourse is critically examined with regard to its implications for cultural policy, and the quality of different media is evaluated with respect to their potential for identity construction and -articulation. It is argued that in a constructive policy set-up, different media have to not only co-exist but be fused, as it were. Such hybridization would ensure that different voices participate in the same sphere of communication, thus making media a plurality-driven form of governance and avoid the creation of parallel structures which are likely to give rise to alienation and encourage feelings of difference among the citizenry.*

## I. CITIZENSHIP: A CONCEPT IN TRANSITION

Citizenship is a concept in transition. Its long history of conceptualization is a history marked by adaptations and ruptures. Different forms of citizenship across time and space have shown that it is a highly dynamic variable, constantly susceptible to change and modification according to the requirements in given politico-historical circumstances.

Originating in the ancient Greek *polis* around the eight century BC<sup>1</sup>, the idea of citizenship entailed the transfer of a set of rights, including the right to vote, to a particular kind of person—the male, property-owning warrior—thus rendering the citizenship of ancient Greece exclusive of women, slaves, craftsmen or sailors (cf. Harrington et al. 2006: 61), in exchange for the duty to defend the *polis* against outside forces. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries then citizenship became associated with the larger idea of the nation and was understood as membership of a state rather than a city (Harrington et al. 2006: 61, see also Brubaker, 1992). The citizen also has constantly evolved (with the rights and duties

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough investigation into the structures of citizenship in ancient Greece, see Manville (1990).

dichotomy providing an essentially stable core) and thinkers of various centuries have reflected on his or her role very differently<sup>2</sup>. Different conceptualizations from different historical periods—real or imagined—have however not existed in isolation, but have continuously informed each other: the French revolutionaries of the late eighteenth century for example sought to revive the “active citizenship that was believed to have existed in certain periods of antiquity” (Schama, 1989: 170)—citizenship, like culture, thus does not exist in a theoretical vacuum, but is the product of ‘conceptual flow’ (Mitra, 2010; 2012a) across time and space. It is a concept of a transcultural nature, in the sense that it is a product of interaction, negotiation and adaptation, and in that it results from activity and creativity in contact situations<sup>3</sup>. The dynamic nature of citizenship becomes apparent through the striking differences between citizenship regimes that can be noted even when conceptualizations of citizenship are looked at synchronically, i.e. at a given point in time. Empirical research has for example shown that “conceptions of citizenship vary drastically between the UK and the US” (Oommen, 1997: 32).

Despite the long evolutionary process of the ‘citizen’, full-fledged citizenship theory is a product of the more recent past. Citizenship only became a subject of scholarly interest in the twentieth century, with the seminal work of English sociologist T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (1949), where a three-dimensional model of citizenship consisting of civil, political and social elements is presented<sup>4</sup>. After a long dormant phase—Herman van Gunsteren in 1978, almost thirty years after Marshall’s publication, stated that “the concept of citizenship has gone out of fashion” (quoted in Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 352)—citizenship studies re-emerged with the end of the Cold War and the ensuing fundamental changes in world politics, and citizenship theory broke through with all its complexity. Former theoretical approaches were called into question, and Marshall’s three-dimensional model was criticized for being based on social utopia. Fraser and Gordon, for example, argued against his concept of an increasingly just society showing solidarity by citizenship and claimed that “when questions about gender and race are put at the center of the enquiry, key elements of Marshall’s analysis become problematic; his periodization of the three stages of citizenship, for example, fits the experience of white working men only, a minority of the population” (1994: 93).

Broadly speaking, two sets of criticism can be identified: the first set focuses on the need to supplement or replace the passive acceptance of citizenship rights with the active exercise of citizenship responsibilities, such as economic self-reliance, political participation and civility (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 355). The second set focuses on the need to revise the current definition of citizenship to accommodate the increasing social and cultural pluralism of modern societies<sup>5</sup>; a pressing project

<sup>2</sup> While “Aristotle’s ideal citizen is prudent, Cicero’s is honourable, Augustine’s is hopeful of salvation, Machiavelli’s is martial and Locke’s is productive” (Jandora, 2008: 3).

<sup>3</sup> ‘Activity’ and ‘creativity’ are, according to Mary Louise Pratt, central features of transculturality. “Peoples [...] do determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own [culture] and what it gets used for” (Pratt, 1991: 36, cited in Schröder, 2005: 201).

<sup>4</sup> Arguing that the evolution of citizenship has been in progress for about 250 years, Marshall constitutes the ‘modern drive towards social equality’ as the latest phase. He proposes to divide citizenship into three parts or elements and distinguishes between civil, political and social citizenship. These elements to him contain the rights which are necessary to secure individual freedom, active and passive suffrage and rights to a minimum of economic welfare and security as well as the right to a share in societal wealth, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> The question of how to accommodate diversity in modern societies is also explored theoretically with the help of the concepts of ‘differentiated citizenship’ (Young, 1989) and ‘multicultural citizenship’ (Kymlicka, 1996). ‘Cultural citizenship’ draws on these, but also

that finds expression in the concept of ‘cultural citizenship’. The academic debate has responded to the new challenges by transcending Marshall’s original notion of citizenship and its connection with the territorial state; a process that resulted in the proliferation of ‘new citizenships’<sup>6</sup>. The mass of varieties of citizenship reflects the different political agendas of citizens and their perceived need to emphasise certain policy fields, which they feel are not high on the state’s agenda and yet constitute a vital part of their self-understanding as citizens.

Citizenship today therefore is a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming or expanding rights. Being politically engaged increasingly means “practicing substantive citizenship, which in turn implies that members of a polity always struggle to shape its fate” (Isin and Turner, 2002: 4). The dynamics of citizenship are in many cases tied to identity which is expressed through cultural claims. Thus, in contemporary citizenship theory, ‘culture’ more than ever before gains importance as means of articulation and also as crucial for belonging to a particular polity. The continuing rise of new forms of cultural politics, however, has challenged modern understandings of belonging and has contributed to a rethinking of the meaning of citizenship. Citizenship is thus not only an object of policy anymore—it has increasingly become a source and marker of social identity.

## II. CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

Despite the fact that Simon Schama in his seminal work on the French Revolution stressed the importance of culture in the making of the citizen, which in its modern avatar was essentially a child of the Revolution, born in the bloodstained streets of Paris, and devoted an entire chapter to it<sup>7</sup>, a theoretical debate about how people can become stakeholders in a larger political entity using the field of ‘culture’ as an avenue has only been taking place since the early 1990s, when the concept of ‘cultural citizenship’ was introduced. It formed the theoretical backbone of a discussion on what explains people’s sense of inclusion and exclusion in a nation-state and which measures can be taken to increase their sense of belonging—citizenship has thus evolved from a one-dimensional to a two-fold concept entailing a legal right to the soil as well as a moral affiliation to it.

Focussing increasingly on the cultural dimension of the social in the 1990s, the term ‘cultural citizenship’ has entered the debate as a supplement to the three dimensions of citizenship as outlined by Marshall. It is widely used by scholars from nearly all academic backgrounds in the humanities and social sciences; it has played a role in debates on educational democracy (Rosaldo, 1994), feminist audience studies (Hermes, 2000) cosmopolitan art (Chaney, 2002), and most lately even on scrapbooking (Hof, 2006) and colonialism (Nordholt, 2011). Given the diversity of the topics, the authors also approach the concept differently and emphasise different aspects of it, although some core parameters remain: the crucial concern of cultural citizenship is the question of *identity*, more precisely the provision of space for the

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constitutes a further development, as it links theory with policy; in the working definition of this paper, with media representation.

<sup>6</sup> A glance at the table of contents of Isin and Turner’s *Handbook of Citizenship Studies* provides insight into these new forms: the list contains sexual citizenship, ecological citizenship, cosmopolitan citizenship, economic citizenship, health citizenship, liberal citizenship, republican citizenship, cultural— and multicultural citizenship, to name but the most widely discussed ones.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed analysis see Schama (1989), chapter four ‘The Cultural Construction of a Citizen’.



minorities by the majority. ‘Cultural citizenship’ relates to issues of representation of specific groups and is thus closely connected with identity politics. By entering the field of identity politics, which refers to groups that understand themselves as groups, the concept of ‘identity’ has changed from a descriptive tool to a political term (Hermes, 2000: 363).

Issues of representation and identity also figure prominently in the UNESCO’s approach to ‘cultural citizenship’. The UNESCO Institute for Education has introduced the idea of ‘cultural citizenship’ as a “notion of collective rights to culture, implying the struggle for the reconstitution of indigenous cultures and communities which have been seriously eroded through conquest, colonisation and assimilation” (UNESCO, 1999: 7). UNESCO calls for a change in policy content, from a policy of assimilation to a concept of ‘cultural citizenship’, by making possible the participation of indigenous peoples at all levels of decision-making—educational, cultural, developmental and political—in order to create within broader societies an awareness of the principles of mutual respect and equality, as well as the right to be culturally different<sup>8</sup> (UNESCO, 1999: 7).

A comprehensive approach to ‘cultural citizenship’ is given by John Hartley (2004) who defines it as

“publicly acknowledged rights and obligations associated with cultural identity. Citizenship theory is concerned with how we conceive the rights and obligations implicated in membership of a political community as well as the identity that it confers on us. It focuses upon the necessity of such a membership either in the legal sense, to make society more governable, or as something to be desired for the purposes of inclusion, nationality or equality. Cultural citizenship concerns movement from the latter towards the former, a tendency that has become increasingly prominent since World War II”<sup>9</sup>.

Hartley emphasizes the significance of the concept by taking recourse to Marshall and labelling ‘cultural citizenship’ a “recent addition to [T.H. Marshall’s] understandings of citizenship rights” (2004: 46-47); a conclusion which is also backed by Gerard Delanty on the basis of his review of the works on cultural citizenship by Kymlicka and Norman (2000) and Stevenson (2001).

For the purposes of this paper, however, ‘cultural citizenship’ is understood as strongly linked to the audio-visual media, although not exclusively tied to them. A definition of ‘cultural citizenship’ with a strong focus on the media, which will be employed here as a working definition, was proposed by the German sociologists Elizabeth Klaus and Margreth Lünenborg who see ‘cultural citizenship’ as a theoretical approach encompassing “all those cultural practices that unfold on the background of uneven power structures and that make a competent share of the symbolical resources of society possible” (Klaus and Lünenborg, 2004: 200). Mass media<sup>10</sup> are seen in this context as the “motor and actor of self- and at the same time

<sup>8</sup> This shows that the concept of ‘cultural citizenship’ has entered world politics, that it is taken seriously as an instrument to improve living conditions of marginalized people, and following from that, governance at the level of the nation-state.

<sup>9</sup> The fact that the definition of ‘cultural citizenship’ was absent from an earlier edition of the same reference work in which the same author was involved (O’Sullivan, 1994) underlines the novelty of the concept.

<sup>10</sup> Following a minimalistic definition by Judith Lichtenberg, ‘mass media’ are here defined as those media which draw mass audiences, have a wide penetration within a given population and bear a responsibility for presenting many sides of an issue. They are distinguished from ‘non-mass media’, whose purpose often lies in advancing a certain point-

heteronomous production of individual, group-specific and societal identities” (Klaus and Lünenborg, 2004: 200).

‘Cultural citizenship’ is deemed important here because it opens up a space in which meanings circulate, i.e. in which they are negotiated and then determined. Claiming that differences can occur between the media messages and readings by the audience, they state that ‘cultural citizenship’ is in fact a cycle of the cultural production of meaning. Since a media text is received differently by different audiences, the production side has to take this into account and has to transfer elements of that reception back into the text. Thus, they plead for understanding processes of identity formation on an individual, sub-cultural or nation-state level within the context of media action. The media text itself does not materialize societal relations of power, but they are inscribed in the text by the producers and are allocated to the text during the process of reception by the audience (cf. Klaus and Lünenborg, 2004: 201).

‘Cultural citizenship’ in the form of participation in the media discourse puts emphasis on localized identities and thereby challenges any elitist attempt to govern the masses through this discourse. By denoting a turn “from passive endurance to active choice” (Schröder, 2005: 202), it is a transcultural concept as conceptualized by Pratt (1991) and Schröder (2005).

By means of combining theory with empiricism, India, with her vast media landscape, and her experience in the management of diversity, provides an excellent case. The multicultural nature of Indian society has led the state to adopt hybrid modes of governance, such as different personal laws, a mixed economy and a three-language formula, to give but the most prominent examples<sup>11</sup>. India thus has all the necessary preconditions for testing the usefulness of ‘cultural citizenship’, as a further addition to the country’s arsenal of hybrid strategies.

### III. CULTURE IN THE INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE: AN APPROACH

In order to determine the relevance the concept of ‘cultural citizenship’ has for India and the state’s cultural policy, the governmental discourse on culture has to be disclosed.

The Constitution of the Republic of India mirrors the country’s heterogeneity in the sense that it sees culture as part of citizenship. The legalistic concept of the citizen does not fail to give ‘culture’ a prominent place. A look at Part II of the Constitution, i.e. Articles 5 to 11, which define who a citizen is<sup>12</sup> and Part III

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of-view or promoting the discussion of a few more narrowly-defined issues (cf. Lichtenberg, 1990: 123).

<sup>11</sup> For a thorough discussion of the hybrid nature of the modern Indian state see Mitra, 2012b.

<sup>12</sup> Article 5 of the Constitution of India defines the citizen in terms of both territory (*jus soli*) and birth (*jus sanguinis*):

“At the commencement of this Constitution, every person who has his domicile in the territory of India and—

(a) who was born in the territory of India; or

(b) either of whose parents was born in the territory of India; or

(c) who has been ordinarily resident in the territory of India for not less than five years immediately preceding such commencement, shall be a citizen of India.”

(Articles 12 to 35), which lists the fundamental rights of the citizen<sup>13</sup> as well as Part IV A, i.e. Article 51 A—inserted into the Constitution under the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment in 1976, at the height of the Emergency—which lays down the ten fundamental duties of the Indian Citizen<sup>14</sup>, reveals that culture is both tied to right and duty, the right to conserve and the duty to value and preserve<sup>15</sup>. However, the Constitution does not provide a definition of ‘culture’, unlike India’s Ministry of Culture, which defines it as representing “a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices”<sup>16</sup> and constitutes that “a country as diverse as India is symbolized by the plurality of its culture”<sup>17</sup>, following from which the Ministry regards it as its foremost task to

“preserve and promote all forms of culture. Towards this objective, the Ministry is engaged in a variety of activities, ranging from protecting and encouraging cultural endeavours at the grassroots level, to promoting cultural exchanges internationally; from programmes to preserve India’s ancient heritage to encouraging an array of contemporary creative arts. The Ministry’s task is to develop and sustain ways and means through which the creative and aesthetic sensibilities of the people remain active and dynamic”<sup>18</sup>.

Culture is an essentially contested concept. The governmental discourse, however, is rather clear on the matter—a clarity which necessarily implies limitation. The discourse is limited in the sense that it suggests a narrow understanding of culture as a separate policy domain rather than as an all-encompassing context permeating every sphere of life, and in the sense that it basically sees culture as artefact. Balmiki Prasad Singh, former Culture Secretary (1995-1997) and Home Secretary (1997-1999) of the Government of India defines culture as the “diverse creative activities of a people—[referring] to literature; to the visual and performing

<sup>13</sup> The six fundamental rights recognized by the Constitution are:

- 1) *Right to Equality*, including equality before law, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and equality of opportunity in matters of employment, abolition of Untouchability and abolition of titles.
- 2) *Right to Freedom*, including the freedoms of speech and expression, assembly, association or union, movement, residence, and the right to practice any profession or occupation (some of these rights are subject to security of the State, friendly relations with foreign countries, public order, decency or morality, right to life and liberty, right to education, protection in respect to conviction in offences and protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.
- 3) *Right against Exploitation*, prohibiting all forms of forced labour, child labour and human trafficking.
- 4) *Right to Freedom of Religion*, including freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion, freedom to manage religious affairs, freedom from certain taxes and freedom from religious instructions in certain educational institutes.
- 5) *Cultural and Educational rights*, i.e. the right of any section of citizens to conserve their culture, language or script, and the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice;
- 6) *Right to Constitutional Remedies* for the enforcement of fundamental rights.

<sup>14</sup> See Article 51A of the Constitution of India.

<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Article 27 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of the United Nations sets out the right to participate in the cultural life of the community as a basic human right, stating that “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.”

<sup>16</sup> Interestingly enough, the first Annual Report on the activities of the Department of Culture, which was then integrated into the Ministry of Human Resource Development, itself only created in 1985, refrains from defining culture and merely states that it is “difficult to describe bounds and parameters of a living vital culture like the Indian culture” (*Annual Report: Part II*, 1985/1986: v). It is however important to note that ‘culture’ is used in the singular voice here, essentially suggesting a conceptual consensus.

<sup>17</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Culture. *Annual Report 2010/2011*: 2.

<sup>18</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Culture. *Annual Report 2010/2011*: 2.



arts; and to various forms of artistic self-expression by the individual (specialist or lay) or by communities” (Singh, 2009: 48), and therefore only refers to the material side of culture<sup>19</sup>. When B.P. Singh criticizes the British colonial authorities for recognizing and promoting only such works of art “which could be kept hanging on the walls in museums or in individual homes”, while neglecting “the work done by a tribal girl in decorating her house or the walls of her home”, he himself promotes an idea of culture which does not go beyond the mere artefact—be it a material object or a performance. This is even more paradoxical, since he critically reflects on the colonial establishment of institutions, such as the Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784), the Fine Arts Society of Madras (1860), the Arts Society Pune (1873), the Bombay Arts Society (1888), the Punjab Fine Arts Society at Lahore (1922), the Delhi Fine Arts Society (1928) and the Imperial Library, Calcutta (1903), and the colonial teaching of courses on history and civilisation at universities while not giving recognition to subjects like aesthetics, art history or folk arts (cf. Singh, 2009: 88). On the other hand, he praises the same institutional manifestation of culture in the form of the Sangeet Natak Akademi (1953), the Lalit Kala Akademi (1954), the Sahitya Akademi (1954), the National School of Drama (1959) and the National Museum (1954), as fora “to facilitate a dialogue among persons engaged in creative activity, and for the publication and display of their work” (Singh, 2009: 53), regardless of the fact that both colonial and postcolonial cultural institutions lack dynamics and encourage conservation rather than innovation.

Similarly, the seven Zonal Cultural Centres (ZCCs)<sup>20</sup> set up in 1985 to provide facilities for the creative development of the performing arts, graphic arts, and other literary works” (Singh, 2009: 56) suggest a geographical containment of culture. The formation of these Zonal Cultural Centres, however, was considered to be a ‘truly historic’ event in India’s cultural efforts, whose declared aim it was to “emphasize cultural kinships that transcend territorial bounds” and to “arouse and deepen awareness of the local culture and how this diffuses into Zonal identities, and eventually forms the rich diversity of India’s composite culture”<sup>21</sup>. Culture was and is thus seen as an entity that can be geographically localised<sup>22</sup>, an idea that is artificial and dangerously close to the German *Kulturkreislehre*, the study of ‘cultural circles’ of the early twentieth century, which claimed that a limited number

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<sup>19</sup> This is not to deny the fact that Singh elsewhere argues that “culture is power” and a dynamic variable, potent, influential and able to release the dormant energies of a community (Singh, 2009: 48)—these aspects, however, do not form part of his conceptualization of culture.

<sup>20</sup> The Ministry of Culture divides India into the following cultural ‘zones’: (i) *North Central Zone*, with Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Bihar and Delhi (ii) *North Zone* with Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttrakhand, UT Chandigarh, (iii) *West Zone* with Goa, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, UT Daman, Diu, Dadra, Nagar Haveli, (iv) *Eastern Zone* with West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Sikkim, Jharkhand, UT Andaman & Nicobar Islands (v) *South Zone* with Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, UT Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshdeep, Pondicherry; (vi) *South Central Zone* with Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh; (vii) *North East Zone* with Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura.

<sup>21</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development. *Annual Report 1985/1986*: v.

<sup>22</sup> Official India does not acknowledge culture as a dynamic concept, but this phenomenon is general rather than particular, as India shares this perception with the larger part of states in the world. Some issues arising from this perception, such as the distinction into ‘cultural zones’ can also be understood as the result of an administrative need. I would like to thank the anonymous referee for emphasizing this important point.

of such cultural circles developed at different times and in different places and that all cultures can be traced back to certain centres of innovation<sup>23</sup>.

It has to be clear that the idea of culture is broad, cumbersome and adds conceptual confusion rather than analytical clarity. In fact, scholars have raised doubts about the usefulness of the term<sup>24</sup> or have argued against employing it altogether for analytical purposes, like the English art and literary critic Herbert Read (1893-1968), who reminds us that “the cultured Greeks [...] had no word for culture”, and hence “it would never have occurred to them that they had a separate commodity, culture” (Read, 2002: 10). Following from that, for Read, culture is “not a separate and distinguishable thing—a body of learning that can be put into books and museums and mugged up in your spare time” (Read, 2002: 13), which is why in conclusion he suggests to stop using the word ‘culture’ altogether, as much as he urges to refrain from using the term ‘artist’ as “art as a separate profession is merely a consequence of culture as a separate entity” (Read, 2002: 23)<sup>25</sup>. He notes that “we shall not need it in the future and it will only confuse the present issue. Culture belongs to the past: the future will not be conscious of its culture” (Read, 2002: 13).

With regard to the concept of ‘cultural citizenship’, these suggestions seem helpful. Adding the prefix *cultural* to ‘citizenship’ serves a crucial agenda-setting function: it stresses the importance of the cultural dimension and contributes to a more holistic understanding of citizenship and its policy outreach. Eventually, however, the term ‘cultural’ should be done away with, which would serve two important aims: it would visibly shift the concept from the academic to the practical political sphere and would decrease confusion by not understanding the cultural as separate, thereby showing that ‘cultural citizenship’ is more than the sum of its parts. A necessary prerequisite to understand the complexity of the concept of culture is to see it as *multi-discursive* (O’Sullivan et al.; 1994: 68) and *relational*. It is multi-discursive, because it can be mobilized in a number of discourses<sup>26</sup>, and it is relational, because “the culture to which people appeal and on which they draw, itself consists of borrowings and exists only in relation to the Other” (Bayart, 1996: 96)<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, culture is really *trans-culture*: every form of culture is always also a product of interaction and fusion; not an entity, but a fluidum. For the Indian

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<sup>23</sup> cf. *Encyclopedia Britannica* ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)). It should also be noted here that, because of its shortcomings this school of thought was short-lived: by the mid-twentieth century, most anthropologists considered cultural phenomena much too complex to be explained by the interaction of a small number of *Kulturkreise*.

<sup>24</sup> Bayart (1996), see especially chapter two: ‘Should we stop using the Word “Culture”?’

<sup>25</sup> Incidentally, Read borrows this thought from the English artist Eric Gill (1882-1940), whose phrase “to hell with culture, culture as a thing added like sauce to otherwise unpalatable stale fish” Read quotes at the beginning of his book (Read, 2002: 10) and who, in turn, was inspired by South Asian philosophy. Gill’s idea, Read notes, was informed by the Ceylonese Philosopher and art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy, who seems to have taken it from Sri Aurobindo (cf. Read, 2002: 23).

<sup>26</sup> O’Sullivan et al. note that if the term ‘culture’ is used for analytical purposes, “it is unlikely that you will ever be able to fix on just one definition that will do for all [...] occasions (1994: 68).

<sup>27</sup> If culture is relational, so is ‘cultural citizenship’: in his discussion of ‘cultural citizenship’ in the Netherlands Indies, Nordholt (2011) claims that while the term was “primarily used to identify the position of ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups in the United States and in Southeast Asia and to explore their possibilities to achieve empowerment and emancipation” (2011: 439), in the context of the Netherlands Indies [it] should not be applied to marginalised ethnic minorities but to the indigenous middle classes who inhabited the very centre of the late colonial state” (2011: 440), since it was these middle classes that were denied access to political power.

government, therefore, it would be crucial to reconsider its understanding of culture and reformulate it along the lines of ‘being’ rather than ‘having’.

#### IV. CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP AND MEDIA REPRESENTATION: TRACING LINKAGES

After having outlined the conceptual difficulties of ‘culture’, and ‘cultural citizenship’, a few instances will be given to illustrate the role of the Indian media in the putting into practice of ‘cultural citizenship’. I am arguing that the media play a critical role in nation-building for two reasons. Firstly, cultural representation is fundamental to overcome bias and gain acceptance, because “how we project class sensibilities, identify with ethnicity or culture, or perform gender cannot be separated from the representations of class, race, gender, and sexuality we see all around us” (Linné, 2007: 464), and secondly, an absence from the media sphere further enhances the feeling of marginalisation: Rabindranath Tagore, for his part, deplored the state of representation of Britain’s biggest and most important colony in English papers, in whose columns “London street accidents are recorded with some decency of pathos, while they need take but the scantiest notice of calamities which happen in India over areas of land sometimes larger than the British Isles” (Tagore, 2009: 40). This feeling is as topical today as it was then. Different sections of society feel marginal and this marginalisation is further enhanced by a media discourse which does not consider their issues and viewpoints. The regional newspaper *Nagaland Post*, for instance, reported on Shiela Sengupta, Subhas Chandra Bose’s niece’s lament, that “the government at the centre was not paying due attention to Nagaland in spite of the contribution made by the people of the state to Netaji<sup>28</sup> and his army”, which, as she put it, was “simple devotion to make India free”<sup>29</sup>. This perceived lack of acknowledgment can give rise to feelings of alienation or intensify already existing ones.

If an inclusion of neglected groups into the media discourse can prevent these feelings, the policy-relevant question is, how can a democratization of the media sphere take place, and when are media democratic? Edward Herman defines democratic media as those media “organized and controlled by ordinary citizens or their grassroots organizations”, i.e. such that “involve individuals or bodies that serve local or larger political, minority, or other groups in the social and political arena” (Herman, 2007: 38). As in the model of ‘cultural citizenship’ by Klaus and Lünenborg outlined above, Herman suggests that the structures of such democratic media would enable a “horizontal flow of communication, in both directions, from the producer to the consumer and vice versa, instead of a vertical flow from officials and experts to the passive population of consumers” (Herman, 2007: 39). Democratization, Herman’s argument goes, can be achieved in essentially two ways: either by trying to influence the mainstream media to give more room to excluded ideas and groups, or by creating and supporting an alternative structure of media closer to ordinary people and grassroots organisations, with identifying the second route as “the only one that can yield truly democratic media” (Herman, 2007: 40). I would like to argue that in the Indian context, both strategies are implemented.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Netaji’, Hindi for ‘respected leader’ is the (unofficial) title bestowed upon Subhas Chandra Bose, the founder and Supreme Commander of the *Azad Hind Fauz*, the ‘Indian National Army’ (INA), and a prominent figure of the Indian Independence movement. Govindballabh Pant notes that “he displayed remarkable qualities of leadership and organisation and for these he has been appropriately given by the entire nation the distinguished title of Netaji” (Pant, 1948: viii).

<sup>29</sup> *Nagaland Post* Online Edition ([www.nagalandpost.com](http://www.nagalandpost.com)) (last sighted on 24 October 2011).

An example of bringing marginalized sections of society into the media mainstream by giving their issues an appropriate forum, would be the *Times of India* featuring a column entitled ‘Different Strokes for Different Folks’, written by the wheelchair-bound professor V.S. Sunder, “who wishes to use this space to remind people periodically of the special needs of the differently-abled members of our society”<sup>30</sup>. Another instance of margins entering the mainstream would be the increasing plurality of voices in the sphere of Indian literature today. Stigmatized sections of Indian society, sex workers<sup>31</sup>, homosexuals<sup>32</sup> and transsexuals<sup>33</sup>, are engaging in the identity-constituting and –enhancing project of putting their story to paper, thereby putting into practice Rob Linné’s claim that “the sharing of stories as a way to create a shared identity makes special sense for those gathered at the margins” (Linné, 2007: 465)<sup>34</sup>. One of the latest contributions of this kind is A. Revathi’s autobiography *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010). She describes her motivation to enter the media sphere as follows:

“as a hijra I get pushed to the fringes of society. Yet I have dared to share my innermost life with you—about being a hijra and also about doing sex work. My story is not meant to offend, accuse or hurt anyone’s sentiments. My aim is to introduce to the readers the lives of hijras, their distinct culture, and their dreams and desires. I am proud of the results wrought in the state of Tamil Nadu by my book *Unarvum Uruvamum*. I hope now that by publishing my life story, larger changes can be achieved [...] I seek to show that we hijras do have the right to live in this society” (Revathi, 2010: v-vi).

Media representation thus is not an end in itself. It is only the first step to awareness raising, toleration and ensuing policy change<sup>35</sup>.

Alternative modes of communication—the second strategy outlined by Herman—are also existent, and some like the initiative *Grassroots Comics—a Development Communication Tool*, claim to act as an empowering device for the ordinary citizen<sup>36</sup>. While small-scale media produced on a local level, catering to a local audience and discussing local issues can have a more immediate effect, a presentation of the views of margins in the mainstream seems to be more appropriate than to confine a certain group to a certain medium. Periodicals like *Dalit Voice*, or *Anglos in the Wind*, a magazine that is edited and published by Harry McLure, an Anglo-Indian from Chennai, help to connect (literate) members of the respective

<sup>30</sup> *Times of India*, New Delhi, 24 October 2011. As this example shows, the proposed model of a democratization of the media by bringing the ‘margins into the mainstream’ is not only feasible in the context of publicly-sponsored media. Privately-owned media are also considering these steps. Many of the journalists and editors the author has interviewed in the course of his research see journalists in general and their respective medium in particular as taking a crucial role as mouthpieces for the voiceless and marginalised.

<sup>31</sup> See for example Jameela (2005) for an autobiographical account of a female sex worker. The original Malayalam version of the book became a ‘controversial bestseller’ with six editions in one hundred days and 13.000 copies sold.

<sup>32</sup> See for example Merchant (2009) who has collected and published poems by homosexual Indian poets when same-sex relations were still illegal under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.

<sup>33</sup> See Revathi (2010) for the autobiography of a member of the ‘third gender’ community.

<sup>34</sup> In this context, Linné refers to sociolinguist Shirley B. Heath’s conceptualisation of *story as theory*. Heath (1994) describes the possibilities narratives hold for facilitating informed and reformed actions as being especially relevant for those on the margins (cf. Linné, 2007: 465).

<sup>35</sup> In this regard it is also important to note that the enrolment form of the Unique Identification Authority of the Government of India lists the category ‘transgender’ as an alternative to ‘male’ or ‘female’.

<sup>36</sup> For detailed information see Packalen and Sharma (2007).

communities, but would only in a rare number of cases reach out to the larger society<sup>37</sup>.

To achieve the best results, the state and the private media sector have to work more closely together to bring about a further accessibility of the media sphere. If the civic sector is identified as the “locus of the truly democratic media” (Herman, 2007: 51) community-run media have to be strengthened and a detailed government funding scheme will be inevitable to enable this sector to prosper<sup>38</sup>. Also, as far as the state is concerned, rather than measuring the effect of the media merely quantitatively on the basis of supply, (“radio as a mass media and the concept ‘radio for all’ will be roughly measured in terms of the number of radio receiving or transistor sets in the country”, Malhan, 1985: 135), the measure should be the degree of inclusiveness of reporting.

What generally appears to be important is that the fellow citizen is also represented as such. Therefore, when the Republic Day Parade in India is preceded by a seventy-minute folk dance festival televised to the whole country, it less demonstrates “the country’s cultural pluralism and integral nature” (Singh, 2009: 99) as policymakers claim, but rather leads to the exoticization of a cultural ‘Other’. This particular way of representing cultural diversity renders a genuine consideration of different groups as citizens difficult and compounds their incorporation into the national community as equal members.

## V. CONCLUSION: ‘CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP’—A SUITABLE POLICY FRAMEWORK?

As much as citizens are a “hinge between the modern state and the traditional society” (Mitra, 2012a), ‘cultural citizenship’, as obfuscating as it may be, is the link between culture and citizenship—it seeks to incorporate claims to cultural identity into the rights discourse opened up by citizenship.

We learn from Rousseau, whose major work *Du Contract Social* was officially canonized by the French Revolution (cf. Schama, 1989: 175), that participation has an integrative function, “that it increases the feeling among individual citizens that they ‘belong’ in their community” (Pateman, 1970: 27)<sup>39</sup>. Since, as this paper has tried to show, ‘culture’ and ‘citizenship’ are deeply intertwined concepts, it has rightly been argued, that “cultural policy in general is one of the least studied but possibly most important domains for understanding what citizenship actually means and how it works” (Meredyth and Minson, 2001, xi-xii; cited in: Mercer, 2005: 10). This is especially true today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century; a time when the link between citizenship and culture is stressed and citizenship is increasingly perceived as “what cultural policy is, or should be, about” (Mercer, 2005: 11).

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<sup>37</sup> Incidentally, I only learnt about *Anglos in the Wind* by reading a one-page coverage on the Anglo-Indian community in Delhi in the mass medium *Hindustan Times* (*Hindustan Times*, 5 July, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> A possible role model here could be France, where the civic sector gets funding from the state through a tax on commercial advertising revenues (for details see Herman, 2007: 42).

<sup>39</sup> In Rousseau’s logic, participation also helps to overcome the disruptive division between different sections of society, with the effect that there will be no people who like in Rousseau’s *Emile* when asked about their country reply ‘I am one of the rich’ (quoted in Pateman, 1970: 27).



A revision of perspectives informing citizenship policies is under way, but to this day there has been an under-theorisation of the significance of the cultural sphere in a participatory democracy. There is no consensus on what cultural participation implies, which is why it is used as an umbrella term to denote activities of individuals and groups in the making and using of cultural products and processes, as Murray (2005) states in her aptly-titled article ‘Cultural Participation: A Fuzzy Cultural Policy Paradigm’. Participation, it is argued, breeds social capital which in turn may lead to social bonding (within group identity), or to bridging (between group identities) (cf. Murray, 2005: 35) and can in that way strengthen citizen identity. However, the reverse is also true: ‘social bonding’ can lead to ‘ghettoisation’, where groups define themselves against others by demarcating strict identity-boundaries, which hinder the permeability between diverse groups and undermine the very essence of citizenship, which is a common national identity<sup>40</sup>.

Implementing ‘cultural citizenship’ along the lines outlined in this paper is a highly complex endeavour. A comprehensive framework would have to entail more than policy regulations for the media. India has a long and rather successful history of managing her diversity with instruments such as reservations and quota for minorities in educational institutions and the bureaucracy, the Three-language formula, the constitutional protection of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other measures of positive discrimination. The media are constantly proliferating, and citizens, very well-aware of their agenda-setting function see them as crucial instruments for participation, the voicing of dissent and ensuing political change. A tampering of the state with the free media is hardly desirable; a broadening of the spectrum to include the hitherto excluded into the discourse has to come from the media themselves. This paper has given some examples of how various media spheres can complement each other. The Indian state in the form of the Ministry for Information and Broadcasting has to see how community and alternative media can be furthered strengthened, it has to consider whether radio news can be de-monopolized, and it has to adapt the official conceptualization of culture to accommodate the increasingly visible range of social, sexual, and other identities.

If India can take steps towards establishing a policy framework for ‘cultural citizenship’ along those lines, the achievement might be two-fold: it could help to increase (cultural) governance in India, and the Indian example might be able to provide policy solutions for the old Western nations with their new problems of an increasing heterogenization of a formerly ethno-culturally homogenous societal sphere.

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<sup>40</sup> I would like to sincerely thank the anonymous referee for emphasising this crucial point.

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# Being a Governed Muslim in a Non-Muslim State: Indian Muslims and Citizenship

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*Keywords: Citizenship, Islam, Hybridity, Transculturality*

## **ABSTRACT:**

*With the changing social fabric of Western societies and the rise of the minority question, fervent debates have arisen on Muslims living as minorities. Indian Muslims present us with an almost unique case of Muslims living in a democracy as an integrated part of the Indian citizenry and not as migrants or descendants of migrants. India acts as a model first for underlining the Eurocentric misfits in theorization on Muslim nations, and second for questioning established conceptions of political dissent and protest. This paper, consequently, seeks to provide an anti-essentialist perspective to the discussion of Muslim politics and the dilemma of accommodating Islam and citizenship within a context of democratic governance. The case of Indian Muslims offers interesting insight into showing how transculturality can form a basic tenet of understanding citizenship in a postcolonial, yet democratic setting. Confronting the Eurocentric bias and simultaneously trying not to fall in its trap of essentialization and 'Otherization' is a major task. This is attained by showing different and intriguing conceptualizations of political action and agency undertaken by Indian Muslims.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION: THE REALM OF IDEAS**

This paper is driven by the urge to understand the puzzle of why Indian Muslims appear to have the highest sense of citizenship and higher rates of positive responses to democracy than the national average. Hence, it is argued that the case of Indian Muslims presents us with alternative hybrid and postcolonial conceptions of what a citizen is, as opposed to the liberal and republican paradigms. I will start by looking at the problem conceptually, then briefly outline the reality, and finally analyze how concepts and realities merge.

### *Post-Orientalist Citizenship*

Through the historical moment of the Partition of India, and the creation of post-colonial citizenship, India witnessed a theoretically legal adoption of a secular democratic system. However, the reality of the marginalization of the majority of Indian Muslims seriously questions the nature of Indian democracy. The process of adjustment to the secular and Western conception of citizenship, which was alien to Muslims and to their Islamic world view(s), is reproduced in today's settings by accommodating their minority status to the reality of political and social life.

Here, I deem it most significant to make some remarks on the influence Orientalism and Occidentalism had on the elaboration of theories of citizenship of an occidental nature. Isin (2002) argues that the Western conceptions of citizenship entailed two fundamental perspectives: Orientalism and syneocism. Orientalism refers to the division of the world into essentially two civilizational blocks: the first is rationalized and secularized, and therefore modernized; the other is irrational, religious and traditional. In the Occident, notions of sovereignty, reason, and transcendence of primordial loyalties are configured. The second perspective is that of syneocism; a way of seeing the polity as embodying spatial and political unification. The first perspective gives the image of citizenship as a unique occidental invention, in other words, citizenship without kinship ties. As for the second perspective, the images are those of fraternity, equality, liberty and a unified and harmonious polity, which is why in syneocism, the citizen is seen as a secular and universal being (Isin, 2002).

Moving away from the distinction between a sovereign rational Western citizen, and that of an irrational traditional Eastern subject, new constellations of democratic and universal perceptions gained importance. The introduction of concepts like 'cultural citizenship'<sup>1</sup> (Miller, 2002) is considered another intellectual contribution in this regard. These new conceptualizations help to understand how orthodox histories of citizenship have postulated the concept as the western outcome of 'fixed' identities, nationhood, indivisible society, ethnic homogeneity and exclusivity. These perceptions of 'modern' theorists of citizenship have ignored a crucial fact, namely that theories of citizenship were forged in relation to the imperial and colonial encounters of the West and the East as a justification of extra-territorial subjugation, followed by incorporation of the periphery into an international system of labour.

Another attempt at theorizing citizenship in the postcolonial and globalized world is the theory of 'differentiated citizenship', which was first formulated by Iris Marion Young in 1989. This theory diverges from postmodernism in the sense that it recognizes the necessity of citizenship, but at the same time does not negate the particularities of group identities (unlike liberals and communitarians) (Gianni, 1998: 44). Bhargava (2005) summarizes it as a theory that stands in contrast to equal citizenship. It arises when for example some citizens' mother tongue is not the official language, and thus they suffer from a predicament of deliberation with fellow citizens, and consequently from a state of marginalization and discrimination.

In postcolonial contexts, alienation of certain groups arises as a major challenge. Walzer (1970) discusses the differentiation between passive and active citizenship. According to him, the *passive* citizen is a recipient of benefits from the state which enables him or her to act freely in private spheres protected by the state, but he or she hardly plays a role in the public or political sphere (originally a Roman definition). The *active* citizen, on the other hand, has an interest in policy and in the question of who governs him and why. Thus, the meaning of civil society is broadened once political subjects begin to see themselves as active citizens. Differentiated citizenship refers to those citizens who are more active than others, in that they actually exercise power (Bhargava, 2005).

Citizenship, being a modern concept, does not have any roots in Islamic political thought. The Islamic paradigm comes with different concepts and emphases, depending on the political context of the time. Linguistically, the word

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the concept see also Lion König, 'Cultural Citizenship in the Age of the Mass Media: From Theory to Policy' in this issue.

citizenship is translated now in Arabic as *muwatannah*, which comes from the root *watan*, meaning homeland or *patria*. The word is directly linked to *wataniyya*, meaning patriotism. In classical literature and during colonial times, before the nation-state was established, the masses would be referred to as *al ahaly*, from the root *ahl* meaning family. In Urdu, the word citizenship is translated as *shehreyat*, from *sheher*, meaning city. And this is where the ‘urban’ dominates. In Hindi, it is *nagrikta*, linked to *nagar* meaning city or town. The same is true for Malayalam, where the word for citizenship, *paurutum*, is derived from Sanskrit, based on *pura*, the city.

The basic conceptual difference arising from transferring the discussion on citizenship from the Western liberal paradigm to the Islamic one is the context. The context of Muslims living as natural citizens<sup>2</sup> in a liberal state differs from those living in illiberal states. Second, conceptual elements also differ. In the Islamic paradigm, justice is regarded as the highest value. I will limit the discussion here to the first case, that of Muslims living in liberal states. The interlocking relationship between justice and liberalism brings to the fore John Rawls as the thinker who extensively dealt with this issue. He saw society as “a fair system of co-operation between reasonable and rational citizens regarded as free and equal” (Rawls, 1993: 103). Andrew March has worked on theorizing Islamic citizenship within a liberal framework. He stressed that living in liberal constitutional arrangements gives Muslims the benefit of not being obliged to assimilate, convert, abandon their religious beliefs, being forced to endorse a certain belief, or being required to act against their religious beliefs. In March’s (2005) words “they benefit from a system that does not see society primarily as united in a single common purpose but rather as the just management of multiple private purposes” (March, 2005: 322). Once we include the Islamic paradigm in the discussion, we have to be aware of the conceptual differences in dealing with the conceptions of society, of ‘the Other’, and of the individual. An Islamic doctrine of recognition of ‘the Other’ would consist of variations on the following positions: on asserting the fact of pluralism; justice across communities; concern for the welfare of non-Muslims; and shared ends.

In Islamic political jurisprudence, the world is divided into several zones; those of Islam (*dār al-islām*), and those of non-Islam (*dār al-harb*). In the jurisprudence of minorities (a new branch of *ijtihad* on the affairs of Muslims), several points have to be clarified. The Quranic view of minorities includes two models for minorities to follow; the first is the Meccan model, or the *muhajir* (immigrant), in which Muslims facing persecution opted for *hijra* (emigration); the second is the Abyssinian model, or the *mujahid* (struggler), in which a state of tolerance and peaceful co-existence was achieved within a non-Muslim majority context through exerting extra effort (*jihad*) (Krämer et al., Oxford Islamic studies online). Some theoreticians opted for an adaptation of the already established divisions of *dār al-islām* and *dār al-harb* like Al-Alwany who defines *dār al-islām* to include all lands where the Muslims’ belief is secure even though this may occur among a non-Muslim majority, and conversely *dār al-harb* to include areas where the believer’s religion is not safe even though all inhabitants adopt the Islamic belief and civilization (Al-Alwani, 2000).

Other theorists depended on older jurists who sought to devise new conceptions describing their political reality. Since Islam recognizes the concept of *watan* (homeland) in purely theological terms, India was not viewed as either *dar-al-Islam*,

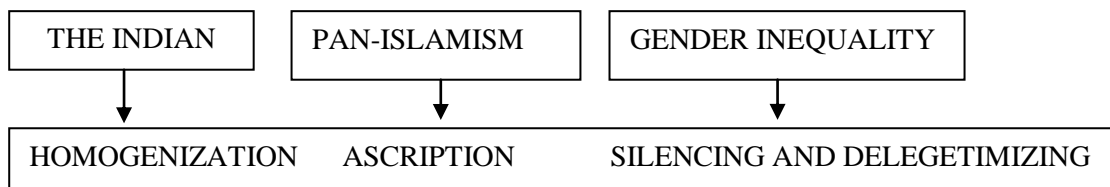
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<sup>2</sup> When speaking of ‘natural citizens’, I purposefully differentiate between the case of Muslims in India who are citizens of the soil, and the case of Muslims in Europe and North America, who are immigrants and thus indirectly acquired the citizenship by naturalization.

or *dar-ul-kufr* or even *dar-al-harb*. It was looked upon as *dar-al-ahad*, *dar-al-aman*, and *watan* (Shahabuddin and Wright, 1987: 157). Another example is that of the hanafites<sup>3</sup> of South Asia who invented the term *dar al-hind*, or the abode of India (Khalfaoui, 2008). In contemporary India, scholars like Asghar Ali Engineer, and Akhtarul Wasey share the conviction that India is considered *dar-ul sulh* or the abode of treaty, of conciliation. This demonstrates how scholars of Islamic studies have adopted a mechanism of pragmatic compliance with the secular democratic system. March (2005) explains this as follows:

“The civic duty to accept liberal freedoms in a liberal democracy should not be confused on the part of believing Muslims with a wholesale adoption of a liberal lifestyle. Muslims are not required to submit to the ‘relativization’ of the tenets of morality or to radically reform their understanding of what is *halal* (permitted) and what is *haram* (forbidden) in Islam. Nor are Muslims required to abandon the notion of Islam as a communal faith requiring the inculcation of morality and the confrontation of sin through collective efforts. All that is required is the acceptance of the liberal restraints described above as the activities of inculcation and confrontation. At the same time, the long-term affirmation of citizenship in a liberal democracy requires more than a simple tactical agreement to obey the law out of fear of punishment. At some level it requires the belief that the laws themselves may be reasonable or just” (March, 2005: 342).

**Figure 1: Homogenizing, Ascribing, Silencing and Delegitimizing Identities**



Source: Drawn by the author.

The discourse on citizenship of Indian Muslims suffers from two problems of essentialization: first, homogenizing the identity of the Indian Muslims, and second, overburdening this homogenized entity with certain identities. The inclusion of some strata of the Indian Muslims in the discussion of subaltern identities<sup>4</sup> was a step towards revisiting the essentialist methods of discussing Muslim identities and histories. In addition to this, it led to the ascription of what Gooptu (2001) described as an inherently oppositional and resistant, even insurgent mentality or consciousness with regard to the subaltern classes (see figure 1). However, what remains controversial is the process of homogenization of Muslim identity and presenting it within a discourse of backwardness. The discourse on Indian Muslims usually neglects the vast divisions between the different Muslims in India. The North Indian most often monopolizes the discussion, leaving the South Indian outside the picture. In addition to this, the great variations along regional lines, coupled with class aspects, show us the rift between different positions of Muslims as well as between the elites (be it a religious elite or a secular one) and the masses (also be it orthodox, revivalist, or secularist). As Shahabuddin and Wright (1987) contend: “The modernists and secularists may be relatively few in number, but they wield influence disproportionate to their number because of their superior access to the media and their build-up by the national parties and leadership” (Shahabuddin and Wright, 1987: 173). Another eye-opener when trying to analyze the situation of Muslims in India is the critical attitude to the ‘language of minoritism’, and the

<sup>3</sup> Hanafites are those belonging to the Hanafi section of Islamic jurisprudence; one of the four groups of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Pandey (2009) and Chaturvedi (2000).

question in how far it could be deconstructed or reconstructed to explain socio-political behaviour, or as Mushirul Hasan (1997) argues to “uncover the motives of those practitioners of modern-day politics who purported to represent the millat, or the ‘community’ as a whole, but were actually exploiting Islam and communitarian solidarity as a shield to cover their political designs” (Hasan, 1997: 51).

A second dilemma is that Muslims are usually attributed a transcultural identity embodied in the notion of the *Ummah*; reflecting a Pan-Islamic nature. *Ummah* consciousness derives from the Quranic imposed duty on those “who have attained to faith, enjoining upon one another patience in adversity (*sabr*) and [enjoining] upon one another compassion (*marhammah*) (90: 17)”. Patience is not an argument in favour of inaction. In the Quranic meaning, *sabr* is a positive concept that brings out the best in man, separating the weak from the strong. The exercise of *marhammah* as the twin attribute of *sabr* ensures an individual’s continued adherence to human values and acts as a brake against savage impulses (Krämer et al., Oxford Islamic studies online). This topic was largely discussed by the Egyptian Azhar reformist Muhammad Abduh in the early twentieth century. Without going into deeper analysis of the applicability of this identity to contemporary Indian Muslims, suffice it to say that this identity has been utilized by the right-wing forces in India to deny Muslims the character of patriotism or nationalism. The Nationalist Muslim was devised to implicitly suggest the ‘Otherness’ of Muslims in India. As Pandey (1999) argued: “two terms that have gained common currency in the discourse on the “Muslim question [...] [t]hrough both date to before 1947, they came to acquire a new urgency-even a new meaning-with the Partition and Independence of that year. The first is the figure of the ‘Nationalist Muslim’, the second the notion of ‘minority’ and ‘majority’” (Pandey, 1999: 609).

The everyday life of a Muslim is not void of Islamic symbols, meanings, and conceptions. But when looking at the historical junction of partition and those who chose to stay in India, even the Muslim Ulama employed, and still in today’s India employ, the Western language of secularism and democracy. We should also not forget that:

It was the secular and democratic regime, rather than the Islamic dimension, that provided the overarching framework to build new political networks and electoral coalitions [...]. They had to seek adjustments not as Muslims per se but as members of a larger collectivity. They had to accept state laws enacted by parliament and not insist on the application of Islamic law except where marriage, divorce and inheritance were concerned (Hasan, 1997: 188).

A female Muslim librarian in a *madrassa* on the outskirts of Lucknow told me: “Muslims feel injustice after Babri Masjid<sup>5</sup>; they feel deprived of their dignity, shocked and are in sorrow. However, there is no risk for Muslims living in India because Allah protects us and we try to build our future ourselves through what Allah has destined for us” (Interview at Jamiatul Mominat al-Islamia, Lucknow).

Gender-related issues pose additional complications to the practice of citizenship rights among Muslims in India. The power structures governing those who can discuss problems of Muslims often not only neglect the gender aspect, but also seek to silence those voices calling for the inclusion of the gender perspective.

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<sup>5</sup> On 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1992, massive mobs of right-wing Hindutva supporters known as the ‘Karsevaks’ demolished the sixteenth-century Babri mosque in Ayodhya in the State of Uttar Pradesh. Several officials claim that the destruction of the mosque was previously planned as it was a contested site attributed to the birthplace of the Hindu God Ram.



The legitimacy of reformers and the question of who has the right to call for reforms are the greatest obstacles for any discussion on women's rights or betterment in India. This is also a very complicated issue to discuss. Generalizations cannot be enacted here, but as an overall observation, I had noticed how the sense of political agency of the North Indian female students seemed stronger. In one of my conversations with *madrassa* students in Lucknow, they were surprised when I asked them if they are going to vote, they exclaimed: "Of course! We live in a country where our Chief Minister and our President<sup>6</sup> are both women". In my conversations with these young Muslim women, it was evident how this sense of agency is evident but limited to the practise of their political rights. It was also noted how the secular system provided them with a freedom to also practise their cultural rights but when it came to their civil rights, it was this same secular system that had deprived them of the ability to be equal with other women and to overcome the patriarchal domination. When I asked other female students at Jamia-Millia Islamia University in New Delhi about their opinion of democracy in India, I was told: "As a Muslim I do not feel the state is just, but as a citizen, yes I feel so". One of the female students in an Arabic college in Kerala told me: "As an Indian, yes I am a citizen in a democratic country, but as a woman, I am not."

## II. WHEN STATISTICS SPEAK

In addition to the theoretical input, quantitative data serve to negate the intuitive and hegemonic remarks on Muslims' participation in the democratic process. The nature of urbaneness of Indian Muslims should be emphasized and conceptually related to the integral premise that citizenship is an urban value. Although India is mainly a rural country, Muslims predominantly live in urban areas. The level of urbanization among the Muslim population is higher than the average level. In 2001, 35.7 percent of the Muslim population was urban compared to 27.8 percent of the overall population. Several hegemonic discourses govern the lives of Indian Muslims, especially those living in the North. I could divide these discourses into the political (that of terrorism and the portrayal of Muslims as potential terrorists), the ideological (the Hindu-nationalistic discourse and its claims that Muslims are anti-Indian or disloyal and the questions of secularism), and the socio-economic (that of marginalization and backwardness). Likewise, the first detailed and government-commissioned report on the social, economic and educational conditions of Muslims in contemporary India (known as the 'Sachar Committee Report'), which was presented to the Parliament in 2006<sup>7</sup> divided the problems of Muslims into the following categories: identity-related, security-related, equity-related issues.

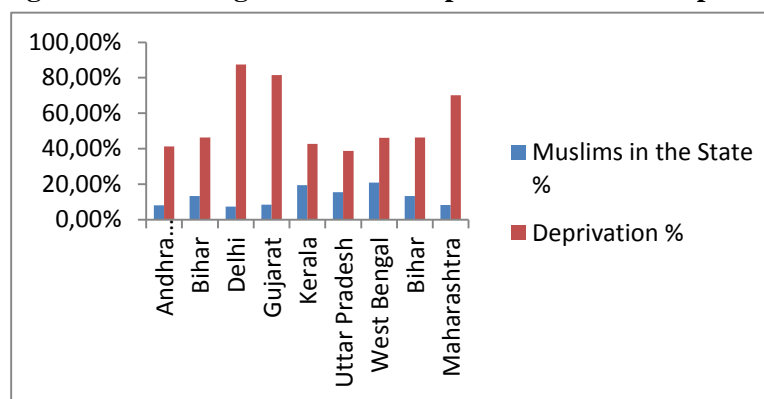
Identity and security-related aspects are closely interlinked with political and ideological discourses, which are in turn related to socio-economic ones. Considerable media evidence reports the increasingly politicized actions of the Indian police, and how some factions of the governing party and local bodies have used the police against minorities. In addition to this, in many ethnic conflicts in Punjab, Gujarat, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, the police have been ineffective (Weiner, 1997: 488). One of the major triggers of this is the visibility of Muslims in public spaces. Lack of security due to the fear of an outbreak of ethnic violence and police impartiality led to the shrinkage of safe spaces for women and the

<sup>6</sup> These are the then-Chief Minister of the State of Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati (1995, 1997, 2002-2003, and 2007-2012), and the President of India, Pratibha Patil (since 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Report on *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India* (Sachar Committee Report, 2006). For the complete report see [http://minorityaffairs.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/moma/files/pdfs/sachar\\_comm.pdf](http://minorityaffairs.gov.in/sites/upload_files/moma/files/pdfs/sachar_comm.pdf).

transformation of common public spaces into segregated ones. Thus, an apparent clash with citizenship ideals appears (when the feeling of being at home gets re-defined). This self-imposed ghettoization, which was nurtured by fear, led to another complicated chain of deterioration on socio-economic levels. There is a reported shortage and neglect by municipal and government authorities of infrastructure (water, electricity, sanitation, roads, and transport facilities), as well as schools, public health facilities, banking facilities and ration shops. This undeniably led to poverty and sustained low levels of education due to poor access to school and pessimistic perceptions of children's futures. The literacy rate among Muslims in 2001 was 59.1 percent, which is far below the national average of 65.1 percent. The Sachar Committee Report (2006) also showed the dismal percentage of representation of Muslims in governmental institutions and offices, whether it was law enforcement bodies such as the police, or administrative services (3 percent in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), 1.8 percent in the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), and 4 percent in the Indian Police Service (IPS)). As for the Parliament, Ansari (2006) lists the numbers of Muslim members and shows the percentage of political deprivation accordingly (see figure 2).

**Figure 2: Percentage of Political Representation and Deprivation**



Source: Ansari (2006).

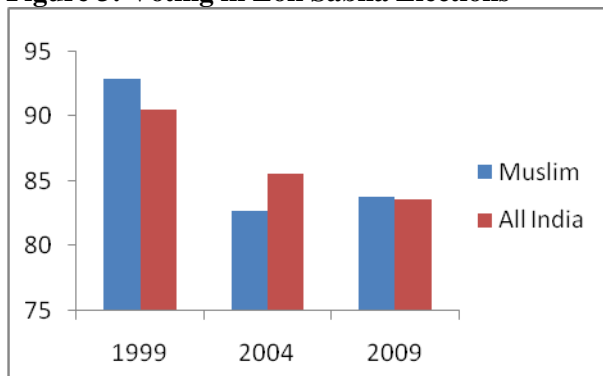
False perceptions of Muslims prevail, the first of which is that they do not support democracy and their political nature is essentially communalistic. However, findings of a survey in 1971 showed that two thirds of Muslims were satisfied with territorial non-communal representation (Nandy, 1975). In 1975, Nandy conducted studies on the acceptability of democratic norms and could not find any differences in respect of support for the democratic norms among Muslims and Hindus. Intergroup differences occurred in the sense that Muslims blamed the police more frequently (Hasan, 1987), and in so far as they were more often dissenters and outsiders (Nandy, 1975). On symbolic issues, such as the destruction of the Babri Masjid and support for a separate personal law, there is a notably sharp difference between Hindus and Muslims (32 percent vs. 86 percent and 41 percent vs. 67 percent, respectively). However, when it comes to a sense of personal efficacy and legitimacy of the political system, Muslims' percentages are slightly higher than those of Hindus (60 percent of Muslims believe their vote matters, as compared to 58 percent for Hindus; 72 percent of Muslims believe that better government is not possible without parties, assemblies and elections as compared to 68 percent for Hindus (Mitra and Singh, 1999).

The State of Democracy in South Asia Report (2008), compiled by the researchers of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in New Delhi, shows that the attitude of Muslims towards the satisfaction with democracy



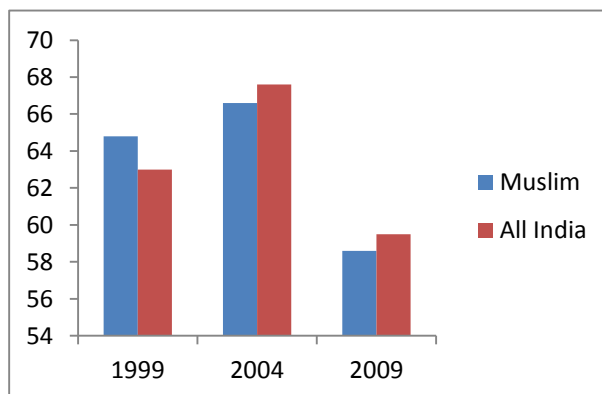
does not differ significantly from the Indian average, on the contrary, it actually exceeds the average by 3 percent since 38 percent of Indians are somewhat satisfied with democracy, whereas the Muslims score a percentage of 41 percent. As for voting patterns, except for the 2004 elections, the percentage of participation of Muslims in the voting process was higher than the all India average (see figure 3)<sup>8</sup>. As far as membership in organizations is concerned, there was a shift in 2009 that reflected a much higher percentage: from 2 percent in 2004, to around 13 percent in 2009. However, there is no great difference again between the Muslim and the all-India average level. The sense of efficacy is an important indicator of the strength of democracy. Here there are again no significant divergences between the Muslim and the all India average levels. However, when the all-India sense of efficacy declined in 2009, a mutual decline in the Muslim variable was witnessed (State of Democracy in South Asia Report, 2008) (see figure 4)<sup>9</sup>.

**Figure 3: Voting in Lok Sabha Elections**



Source: National Election Studies, CSDS, New Delhi.

**Figure 4: Sense of Efficacy: Vote Makes a Difference**



Source: National Election Studies, CSDS, New Delhi.

<sup>8</sup> The National Election Studies conducted by the Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in New Delhi had a sample of around 35,000 voters across India, which was drawn using the multistage stratified random sampling technique. For more information on these studies, see: Lokniti (Programme for Comparative Democracy) [http://www.lokniti.org/national\\_election\\_study2009.html#tm](http://www.lokniti.org/national_election_study2009.html#tm).

<sup>9</sup> For measuring the sense of political efficacy, the following question was asked by CSDS: Do you think your vote has effect on how things are run in this country or do you think your vote makes no difference?

### III. INTERACTION BETWEEN THE TWO REALMS: POLITICIZING RELIGION AND RELIGIONIZING POLITICS

The Indian experience is fascinating with regard to how the different Indian Muslims all over India have devised new Islamic perspectives on religious pluralism and techniques for social and political action, and thus have creatively managed to accommodate and apply the concept of democratic citizenship. The following is a summary of the main points I perceive to be most relevant in this regard.

#### 1. *Building alliances with other marginalized groups and overcoming the vote bank ideology*

“There is no puzzle to why Muslims have a higher sense of citizenship: it is usually the marginalized that have an idea of citizenship because they are the ones at the receiving end” (A Keralite Christian lecturer; personal conversation).

Different political forces in India have sought to build alliances with other marginalized, deprived, or oppressed groups, as partners in political struggles. Interestingly, many Islamists have taken up the cause of the struggle of Dalits, tribal groups, and women. Feminist voices have even found space within the publications of some of the Islamist media, for example on the pages of the *Madhyamam* weekly magazine, which is affiliated to the Jaamti Islami-i-Hind in Kerala and now among the leading weekly magazines in South India. This magazine is known to publish different views relating to issues of Muslims, Dalits, and women (see figure 5).

**Figure 5: Madhyamam Weekly Magazine Cover**



Another important point is the manifesto of the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) which was born out of the Popular Front of India in Kerala. This manifesto states that “SDPI is a party launched to empower Muslims and other deprived communities. It is time to bid goodbye to tactical voting and go for strategic plans designed to achieve adequate representation in legislative bodies” (SDPI manifesto, 2009).

#### 2. *Theorizing Darul Islam and Darul Hind*

*Darul hind* was a term invented by the South Asian *hanafi* jurists (Khalfaoui, 2008). It adds to the numerous terms coined to describe the situation of Muslims in

India and the question which jurisprudence they should follow. Interestingly, when I asked many of the Northern Indian *ulema* if they use any special *fiqh alaqliyyaat*, or minorities' jurisprudence<sup>10</sup>, they were not only puzzled and did not know what I was talking about, but they also emphasized that they follow the *hanafi mazhab* as it is because there is a clear separation between the public and the private space. To them, the Muslim Personal Law meant *shariah*, and having it was sufficient for them to be content. The political aspect of Islam was never a source of concern. As criticized by others, especially their southern counterparts, they had chosen the material life and their own personal gains. They were disloyal to Islam in some way because they had neglected the fact that the Muslim Personal Law was not an identical copy of *shariah*, and that Muslims ideally should live under Muslim power.

The history of the inclusion of *darul Hind* in the realm of *darul Islam* can be traced back to the colonial struggle which culminated in theoretical debates swinging between pan-Islamism and nationalism. In contemporary India, the including of the word national in the name of Muslim political parties in Kerala sends a specific message. The stress on India as the nation instead of the pan-Islamic identity is another point worth focusing on.

Linked to this is also the significance of ghettoization in understanding the way secularism works in India. It is often true that the establishment and realization of *darul Islam* would require a ghettoization to be able to be a Muslim. This led to the creation of a dual identity; that of a secular citizen and that of a Muslim. I asked a female student at Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi if the Muslims in her neighbourhood go to any market outside that area. She said: "Yes of course, they go to Lajpat Nagar, Sarojini Nagar, and people from *outside* also come *here*, but very few. Usually it is the other way". This 'people from outside' expression struck me.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The case of Muslims in India presents us with dynamic subjects who have been grappling with several structural predicaments, but have simultaneously made use of the democratic settings governing their lives. On a scholarly religious level, the *Ulama* have devised new modes of conceptualizing how to be governed by non-Muslim rulers and how to adapt to a minority setting. On a pragmatic level, the discourse on citizenship and constitutional guarantees dominates intellectual debates among Indian Muslims. Throughout talking with several Muslim intellectuals, leaders, students and what some might call the 'common people', they have all emphasized how it is through the multi-party system, the election process, the accountability, the spaces given for freedom of expression and opinion, that Muslims can debate their own personal affairs as well as their socio-political problems. Through the mechanisms offered by democracy, Muslims can manoeuvre and negotiate power relations—something, they cannot dream of in the Arab world, they usually add.

It is through the democratic framework that Islamic organizations like the Jamaati Islami-i-hind (JIH), manifesting a vision for political Islam as a tool for governance in India, could exist and make statements as the following:

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<sup>10</sup> This is a legal doctrine introduced in the 1990s by two prominent Muslim religious figures, Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani and Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and mainly targeted at the Muslim communities living in North America and Europe. It basically focuses on the social and financial dealings of these communities.

The JIH also envisages change of leadership in the broadest sense of the term. This includes intellectual leadership, social and cultural leadership, and ultimately, political leadership—the culmination of the process. The state is conceived as an indispensable means for establishing the order envisaged by Islam. A truly Islamic state is considered inconceivable unless its affairs are directed by people of clear Islamic vision and commitment, and upright character and competence (Jamaati Islami-i-hind website).

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# Good Governance in a Transcultural Context: A Case Study of E-governance Initiatives in India

**Bidisha Chaudhuri**

*Keywords: Governance, Good Governance, E-governance, Transculturality, Asymmetry, Hybridity*

## **ABSTRACT:**

*This paper explores the ways in which normative and 'universal' notions of (good) governance are negotiated and altered while applied to a hierarchical social setting in rural India. While taking a critical stand against the 'global' language of good governance, this paper takes up a society-centric bottom-up approach to understand e-governance initiatives in Indian villages. The aim is to evaluate to what extent these enterprises are shifting the notions of governance in a particular cultural setting and how these notions can be understood in a general context. The broader theme of the paper is to capture the shifting concepts, institutions and practices of governance emerging out of a complex interplay between structure and agency. Hence the emerging approaches of transculturality will shed new light on the politics of governance in Asia (particularly India in this case) and bring out new concepts to understand the contextual multiplicities involved in myriad facets of governance.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The face of international politics changed drastically as the Cold War came to an end in 1990. The bipolarity of international politics made its way towards multi-polar world politics. Consequently, the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a renewed interest in democracy, participation, transparency and efficiency (Woods, 1999). This wider context of political transition coincided with the massive failure of 'Structural Adjustment Programmes' (SAPs) in most of the developing countries. Henceforth, the international development community, especially the World Bank realized that governance reform is the key to all developmental problems in underdeveloped and developing nations. Unlike SAPs which emphasized the role of the market as opposed to the state, this new approach towards reform seriously considered the role and capacity of the state and institutions (Joseph, 2001). Interestingly enough, the governance reform agenda became quietly complementary with two related themes of democracy and economic development. Together they formed a triad of a magical solution to all the anguish and distress associated with underdevelopment. This triad focused on the political system, institutional structures and governance processes within a framework of public-private partnership (Santiso, 2001). All these new developments became popular under the umbrella term of 'good governance'. In the last two decades, good governance has become the



buzzword of the international development community. The term is packaged in such codes of morality that it seems to be devoid of any politics at all. However, quite contrarily, in marrying the free market with a strong civil society, good governance promises to provide new standards of rule which protect the citizens from political societies and undemocratic governments (Corbridge et al., 2005).

Given recent theoretical developments in interdisciplinary research in the humanities and social sciences, it could be argued that studies of governance in general and ‘good governance’ in particular acquire a sophisticated critical edge in the emerging paradigms of transculturality. Studying governance in a transcultural context implies examining the multidirectional cultural flows through which concepts, institutions and practices of governance are transferred across cultures (across all levels of local, regional and global governance) and are reconfigured in a continuous but non-linear historical process through webs of asymmetries involved in receiving and negotiating such flows<sup>1</sup>. Hence, ‘good governance’ can also be studied as a flow of concept which has been adopted and transmitted as a universal language quite consistently across the globe at all levels of governance institutions and practices through negotiating resulting asymmetries. Here asymmetry ceases to be a merely analytical category. It brings the focus back to human agency and the resulting conflict, which leads to the continuous yet non-linear process of transmission eventually culminating in a hybrid form of governance. Transculturality therefore provides critical perspectives by rendering itself as a more complex frame of analysis which helps surmount the dangers of the ‘normative’ in deepening our understanding of good governance (or governance in general).

As the title suggests, the aim of this article is to understand good governance in a transcultural context where e-governance will serve as a tool to set the analytical framework of such an understanding. Given the task at hand, the paper is structured around three broad sections. The first section focuses on the conceptual overview of ‘good governance’ bringing its contexts and connotations together. The following section establishes and explores the relationship between good governance and e-governance with a focus on the transformation of governance. This is where particular e-governance experiences in the Indian context will be discussed. Finally, the third section addresses the issues arising from the previous two sections and weaves them together in a broader framework of transculturality.

## II. GOOD GOVERNANCE: CONTEXTS AND CONNOTATIONS

Governance lies in the complex overlap of state-society interactions (see figure 6; cf. also Mitra 2006: 21), which in turn thrive on how authority, resources and power are distributed among the public, private and ‘people’ sectors and across various levels of government (from the global to the local level) (see figure 7). As explicated in the figures below there are three important stakeholders namely public, private and civil society. Depending on their respective roles the interaction between state and society, and consequently the system of governance also changes. The concept of governance rose to prominence in recent times against a backdrop of multiple contemporary political and ideological changes which propelled significant changes in the way public authority and resources are being allocated and deployed. Hence, the usage of the term governance has moved to the centre of an overlapping set of

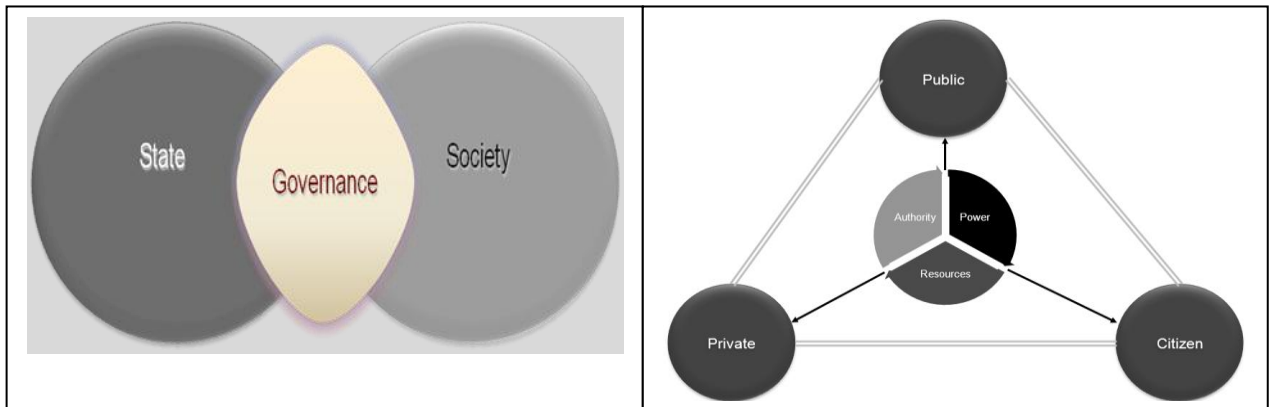
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<sup>1</sup> These views are evoked by writings of members of the Cluster of Excellence *Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows* at Heidelberg University. Some of the thoughts expressed here are accessible on the website of the Cluster (<http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de>).

concepts across a broad range of fields and their practitioners (Ramesh and Fritzen, 2009). In fact, it would not be wrong to say that governance is situated at the intersection of multiple agendas, and in turn gives rise to a governance reform agenda which is popularized by phrases such as ‘good governance’.

**Figure 6: State, Society and Governance in the Modern State**

**Figure 7: Complex of Governance**



Source Fig. 6: Mitra (2006); Source Fig. 7: Drawn by the author based on Fritzen’s analysis (2009).

As has already been mentioned in the introduction, good governance emerged alongside (or as a result of?) a set of other agendas which challenged the prevailing ideas on the size of the state, the locus of authority relationships and the way government authority is organized. Privatization, decentralization, global governance, participatory democracy (democratization), deregulation, public administration reform—all these agendas play out simultaneously in the current debate on governance and culminate in the popular approach of ‘good governance’ (Ramesh and Fritzen, 2009).

There is as such no definition of ‘good governance’. It is rather an ideal-typical construct in the Weberian sense, which delineates the parameters of governance through certain indicators. The qualifier ‘good’ clearly denotes the higher standards of such a formulation and the imperative to achieve them.

The World Bank has identified three distinct aspects of governance which need to be emphasized for reform: “i) the form of political regime; ii) the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development; and iii) the capacity of government to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions” (Bandyopadhyay, 1996: 3109). This implies significant changes in the ways power, authority and resources would be allocated and aligned with the close link between democracy, economic development and good governance. As far as the criteria of good governance are concerned, UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) sets out eight major characteristics: Good governance is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law (see figure 8).



**Figure 8: Five Principles of Good Governance**

<b>Five Principles of Good Governance</b>	
<b>The UNDP Principles</b>	<b>UNDP text on which they are based</b>
1. Legitimacy and Voice	Participation—all men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their intention. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively. Consensus orientation—good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.
2. Direction	Strategic vision—leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.
3. Performance	Responsiveness—institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders. Effectiveness and efficiency – processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.
4. Accountability	Accountability—decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organizations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs, depending on the organizations and whether the decision is internal or external. Transparency—transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.
5. Fairness	Equity—all men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being. Rule of Law—legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.

Source: Graham, Amos and Plumptre (2003).

Now the question arises what this actually means in pragmatic terms, what is the shift from mere governance to ‘good’ governance? This new agenda of good governance, though based on the premise of early liberal theories puts emphasis on a market concept of equality which strives for empowerment of citizens by making them economically self-sustaining and enabling them to enter into market transactions. The cooperation of private agencies and NGOs are crucial for this purpose. Under this new-found concept of equality and active participation of different actors, citizens are often viewed as end users or customers whereas the government acts as the service provider. Improving the quality of these services and reaching out to a wider base of customers with the help of private and non-

governmental stakeholders are the central objectives of the governance reform projects, and call for a complete overhaul of public administration (Joseph, 2001).

Therefore, as an issue of public policy, good governance has moved not only into the agenda of the World Bank but has also become part of the common parlance of national governments and local political actors. In short, good governance provides a universal recipe with a gradually growing mix of deregulation, privatization, civil service reform and decentralization (the associated agendas of reform), which are deemed to produce better governability across societies (Corbridge et al., 2005).

### **III. TRANSFORMING GOVERNANCE: GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA**

Throughout the discussion on good governance in the previous section, it becomes apparent that governance parameters are shifting across the globe and new strategies are being evolved to transform ideas, institutions and practices of governance geared towards a universal set of agendas. E-governance falls into such schematics of transforming governance towards 'good governance'.

Governance in practical terms is the societal synthesis of politics, policies and programmes, and e-governance is the application of ICT (Information Communication Technology) to this very system of governance in order to ensure a wider participation and deeper involvement of citizens, private sectors, civil society and formal institutions in the decision-making processes (UNESCO, 2005). In other words, e-governance is a form of governance which is facilitated by ICT tools in the interaction between government and citizen (G2C), government and business (G2B), business and citizens (B2C), as well as within the internal government operations (G2G) in order to achieve the following objectives (Deva, 2005) (particularly in developing countries):

- Improve connections between citizens and government and encourage their participation in governance
- Make government more simple, transparent and efficient
- Reduce corruption
- Open up avenues for direct participation of marginalized groups in the policy-making process
- Reduce poverty
- Enhance democratization and citizen empowerment

Given this initial introduction into e-governance, we now turn to specific initiatives of the Indian government which fits into the overall paradigm of 'good governance'. The attempt here is not to draw a gross generalization of the Indian context, but to bring forward the significance of particular contexts in analyzing the flows of concepts and practices of 'good governance' within the scope of transculturality. Moreover, a NASSCOM study (2003) shows that e-governance is the fastest growing sector of the IT market in India which grew above 18 percent in 2001-02. There are many core projects both at the national and the regional level such as smart card, national ID card, computerization of revenue departments, and generic office management systems. Some of the well-known State initiatives have been *Gyandoot* implemented by the Government of Madhya Pradesh, *Friends* implemented by the Government of Kerala, and *Bhoomi* implemented by the Government of Karnataka. However, most of these national and State government

projects fail to remain sustainable even after a successful pilot phase. For example, one of the secondary sources pointed out that *Gyandoot* which started with much hype has already died down. The level of awareness about services available under such projects is very low among the villagers and in addition infrastructure appears to be the strongest barrier. There could be multiple reasons for such failures which might differ from one project to the other. However, on a generic level it is believed that citizens and officials both are equally habituated to the hierarchic, non-transparent system of governance which has been operating for many decades now. Furthermore, there is a considerable gap between citizen's expectations and government's visions which renders these schemes rather unattractive for villagers. Adding to these systemic drawbacks is the often strong resistance from local politicians. Many instances from Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh show that villagers have to depend on the middlemen to access information from computers installed in Panchayat<sup>2</sup> offices (Panda, 2007). Even contracts for VLEs (village level entrepreneurs who run the IT kiosks) are fraught with corruption embedded in local political society and bureaucracy.

These insights based on a review of secondary literature were reiterated by a primary field study undertaken in three Indian States from October 2010 to March 2011. The aim of the field visit was to carry out a case study of the Common Services Centres (CSCs) Scheme initiated by the Government of India along with its organizational structure (mentioned below). Qualitative semi-structured interviews exhausting all three levels of the project implementation in each State were conducted. The research is ongoing and hence it would be prudent to refrain from sealing any conclusion on the project at this stage. Nevertheless, some general observations can be made on the basis of experiences emerging out of the preliminary research.

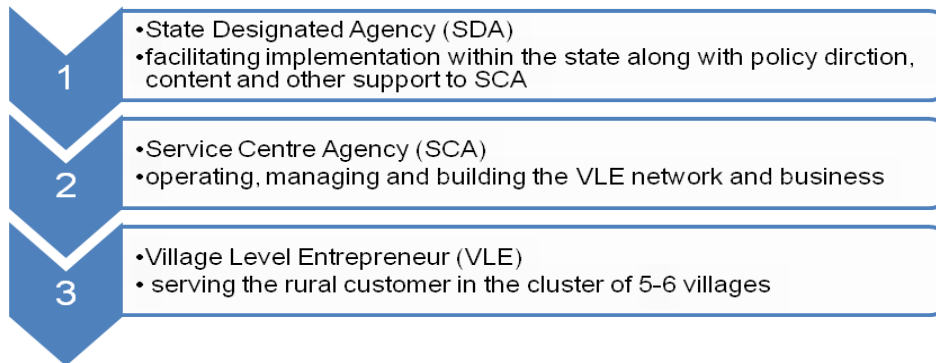
At this point, it becomes imperative to lay out a basic framework of the scheme under scrutiny. CSC is the primary physical front-end of the service delivery mechanism which forms one of the three pillars of the e-governance infrastructure model as envisioned under the National e-governance Plan. The objective is to integrate private sector goals with the government's social objectives through a Public Private Partnership model for achieving socio-economic change in rural India through the use of ICT (Information Communication Technology).<sup>3</sup> The aim of the CSC Scheme is to establish 100,000 rural kiosks across the country with an equitable distribution—one CSC for every six census villages. The CSC Scheme is not just about rolling out IT infrastructure, it also acts as an agent of socially inclusive community participation and collective action. The implementation of the project takes on the structure depicted in figure 9 (DIT: GOI, 2011):

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<sup>2</sup> Panchayat, literally, the 'rule of five' is the village council. It is the basic administrative unit in India.

<sup>3</sup> CSCs provide both public (G2C) and private (B2C) services to the villagers. The public services can be electric bill deposits, revenue services, issuing land record certificates, birth and death certificates, income certificates and many more. The availability of public services varies from one state to the other depending on the e-readiness of the concerned departments and other bureaucratic processes. Private services can range from mobile phone recharge; travel reservations to e-learning courses, private insurance etc. and primarily relies on the entrepreneurship of the kiosk operators.

**Figure 9: Project Implementation Structure: Common Services Centres (CSCs)**



Source: Drawn by the author on the basis of information provided on the DIT websites.

The issues of concern in this project remain somewhat similar to those of the previous evaluations of different e-governance initiatives in India. They can be summarized as follows:

- Inability to connect to wider needs of the rural masses
- Inertia within the system of administration and bureaucracy
- Existing avenues of corruption crippling the promises of ICTs
- Lack of transparency within the system
- Feeding into the existing power structures rather than transforming them
- Failure of long-term sustainability without continuous government support
- No strong role of the civil society

Needless to say, all these issues hint towards the failure to achieve most principles of good governance in any substantial way through ICTs so far (at least in India in this case). There are certainly some success stories which trigger hope for the future. Nevertheless, transforming governance is a daunting task which implies fundamental changes in the system and requires much sustained impetus. However, the crucial question here is how to fully comprehend the innate implications of e-governance and how to deal with its counter-productive forces both from the theoretical and the pragmatic point of analysis. In doing so, it is absolutely necessary to focus on the governance part of e-governance whereas the ‘e’, or the technological part, should be the aid to the former. This does not mean to undermine the contribution of technology (or ICTs), but to propel technological innovations into the right channels to maximize gratification as far as e-governance is concerned.

Therefore, e-governance cannot be seen essentially as an administrative innovation facilitated by ICT, but should also be recognized as a social process which involves not only change in the mental scope and the ways of governmentality, but also in the contested area of social forces shaping the evolution of this technocratic innovation. Technical processes defining the contours of e-governance are embedded in the structures of power which might also become reactionary. This is particularly evident in villages where local elites play key roles in the implementation of the ICT-based projects and enjoy the greater benefits from this public good. “The idea that ICT is inherently a liberating technology, and hence e-governance is a new way of transcending inept and inefficient bureaucratic systems, which empowers ‘end-users’, appears to be completely inaccurate in the

rural societal setting” (Sreekumar, 2008: 86) With this insight, the need for new perspectives to address governance issues as matters ensconced in culture, context and history becomes even more vital.

#### IV. GOOD GOVERNANCE IN TRANSCULTURAL CONTEXT: EMERGING APPROACH TO GOVERNANCE<sup>4</sup>

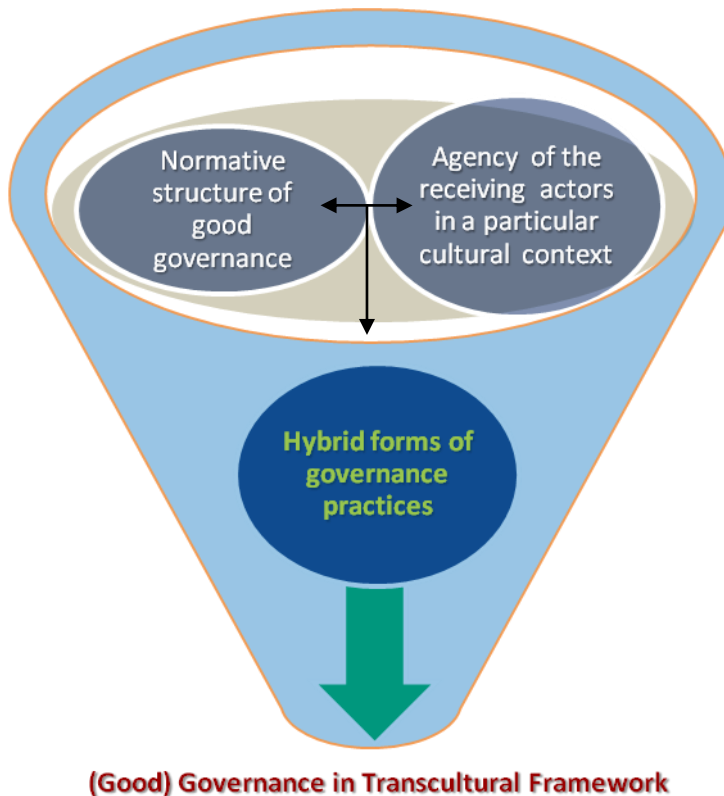
The study of governance has predominantly been the domain of political science approaches that took their point of departure from a given (Western/European) polity and evaluated the effectiveness of other political systems from the vantage point of the former. Similar trends were present across most social science disciplines in post-war times which were dominated by the ‘universal’ appeal of modernization theory in developing countries focusing on economic growth (Rostow, 1960), social change (Eisenstadt, 1964), and political development (Huntington, 1968) for a linear progress of societies along an axis that impeccably connected traditional societies to the stage of self-sustaining, liberal, democratic modernity. The post-Second World War policy of developmental aid was intended to promote this very idea of modernization and somewhat continues to maintain the undercurrents of the same philosophy till date.

The agenda of good governance with its components (democratization, decentralization, privatizations etc.) reflects a similar tendency of universalizing a global language of governance across culture intended to produce predictable, linear models of transformation. Moreover, the prefix ‘good’ not only points towards an inherent superiority of liberal democratic ideologies which are dominant in the international development community, but also denotes the blurred lines between ideologies and operational categories. What it ignores is the fact that multi-directional cultural flows often create conflict and asymmetries in the receiving cultures which lie at the heart of any process of change and transformation. The emerging perspectives of transculturality could shed new light on the politics of governance while attempting to understand the contextual multiplicities involved in the processes of governance by deploying notions of asymmetry and hybridity (see figure 10).

Asymmetries which surface out of cultural entanglements are not just an analytical category, but are one of the driving forces of human agency and interaction. The agency of the members of the receiving society plays an active role in shaping asymmetrical cultural contacts, selective reception of or even resistance to foreign goods, ideas, institutions and practices (Bhabha, 1994). Therefore, in analyzing the universal package of good governance, asymmetry does not only serve as a heuristic tool but also hints at the human agency and consequent conflict involved in the adaptation of good governance in a particular cultural context (India, in this case) which is already fraught with innate structures of asymmetry. Thus, asymmetry plays itself out at the levels of ideation and implementation.

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<sup>4</sup> Most of the views in this section have emerged out of the ongoing research and academic debate taking place at the Cluster of Excellence ‘Asia and Europe in Global Context’ at Heidelberg University. I owe my thoughts expressed and concepts used in this section to my supervisor Professor Subrata Mitra, Cluster professors and to my colleagues in the Cluster and the South Asia Institute at Heidelberg University.

**Figure 10: (Good) Governance: A Transcultural Framework**

. Source: Drawn by the author

Multi-directional and asymmetrical cultural links that shove interaction of indigenous values and institutions with imported norms and institutional practices, lead, occasionally, to a smooth fusion in the form of a stable, legitimate political order, but more often than not to disorder and conflict resulting from the rupture between the modern state and the traditional society. Real politics of developing societies often reveal complex political structures that salvage their indigenous traditions and combine them with the cultural flow from outside, originating, particularly, in Europe. This leads to the notion of hybridity which not only creates buoyancy for new political structures but also tackles the process of serrated negotiations involved in such creations. Hybridity therefore serves as a heuristic tool to introspect universal political ideas, such as good governance as applied to a particular political context (India, for instance) and the resultant counter-productive forces. This enables us to understand hybridity also as a dynamic process where the universal is combined with the specific to produce a ‘third space’ (Bhabha, 1994).

## V. CONCLUSION

In order to understand the shifting facets of governance in Asia, it is important to understand the role of history, tradition and cultural complexities of a particular region. The aim should be to link these regional experiences with the theoretical understanding of governance as such, rather than building universal models and assessing the performance of states accordingly. Good governance and its close ally e-governance (as experienced in India) show us the pitfalls of such a grand attempt by emphasizing the hiatus it creates between the governed and those who govern. However, instead of simply negating the grand narrative, the case study of CSCs



strives to illustrate how universal models of governance are negotiated in the local context and create new forms of governance which are neither 'global' nor 'local'. These new forms of governance contain the marks of asymmetries, conflict and rupture that result from the process of transformation. Therefore, the impact of e-governance or CSCs (in particular) in rural India point out the continuous interplay of structure (state initiative of e-governance) and agency (of different stakeholders and actors involved in the process), as well as new hybrid forms of governance that emerge out of such interactions (as explicated in Figure 10).

No doubt, parameters of governance are changing across the globe, but the process is neither smooth nor homogenous, often obfuscating the notions of governance themselves. The emerging paradigms of transculturality bring these problematic zones into the frontline of the academic debate. By manoeuvring the nebulous zones of contexts and conflicts, possibilities are created to move beyond the grand narratives (of European origin), where area studies can merge with theories. Hence, rather than engaging in the universal quest for holistic models, transculturality compels us to understand how multidirectional flows of ideas, institutions and practices of governance create ruptures in a particular cultural context without subverting them as mere exotic aberrations.

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# **A Transnational Concept with Chinese Characteristics: The Changing Structure of the Chinese External Propaganda Apparatus**

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*Keywords: Propaganda, Governance, Asymmetry, Transculturality*

## **ABSTRACT:**

*This paper explores how the notion that a nation-state needs to advertise itself to foreign publics has developed in China, and how the institutional structures responsible for what is known in China as 'external propaganda' have changed since the founding of the People's Republic of China. In doing so, this study views Chinese external propaganda not as an isolated Chinese phenomenon, but as a concept that entered China from the 'West' in the early twentieth century and that has developed by drawing on the experience of different countries during different periods. Since the beginning of China's economic opening in 1978, the ability to influence foreign publics has become a part of its overall development strategy, and the country has started to look increasingly to the 'West' again as the main model to reform its external propaganda. In addition, the continually-developing discourse on external propaganda in other countries frequently adds new concepts and practices to the Chinese context. This paper concludes that changes as to which country served as the main model for China have caused some problems, and that despite efforts to improve the structure of the external propaganda sector, some old issues remain while new challenges emerge.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Over the last few years, China has invested considerable resources to expand the reach of its global media and has launched a plethora of new cultural exchange initiatives (most famously the Confucius Institutes) to boost its 'soft power.' With this large number of new developments, China has been struggling to find an adequate bureaucratic structure to coordinate this rapid expansion. At the 2009 Annual Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)<sup>1</sup>, one of the delegates reportedly recommended that China establish an institutional structure to coordinate its 'public diplomacy' ('Chen Haosu weiyuan', 2009: 9), an indication that the current organizational arrangement is perceived as

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<sup>1</sup> The CPPCC is an advisory body consisting of delegates from political parties (known as the 'democratic parties') other than the Communist Party of China, which are allowed some participation in the policy process through this channel, but cannot replace the CPC as ruling party of China. The CPPCC is in session once a year, around the same time that the National People's Congress (which is nominally the legislative body of the Chinese government) holds its annual meeting in March.

inadequate. ‘Public diplomacy,’ broadly defined as the attempt of a government to influence foreign publics, either directly or through the involvement of third parties, in order to make them more amenable to its policies, indeed poses a problem to the Chinese bureaucracy that has not yet found a suitable mechanism to co-ordinate policy making and implementation for the growing number of activities that in official circles are still mostly subsumed under the term ‘external propaganda.’

The goal of this paper is to provide a diachronic institutional analysis of the main actors and of the authority structure in the Chinese external propaganda sector as it has been adapting to new realities and tried to integrate new concepts and practices associated with external propaganda. These are often based on or at least inspired by models and discourses from other countries. Despite this link, Chinese external propaganda is, with some exceptions, often viewed in isolation of similar developments in other countries, especially ‘Western’ ones<sup>2</sup>. To counter this trend, this study explicitly treats Chinese external propaganda as a ‘transnational’ concept. At the same time, it acknowledges that the existing (though, of course, not static) structural context in China shapes the way in which external propaganda can be developed and implemented. This study thus tries to answer the question: what is the historical and institutional baggage China has to deal with while reforming ‘external propaganda’ and reshaping it in accordance with new developments that have emerged in the ‘West,’ which currently serves both as the model and primary counter-text for China?

The concept of ‘external propaganda’ as it is understood in China will first be explained briefly, demonstrating that it has not only been shaped profoundly by ‘Western’ debates following World War I, but has, in more recent times, also been influenced by current developments in the ‘West,’ most importantly by the post-9/11 American debate on ‘public diplomacy.’ Second, I will analyze the institutional set-up of the external propaganda bureaucracy by tracing its history (which, compared to the history of other bureaucracies, has undergone a tremendous amount of re-arrangement) and will identify some of the past and current problems in the structure that explain why there has been a sizeable amount of reform, why problems still persist, and which new issues have emerged. This paper finds that an inadequate institutional structure at the beginning of China’s economic reform period combined with the change from the Soviet Union to the ‘West’ as the main model has rendered establishing an efficient and independent external propaganda structure difficult.

## II. THE CHINESE CONCEPT OF ‘EXTERNAL PROPAGANDA’

While most people probably would not dispute that trying to influence foreign publics in one’s favour is not an exclusively Chinese practice, it is often treated as such in academic studies;<sup>3</sup> even explicitly comparative studies are rare<sup>4</sup>. This part is dedicated to demonstrating that ‘external propaganda’ is a transnational concept that

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<sup>2</sup> The term ‘West’ and the adjective ‘Western’ are used throughout this paper because ‘the West’ is an important category in all Chinese writing on external propaganda and the international situation in general. It mostly refers to the ‘economic’ West—that is North America, Western Europe, and Japan, with the United States as the leading country, exerting considerable influence over the other Western countries.

<sup>3</sup> This probably has as much to do with academic convention as with the fact that the study of other countries’ foreign propaganda apparatuses has grown out of and feeds back into intelligence work.

<sup>4</sup> Comparison, if any, is usually implicit and takes place in the form of edited volumes with different authors covering separate areas (see, for example, Snow and Taylor, 2009).

has been and, more importantly, continues to be influenced by developments in other countries. The adjective ‘transnational’ is used here to refer to ‘things’<sup>5</sup> (concepts, institutions, practices, etc.) associated in particular with the nation-state or the nation-state-based world order which are spread across various nation-states and which often continue to be in contact with one another, although such continued interaction is not necessarily acknowledged. A transnational ‘thing’ is usually some form of abstract category or idea that has particular manifestations in various nation-states that differ from each other with regard to some of its properties. For things not directly associated with the nation-state based world order, the term ‘transcultural’ is preferred; however, ‘external propaganda’ is referred to as a ‘transnational’ (rather than a ‘transcultural’) concept because the very idea of targeting *foreign* publics is closely tied to the nation-state based world order.

Since the notion of the ‘public’ has gained importance in the political imaginary, political and other elites have sought ways to be able to manipulate them, both on the national and, especially since the two world wars, also on the international level. As Peter Kenez has stated, propaganda has been “an integral part of modernity” (Kenez, 1985: 4). Whereas the concept of propaganda targeting domestic audiences has been challenged in a large number of countries, at least in the political realm, and when organized by national governments rather than particular interest groups, the notion that a nation-state must advertise itself to foreigners in order to be successful has faced far less scrutiny, and continues to be accepted even in places where the term ‘propaganda’ itself has clearly come out of fashion.

Although some of the activities undertaken by various Chinese imperial courts during pre-modern times have been interpreted as forms of ‘external propaganda’ in the broader sense, the modern concept with its underlying assumptions about the role of publics and a specific set of practices only entered China after the new nation-state based way of viewing the world had gradually established itself in the country during the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. As early as 1908, the *New York Times* reported that an English language publication had been launched in Beijing under the direction of military general Yuan Shikai袁世凱 (1859-1916), which was portrayed as the official mouthpiece of the Chinese imperial court and declared to be published with the goal “to express in the press the feeling of China with regard to her international situation” (‘National Paper for China’, 1908). Hence, the idea that China should publicize its official stance to the global public already took hold during the last years of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), before the founding of the Republic and probably even before the Chinese term for propaganda in its modern sense had properly established itself.

During the Republican Period (1912-1949), propaganda aimed at foreign audiences was most frequently referred to as *guoji xuanchuan* 國際宣傳 – international propaganda. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, *duiwai xuanchuan* 對外宣傳 has become the more commonly used term. *Duiwai* means “aimed at the outside” and can potentially refer to anyone outside a given group, but, in the compound *duiwai xuanchuan*, is most frequently

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Thing’ is used here as the most general to subsume the broad range of different categories of occurrences, such as objects, entities, practices, concepts, events, etc. Use of the term is based on the Chinese word *shiwu* 事物, object, in (Chinese) Marxist philosophy, which encompasses all concrete and abstract things and events that the world is made of.

used to refer to propaganda targeted at non-PRC nationals.<sup>6</sup> The lexeme *xuanchuan*, propaganda, in its modern sense, is believed to have been coined in Japan (宣伝 Japanese pronunciation: *senden*), from where it was transmitted to China (cf. Volland, 2003: 31). Use of the term *xuanchuan* in the sense of ‘political propaganda,’ including at the international level, can be traced back to the early 1920s (e.g. Miao 1922).<sup>7</sup> Many authors have stressed the positive connotation of the word compared to ‘propaganda,’ which has acquired a profoundly negative connotation (e.g. Shen, 1998: 15; Gan, 2004: 10; Volz, 2011: 174)<sup>8</sup>. In fact, the term *xuanchuan* today is used in a similar fashion as ‘propaganda’ was used in early twentieth century Europe, i.e. it is neutral: It can refer both to one’s own activities and to those of one’s opponent; whether it is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ depends on who exercises it.

Despite some earlier attempts to influence foreign publics and buttress China’s standing in the world, the idea of propaganda aimed at foreign or international audiences gained significantly in popularity in the course of the escalating conflict with Japan (Volz, 2011: 163). During the 1930s, largely American-trained intellectuals introduced ‘Western’ propaganda theory at Chinese universities and through a number of journals (Volz, 2011: 165). While the debate on propaganda based on ‘Western’ theories was largely led by people associated with the Nationalist Party (Guomindang 國民黨, GMD), members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) were also exposed to ‘Western’ propaganda theories and practices during the Second United Front (1937 to 1946), when the GMD and CPC officially co-operated to fight the Japanese, a union which ended with the outbreak of a civil war between the two parties after the end of the Second World War. During this time, propaganda was viewed by some in the ‘West’ as a ‘magical weapon’ that needed to be explored further and as a threat to democracy by others (Bussemer, 2008: 52). Notably, although the majority of Chinese texts on propaganda viewed it positively, more skeptical points of view regarding propaganda in general were also represented in the overall debate (e.g. Pan, 1946 [1940]), meaning that a fairly large range of ‘Western’ propaganda debates found their way to China.

After the CPC had defeated the GMD and the PRC was established in 1949, *xuanchuan* began to be employed in predominantly positive terms because it was mostly used to refer to the activities of the CPC, which, under Soviet influence, started building a ‘propaganda net’ (*xuanchuanwang* 宣傳網) in 1951 to penetrate all segments of society (Brady, 2008: 12). During the Mao Period (1949-1976), Western works and press clippings continued to be translated and circulated internally at various different levels of access; however, I have not located any internally published translated Western works on propaganda theory or practice from

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, *duiwai xuanchuan* often also encompasses external propaganda aimed at residents of territories nominally under PRC control, but *de facto* run by independent or semi-independent regimes, namely Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao.

<sup>7</sup> This conclusion is based on searches in two databases of journals from the period, *Quanguo baokan suoyin* and *Dacheng laoju kan quanwen shujuku*. There may have been sporadic incidents in which the term was used in the sense of political propaganda before the 1920s, but I have not been able to locate any examples.

<sup>8</sup> Awareness of the difference in connotation is also the reason why the English name of the *Zhonggong zhongyang xuanchuan bu* 中共中央宣傳部, which I translate as ‘Central Propaganda Department’ throughout this paper, has officially been translated as Central Publicity Department since 1998 (Shen, 1998: 15).



this period<sup>9</sup>. Although China did not copy the Soviet propaganda concept and institutions on a one-to-one basis (Volland, 2003) the Soviet influence over Chinese practices in the realm of propaganda work and cultural exchange (e.g. ‘friendship associations’) can hardly be overstated.

Necessitated by China’s economic reforms and its gradual re-integration into the global economy after 1978, it was mainly in the post-Mao period that for the first time since the founding of the PRC, external propaganda became the subject of an open and widespread discussion in both the realms of politics and academia. With increasing exposure to the rest of the world, the CPC was forced to operate in a new global environment that it did not control and in which it felt threatened by asymmetries both in hard power and in normative power vis-à-vis the ‘West.’ The sentiment of being encircled by hostile forces was aggravated after the crackdown on the Tiananmen Movement in 1989, which severely tainted China’s image. This was followed by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which left China as the only large country in the Socialist camp. Although it is seen as China’s principal opponent in the battle over public opinion, ‘the West’ has also—again—served prominently as a model for reforming China’s external propaganda. While all cultures absorb elements of other cultures, the Chinese case is special in that the Communist Party of China openly and professedly engages in this absorption. According to the CPC’s vision of China’s development, care needs to be taken to avoid ‘decadent’ Western thought entering China during the process of opening up to the outside world, but the absorption of progressive technology, thought and other ‘experiences’ is encouraged<sup>10</sup>. Hence, as far as external propaganda is concerned, it is often stressed that although China’s motives for propaganda are different from those of the United States or the ‘West,’<sup>11</sup> China can still learn a lot from Western techniques (cf. Li and Liu, 2004: 19).

One well-known example of a new idea that emanated from the ‘Western’ discourse and has been integrated into the Chinese one is the concept of ‘soft power’ (cf. Wang and Lu, 2008; Li, 2008), which was even mentioned by Party Secretary and President Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 during his work report at the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2007<sup>12</sup>. This is fairly remarkable as, in general, the Chinese leadership has retained the vocabulary of the Mao period instead of adapting new, more ‘fashionable’ terms, such as ‘publicity’ and ‘public diplomacy,’ which may enter the academic discourse in China, but are usually kept out of official Chinese Party and government documents.

Another, perhaps less well-known and unacknowledged ‘flow’ is the overall broadening of the concept of ‘external propaganda’ in the early 2000s, which quite probably happened in response to the renewed debate on public diplomacy in the United States after 9/11. In 1999, Jiang Zemin 江泽民, the then-Party Secretary of

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<sup>9</sup> Overall, while volumes outlining the experience of local propaganda cadres were circulated, not much theoretical writing on either domestic or external propaganda was produced during that period.

<sup>10</sup> This idea is consistent with the ‘Law of the Negation of the Negation’ in the overall Marxist world view, in which new historical stages maintain the progressive aspects of the previous stages while discarding their backwards elements.

<sup>11</sup> China’s motives are ‘pure’, while the West’s motive is to ‘Westernize’ and ‘split’ China in order to be able to exert ideological hegemony over the entire world (cf. Hu, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> The National Congress of the CPC is held every five years, usually in autumn. Nominally, it is the highest decision making body of the Party. Although decisions are made beforehand, they are often introduced to the public around the time that the Party Congress meets. It is also when the Party Congress is in session that leadership transitions take place.

the CPC and President of China, delivered an important speech on external propaganda. The focus of the speech was on traditional media and on improving China's image (cf. Xu, 1999: 2). In contrast, by 2003, the scope of what was subsumed under the term *duiwai xuanchuan* had become considerably larger and more congruent with what is discussed in the U.S. under the term 'public diplomacy.' Given the fact that various Chinese media organizations and think tanks closely monitor U.S. academic trends and debates in the media, it is certainly no exaggeration to say that without the tremendous post-9/11 concern about public diplomacy in the U.S. (cf. Cowan and Cull, 2008: 6), the Chinese discussion on external propaganda would not have taken the direction it has. In 2003, the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC)<sup>13</sup> member in charge of propaganda work, Li Changchun, stressed that China must broaden the field and channels of external propaganda. The message that Li Changchun sent was for propaganda cadres to think outside the box and use any channel possible to propagate China abroad. China should strengthen its cultural exchanges and, more importantly, link the fields of external propaganda and cultural exchange (cf. 'Li Changchun zai quanguo waixuan huiyi shang qiangdiao', 2003: 1). This was the first time in the post-Mao period that cultural propaganda appeared in such a prominent place. This broader set of practices has also been referred to as the 'big external propaganda pattern' (*da waixuan geju* 大外宣格局) to distinguish it from the narrower, media-based approach to external propaganda<sup>14</sup>. This strongly suggests that current Western debates continue to influence the direction of the Chinese debate, including in cases where this is not immediately apparent or openly acknowledged.

In sum, the Chinese concepts of 'propaganda' and 'external propaganda' were influenced by both the 'West' and the Soviet Union during the Republican Period (1912-1949), were then strongly influenced by the propaganda concept and practices used in the Socialist camp during most of the Mao period, and have again since the 1980s, and increasingly so since the 1990s, been strongly shaped by 'Western' discourses and practices, albeit against the background of a bureaucracy that had heavily borrowed from the Soviet Union in terms of delineation of different fields of work and concrete work practices.

### III. THE EXTERNAL PROPAGANDA BUREAUCRACY

In early 2012, Joseph Nye, father of the concept of 'soft power,' commented on the supposed ineffectiveness of China's external propaganda: "What China seems not to appreciate is that using culture and narrative to create soft power is not easy when they are inconsistent with domestic realities" (Nye, 2012). This may or may not be true, however, by analyzing how the bureaucracy has developed and by identifying structural problems, the purpose of this section is to show that there are also a number of institutional reasons that complicate the policy process in China's external propaganda sector.

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<sup>13</sup> The PBSC is the *de facto* decision making body of the CPC, consisting of the top leaders of the Party. It currently has nine members.

<sup>14</sup> *Da waixuan geju* is a phrase that was first discussed in 1998 in an article by Zheng Peimin, which was re-published in 2003. The slogan was the main topic of debate at the national conference on external propaganda in 2005.

The external propaganda system remains one of the least-studied sectors in the Chinese party-state<sup>15</sup>, although in terms of its development, it is perhaps one of the most eventful ones. While a lot of information on the inner workings and set-up of the external propaganda bureaucracy are not openly available, there is enough material to trace the overall development and direction. It is argued here that the fact that the CPC has lacked a centralized structure to coordinate external propaganda throughout most of its history is an important reason for why the external propaganda bureaucracy has seen a lot of adjustment and re-arrangement, both during the Mao period and since the beginning of the policies of reform and opening. The lack of a strong centralized structure coupled with a number of practices adapted on the basis of the Soviet model in previous decades and in place till date, but no longer practical for China's interaction with the rest of the world, pose a problem for the external propaganda bureaucracy, which would like to incorporate new concepts and practices and adapt to a changed global environment while maintaining an efficient and unified bureaucratic structure.

After the founding of the PRC, the CPC instituted a strong domestic propaganda apparatus, but did not install a comparably unified and operational external propaganda bureaucracy. One likely reason why it did not do so is that the Soviet Union, which served as a model before the founding and for the first few years of the PRC, did not have any such structure either (cf. Pechatnov, 2001: 7). As was the case in China later, the responsibilities of the external propaganda sector in the Soviet Union were spread out across units that were supervised by two different super-ordinate bodies, neither of which had specialized personnel for external propaganda (cf. Pechatnov, 2001: 7). By contrast, the GMD had erected a Central Propaganda Department in 1923 under the influence of Soviet advisors (cf. Tang, 2005: 63), and, after the outbreak of open hostilities with Japan in 1937, established an additional unified structure in charge of external propaganda under (informal) U.S. influence (cf. Volz, 2011: 169). When the CPC established itself as the ruling party of China in 1949, the structures engaged in external propaganda and liaising with foreigners were not under centralized control and could still be broadly subsumed under two categories of different origin: first, there were media units which had been founded during the Second World War and which had nominally operated under the guidance of Zhou Enlai 周恩來 (1898-1976)<sup>16</sup>, who became Prime Minister after the founding of the PRC. Some of these units had been established with the help of Westerners and had focused on getting Western support throughout the Second World War as well as during the ensuing civil war with the GMD. A lot of the personnel that had worked for these media gained important positions in external propaganda journals and external propaganda units of the PRC<sup>17</sup>. These media were, however, gradually brought under the control of the CPC propaganda apparatus, which stressed heavy control by the Party and the top leadership, who often read and approved of important articles personally (cf. Cui, 1988). Second, there were units that had been born out of an interaction with the Communist International and the Soviet Union. These units were reorganized after the founding of the PRC, resulting, for instance, in the 'International Liaison Department,' which was founded in 1951 and the 'External Cultural Liaison Bureau,' founded in 1954. In all types of units, a lot of

<sup>15</sup> Brief descriptions of China's external propaganda system can be found in Brady (2008: 23-24; 156), and Shambaugh (2007: 47-50). However, the specifics of the bureaucratic rearrangement in the post-Mao period are not addressed in detail, and some of the details in the secondary literature contradict the information found in Chinese texts.

<sup>16</sup> Zhou Enlai's influence over these media units during the war might also be a teleological construct created in hindsight by CPC historiography.

<sup>17</sup> The newly-founded *People's China* (English edition: 1950—1958) is thus considered a successor of the journal *China Digest* (*Zhongguo wenzhai* 中國文摘) [cf. Gan, 2004: 148].

Soviet practices were absorbed during the early years of the PRC, but as opposed to other sectors in which China selectively adapted the Soviet model, no unified structure was placed on top to coordinate all work.

According to the organizational logic of the Chinese bureaucracy, which divides party and government work into functionally related sectors, external propaganda was not considered a category in its own right, and units involved consequently belonged to different functional bureaucracies. The programmatic statement that external propaganda forms an important part of both propaganda work *and* foreign affairs continues to be stressed in most speeches by China's leaders (e.g. 'Rang shijie liaojie Zhongguo', 1998: 2) and means that policy making is, like in the Soviet Union, spread out across two different systems (*xitong* 系统) formally handled separately in the policy process. At the very top, during the Mao period, external propaganda was the joint responsibility of the 'Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group' (FALSG) and the 'Propaganda and Education Leading Small Group' (Shambaugh, 2007: 47). Leading small groups were initially intended to strengthen party control over government work, but have become *de facto* decision-making bodies for the inner circle of the CPC leadership in the post-Mao period (Shaw, 2010: 6-8). They are usually comprised of cadres from pertinent party and state units in the sector that they are responsible for and are intended to facilitate coordination and avoid conflict by providing a platform for cooperation during the stage of policy formulation (cf. Shaw, 2010: 6-8).

Some reforms of the external propaganda sector already took place during the Mao period. A major change in policy coordination occurred in 1958, when the responsibilities within the external propaganda sector were reshuffled after the introduction of leading small groups into the system. Before 1958, media-related external propaganda had been the responsibility of the 'International Liaison Department,' while propagating China's foreign policies was the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ('Zhonggong zhongyang pizhuan', 1994 [1958]: 371). With the creation of the FALSG, the role of the International Liaison Department was thoroughly curtailed, and most major responsibilities were handed over to the new Leading Small Group, including macro-level policy making, with an elaborate division of labour for specific tasks between a number of other units belonging to different functional bureaucracies (cf. 'Zhonggong zhongyang pizhuan' 1994 [1958]: 372-373).

It is not true, as most Chinese academic literature claims (e.g. Gan 2004, 196-205), that the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)<sup>18</sup> crippled all external propaganda work. Activities were by and large expanded rather than curtailed as China came to view itself as the new 'centre of the world revolution' and felt a new urge to export Mao Zedong's ideological discoveries to the rest of the world. However, during the initial years of the Cultural Revolution, almost all cadres involved in external propaganda under Zhou Enlai were purged, and the organizational structure was dissolved and rearranged (cf. 'Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao bianshen weiyuanhui', 2000, vol. 6: 68-69). In January 1978, briefly after its re-establishment in late 1977, the Central Propaganda Department (CPD)<sup>19</sup> added a 'Bureau for External Propaganda' to its internal structure ('Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi

<sup>18</sup> The Cultural Revolution was a political movement initiated by Mao Zedong in 1966. During this period, many high-level CPC leaders were purged, intellectuals persecuted, and the regular operation of institutions, such as schools and universities disrupted. The high tide of the Cultural Revolution lasted from 1966 to 1969.

<sup>19</sup> The CPD in China is responsible for media work (newspapers, journals, radio, television, etc.), theory and thought work, as well as culture (cf. Brady, 2008: 11; 21).

ziliao bianshen weiyuanhui', 2000, vol. 7: 230). In 1980, in addition, the 'External Propaganda Small Group' (*Duiwai xuanchuan xiaozu* 對外宣傳小組, EPSG) was founded. This was not a *leading* small group, meaning that its status in the overall bureaucracy was lower, but it served a similar function by combining cadres from various units involved in external propaganda as well as in foreign affairs work. It was headed by the CPD's de facto director, and its executive body remained the Bureau for External Propaganda at the CPD. The Small Group was comprised of cadres from fourteen different units that combined players from the propaganda system,<sup>20</sup> the foreign affairs system, as well as the bureaucracies in charge of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and overseas Chinese affairs work ('Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jianli duiwai xuanchuan xiaozu' 1994 [1980]: 386). In 1988, the EPSG was disbanded as part of the central streamlining in that year (Brady, 2008: 156) after a campaign in 1987 had shifted the main concern and focus towards a reinforcement of domestic propaganda. The concrete responsibilities of the EPSG were officially handed back to the CPD Bureau for External Propaganda, but the director and most of the personnel remained the same (Zeng, 2006: 44). In terms of decision making at the highest level, two different Leading Small Groups were put in charge of external propaganda: the Propaganda and Thought Work Leading Small Group (*Xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo lingdao xiaozu* 宣傳思想工作領導小組, PTWLSG), which had been created a month before the abolition of the EPSG was announced ('Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu zhongyang xuanchuan sixiang gongzuo lingdao xiaozu', 1994 [1988]: 1703) was made responsible for overall policies, whereas the FALSOG received the responsibility for external propaganda concerning larger issues in the international situation and China's diplomacy. Concrete enforcement of policies was made the responsibility of CPD, while administrative matters and allocating the budget was to be handled by the State Council Foreign Affairs Office ('Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu chexiao', 1994 [1988]: 1704).

In order to counterbalance the negative images of Tiananmen after the CPC had crushed the Chinese democracy movement on June 4, 1989, the EPSG was re-established in 1990. The resurrected EPSG was led by the PTWLSG and had the rank equivalent to that of a ministry or a province ('Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu huifu', 1994 [1990]: 1904). Propaganda pertaining to the overall international situation and China's foreign policy remained in the hands of the FALSOG. The re-establishment of the EPSG entailed turning it into an entity with an office and a staff of its own, as opposed to the 1980s, when its office operated from the premises of CPD and its authority within the Chinese bureaucracy was uncertain (Zeng, 2006: 3).

Despite the creation of a permanent office in charge of external propaganda, the sector was still part of two different systems with responsibilities shared by two different LSGs. Both policy making and the institutions involved in policy implementation continued to be spread out over different functional areas handled separately in the policy process. Moreover, external propaganda was obviously not the primary concern in either LSG. For the FALSOG, the most important issue is national security and territorial integrity, compared to which China's image in the eyes of foreigners inevitably becomes a secondary consideration<sup>21</sup>. Likewise, the primary concern of the propaganda field is propaganda aimed at Chinese audiences,

<sup>20</sup> A *system*, the English translation for *xitong* 系統, refers to a "grouping of functionally related bureaucracies" (Lieberthal 1995, 193).

<sup>21</sup> A prime example of the priority of territorial integrity over China's image (in this case China's image as a peaceful country) was the passing of the Anti-Secession Law in 2005 which threatened military action should Taiwan declare Independence.



as success or failure in this field has more immediate implications for regime security.

In January 1991, the State Council Information Office (SCIO), which is presented as a government instead of a Party institution, was set up as a second separate entity from the Central Propaganda Department along with the EPSG. From the very beginning, EPSG and SCIO were “one organization with two nameplates” (‘Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao bian Shen weiyuanhui’, 2000, vol. A1: 897), which means that the State Council Information Office exists only in name. Here, the CPC has found an acceptable solution for a conflict between a transnationally-established practice (that governments should have a press or information office), and the rules according to which the Chinese bureaucracy functions, namely that media-related work must remain within the hands of the Party. In accordance with international convention, the Chinese government needed a press office to speak on its behalf, but the CPC was reluctant to actually vest a government bureaucracy with that power. Therefore, the EPSG/SCIO was put under the direct authority of the Party Centre (cf. ‘Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao bian Shen weiyuanhui’, 2000, A1: 896), but acted to the outside world as if it were a government agency. In July 1993, according to an official party compilation on the organizational structure of the CPC, the EPSG was ‘adjusted’ to become the Office of External Propaganda (*Zhonggong zhongyang duiwai xuanchuan bangongshi* 中共中央對外宣傳辦公室, OEP) [‘Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao bian Shen weiyuanhui’ 2000, vol. 7: 243]. However, it is more likely that the Small Group, i.e. the structure in which leading cadres come together to deliberate policies, was maintained<sup>22</sup> and that the name ‘Office of External Propaganda’ is simply short for ‘Office of the External Propaganda Small Group’ (*Duiwai xuanchuan xiaozu bangongshi* 對外宣傳小組辦公室).

Although the fact that the external propaganda sector was put under the authority of the Central Committee may, again, have been another step towards granting it some more independence, and combating the situation in which units involved were under the leadership of two main and various other LSGs, the PTWLSG continued to have some authority over it (cf. ‘Zhongguo gongchandang zuzhishi ziliao bian Shen weiyuanhui’, 2000, vol. 7: 243)<sup>23</sup>. In addition, the units actually responsible for the external propaganda work were often under the authority of (or at least financially dependent on) other units not directly engaged in external propaganda work and took orders from the PTWLS, FALSG, or another LSG instead. For instance, many external propaganda media units received their funding through super-ordinate media units whose main responsibility was to organize content aimed at Chinese audiences. This made external propaganda media heavily dependent on domestic media and was pointed out as a severe systemic flaw by cadres engaged in external propaganda (cf. Xia, 2000: 22).

The overall media system, in which media units have to await instructions before reporting on certain sensitive issues and are required to use specific formulations is already problematic for domestic reporting; in external propaganda, where Chinese media units face even more fierce competition from other global

<sup>22</sup> As explained below, Zhu Muzhi mentioned that the EPSG was ‘upgraded’ to a *leading* small group in the early 2000s. This suggests that the Small Group continued to operate after 1993.

<sup>23</sup> The continued division of press conferences into domestic news, handled by OEP/SCIO, and international affairs, handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is under the authority of the FALSG, suggests that the FALSG, likewise, continues to direct aspects of external propaganda work.



media, it becomes a severe liability. However, there is no indication that the CPC is preparing to relinquish control over the media or de-emphasize propaganda work. On the contrary, at the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2002, when Hu Jintao became new Party Secretary and President of the PRC, the propaganda sector was elevated in terms of its administrative rank in the Party hierarchy as the responsibility for all propaganda and thought work was handed over to a member of the PBSC, the highest body in the CPC consisting of the nine most powerful cadres. Likewise, at some point in time in the early 2000s, presumably after the 16th Party Congress in 2002, the ‘External Propaganda Small Group’ was upgraded to the status of ‘Leading Small Group’, which strengthened the sector (Zhu, 2007: 248). However, it is safe to assume that the External Propaganda Leading Small Group (EPLSG) is outranked by the PTWLSG and the FALSG, both of which are headed by PBSC members, the latter even by the Party Secretary himself.

Additionally, two new structural problems have emerged. First, owing to an international environment in which it becomes increasingly difficult to contain media or other messages to only one particular target audience, the external propaganda sector has again been tied more closely to the domestic propaganda apparatus. New media like the internet, which makes material more widely and easily available to different groups of people, as well as an increasing number of people fluent in foreign languages have blurred the boundaries between internal and external propaganda, a point first formally noted by the CPD in 2003 (cf. Brady, 2008: 13). In 2009, the new head of OEP/SCIO stressed the need to “co-ordinate the domestic and the international situation.” This slogan, which applies to a variety of fields, was adopted at the 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. In the media sector, it seeks to answer the challenging question of how to control both domestic and international public opinion in a global environment in which information travels fast and national borders are more difficult to control in terms of information flow (cf. Ling, 2007). For external propaganda this means that if there is a conflict between vital interests of external propaganda and domestic propaganda, domestic propaganda interests will win<sup>24</sup>. Institutionally, internal and external propaganda have again been tied together more closely: between 1998 and 2008, the director of the Office of External Propaganda was not directly linked to the Central Propaganda Department. In 2008, former head of the Party mouthpiece *People’s Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日報), Wang Chen 王晨, who was made deputy director of CPD in the same move, was put in charge of OEP/SCIO. This seems to indicate that after ten years, the trend and goal of granting the OEP/SCIO more independence has been reversed and replaced by an arrangement of both supervision and closer co-operation.

Second, although an LSG was finally created, the different bodies involved in external propaganda continue to increase with the expansion of the notion of external

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<sup>24</sup> For instance, the general rule for Chinese propaganda aimed at foreign audiences is that if foreign media report on something, or are likely to report on something that happened in China, the Chinese media cannot be silent about it and need to try to report before the foreign media. Yet, to give a fairly recent example, during the ‘Jasmine Revolution’ protests in various Chinese cities in February and March 2011, the importance not to spread the news among Chinese outweighed the importance to report and to report on time, so the Chinese foreign language media reported very late, only indirectly and not at all on television about this event. I was in Beijing at the time and followed the news of Chinese media outlets, including the English language TV channel, CCTV-International. While the ‘Jasmine’ protests were generally a non-event, the party-state took a large number of precautions, including thoroughly blocking ways to circumvent the ‘Great Firewall’, i.e. the system that prevents (politically or otherwise) undesirable content on the internet from being accessed through Chinese IP addresses.

propaganda (which implies the adaptation of new practices) and the wish of CPC leading cadres to exploit every channel to engage in external propaganda. This has led to the call mentioned at the beginning of this paper for a coordinating body in charge of all work that can be categorized as belonging to the field of ‘public diplomacy.’ Chinese authors have been systematically studying and comparing the institutional structures behind activities related to ‘public diplomacy’ in various Western countries in order to find a suitable model that China could selectively adapt (e.g. Liao, 2011 [2009]). This shows some readiness to reform the entire sector again, and, perhaps, impose an institutional structure that is more capable of expanding and implementing new practices, as the concept of ‘external propaganda’ continues to absorb new ideas and practices from abroad. However, what such a new arrangement would look like, and whether it would be strengthened vis-à-vis other bureaucracies, is currently still unclear.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The above analysis has shown that after several decades of intense and continued reform, the CPC still struggles to find an ideal coordinating mechanism for external propaganda work that is efficient without jeopardizing or counteracting the work of other sectors that are still considered strategically more important. The current institutional structure poses a number of problems. There continues to be a large and growing number of organizations that belong to different policy sectors and cannot easily be placed under the direct leadership of the EPLSG or the OEP/SCIO. Relatedly, some of the shortcomings of ‘external propaganda’ that Chinese analysts frequently complain about, such as a reporting style that is not suited to foreign tastes or late reports especially in crisis situations, are arguably a direct result of the institutional arrangement at the decision and policy-making level, where the interests of external propaganda institutions are secondary to domestic concerns. Especially in the media sector, however, a more independent external propaganda bureaucracy currently seems unlikely.

Moreover, it has been suggested here that the institutional problems are, at least in part, the outcome of the back and forth as to whose propaganda concept and institutions China should adopt as its principal model. The shift from selective adaptations from the Soviet Union to selective adaptations from various ‘Western’ countries has caused problems, first, because of the lines of division in the overall bureaucratic structure and, second, because of concrete practices, especially in the realm of media work, which are incompatible with the requirements posed by the new international environment that China is part of. Thus, the study of Chinese external propaganda potentially provides an interesting test case to explore the question whether and how concepts and institutions originating from vastly different ideological universes can be merged and combined within the Chinese party-state. As both the scope of external propaganda work and the institutional arrangement are likely to undergo more changes in the near future, further investigation into this issue is needed.

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# Shifting Tourism Images: The World Heritage Site Lijiang, China

Yujie Zhu

*Keywords: Tourism, Flow, Heritage, Imaginary*

## ABSTRACT:

*The World Heritage Site, old town of Lijiang, is one of the most popular inbound tourism destinations of China, and has attracted millions of tourists in the context of a direct encounter with Chinese ethnic cultures. To satisfy demands of both the inbound and domestic tourism, the commoditization of local cultures and its manifestation in the indigenous religion and folk festivals have been developed dramatically as a 'reinvention of tradition'. Grounded in the tourism development of Lijiang in the past two decades, this paper aims to explore how tourism imaginaries are produced, negotiated, and transformed to intersect and establish the dynamic network of actors including different individuals and groups in the tourism industry of Lijiang. The consciousness of cultural flows made by the mutual communication between the local community and the tourism is addressed as part of global dynamics. In this sense, the mediation between the global and the local strengthens a continuity of cultural forms of the past, and synthesizes transculturality in different places through reinvention and innovation.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Imaginaries are conceptualized as socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with peoples' personal imaginings (Salazar, 2012). Tourism imaginaries of destinations and travels are increasingly produced and consumed by diverse populations around the globe through expanding forms of media and opportunities for travel. A range of actors collaboratively produce spatial imaginaries in touristic systems. Although there is substantial literature documenting the tourism imaginaries, limited research has been devoted to the dynamic imaginaries by the flow of different actors in the tourism industry.

World heritage is widely discussed as dynamic and living value systems of layered significance, which are central to the individual, community, national and global sense of cultural esteem and identities. When world heritage meets tourism, a global phenomenon for direct, indirect, physical, and cultural interaction emerges wherein heritage has been constructed as a platform for cultural representation and social consumption. As a result of commercialization, bar culture in tourism destinations often serves the purposes of entertainment, exchanging information, making acquaintances and sometimes searching for romance.

In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Lijiang as a historic trade centre started to market itself as an international tourism destination. Since then, the town has attracted a number of Western tourists from around the world. Western backpackers are fascinated by this remote town described as “a magic Kingdom of wealth, scenic beauty, marvellous forest, flowers and friendly tribes” (Rock, 1947: viii). After being included in the World Heritage List by UNESCO in 1997, Lijiang has become one of the most popular destinations for both inbound and domestic tourists in China. The local culture becomes eroticized, romanticized and ethnicized through the tourism imaginaries collaboratively produced by the local government, the tourism practitioners and the local community. Shifting from a historic trade town to a commercial heritage site, Lijiang has acquired a new connotation as a ‘town of romance’.

Taking the tourism development of Lijiang, especially the transformation of its varied images as a case study, this paper aims to explore how tourism imaginaries are produced, negotiated, and transformed to intersect and establish the network of actors including different individuals and groups in the tourism industry. It elaborates the argument by examining how the historic trade town is transformed to the commercial heritage site, and how the theme of love is constructed with the presentation of romance in the bars. This paper conceptualizes tourism discourse as a transcultural process that embodies a mix of both homogenizing and diversifying forces. The complex process of the formation of tourism imaginaries needs to be understood in terms of the cultural flows and internal shifts of power, which move from a binary opposition to an intertwined reality. It also stimulates the theoretical understanding of the relational and structural nature of cultural flow in constructing imaginaries in tourism. In this research, participant observations and interviews are applied as the main research methods.

## II. TOURISM IMAGINARIES AND THE FLOW OF ACTORS

Imaginaries are regarded as symbolic objects of a significant contest over economic supremacy, territorial ownership, and identity (Salazar, 2012). The symbolic order structures the visual field of the imaginaries and on the other hand, the imaginaries are rooted in the subject's relationship with his or her own body (Lacan, 1964). Like Joy and Sherry (2003) state, imagination is “thoroughly embodied” (Joy and Sherry, 2003: 278). Such imagination is expressed through virtual body enactments, and is co-constructed through the interaction of service providers and receivers (Chronis, 2005).

Concerning the approach of symbolic interaction for studying imaginaries, Blumer (1986) argues that humans relate to things on the basis of the meanings. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of the social interaction that one has with others and the society. These meanings are dealt with, and modified through an interpretative process by the person dealing with the things they encounter. By this approach, meanings are associated with particular imaginaries that are created, negotiated and interpreted. Hence, as the output of social interaction with people's imaginings, imaginaries are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices (Salazar, 2012). It is both a function of producing meanings and the product of this function (Ricoeur, 1994).

In the process of the formation of imaginaries, the value and meaning of symbols and knowledge can be changed and re-interpreted. Empowered by imagined vistas of mass-mediated narratives, tourism imaginaries nowadays have become

more global and dynamic (Crouch, Jackson and Thompson, 2005). In other words, global tourism constructs images and ideas of people and places based on their original context, making them available through their transformation, legitimization, institutionalization, and distribution (Salazar, 2012). Thus, the way in which different forms of symbols are constituted is also dynamic, once the network of different actors in tourism is involved.

In this sense, tracing the global circulation in tourism, particularly different actors involved in tourism activities offer innovative ways to interpret the transformation and evolution of imaginaries. Latour (2005) put forward the actor-network theory to indicate in what directions images and ideas move, and how they circulate and are transformed during circulation. Based on this theory, everything circulating within a network is continuously interpreted and modified (Latour, 2005). Every single actor can potentially make use of a series of translating or distorting processes (Duim, Jóhannesson and Ren, 2012). But the network itself is also part of the dynamic ongoing process of structural change by excluding and including various actors.

In the global tourism network, tourism imaginaries are produced by local people and tourists, as both intermediaries and consumers. Imaginaries are embedded in the network of local, national and global actors that determine their way of practices. All actors co-exist at a certain point in time, thus forming an emotional connection to participate in the battle of the “imagined community” (Anderson 1991), where a feeling of *communitas* is shared among all participants. These participants collaborate in space and time and contribute to the construction of the imaginaries. The social construction of the imaginaries of a tourism destination becomes a process of local meaning-making, continuous stimulation and intervention from varied actors passing in and out with social and cultural movements, which give rise to the revised imaginaries of this place.

To sum up, the actor-network theory can potentially enrich the description of the dynamic construction and production of tourism imaginaries. Through the flow of actors in the tourism network, the tourism imaginaries are more than embedded in the tourist’s mind and their travel experience. Rather, imaginaries focus on the actors’ integration with alternative symbols and meanings and constitute “the flow of relations among things, people and human purposes” (Reisinger and Steiner, 2006). From a trade town centre to a commercial heritage site with the theme of ‘love and romance’, the story of Lijiang presents the dynamic process of producing the multiple imaginaries in the global tourism.

### III. FROM A TRADE TOWN TO A COMMERCIAL HERITAGE SITE

Lijiang County is located in Southwest China, 600 kilometres from the provincial capital, Kunming. Among the many ethnic groups living in Lijiang, *Naxi*<sup>1</sup> is the most numerous one accounting for about 60 percent of the total population. *Naxi* living in Lijiang still maintain a number of traditional cultural activities in their daily life including their own religion—Dongba. The indigenous religion of the *Naxi* community is influenced by both Tibet and China, including *Bon* (indigenous, pre-Buddhist) practices from Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism, Chinese Buddhism, Daoism and

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<sup>1</sup> *Naxi* is the main ethnic group in this region, many of whom live in Lijiang. The other members of the group call themselves *Mosuo*. However, both groups are officially classified by the Government as *Naxi*.

Confucianism. These bond *Naxi* people closely with all important events like birth, marriage, and death. The Dongba religion is centred around maintaining harmony between humans and nature, and consists of offerings and dances to worship ancestors and nature, and to expel evil spirits (McKhann, 1992).

Historically, little intervention and weak control by the central authority has left space for local *Naxi* people to develop their own society for a long time. The town became an unparalleled commercial market on its own. Lijiang was an advanced industrial town for the leather, textile, copper and iron industry. At the peak of commercial development, it is estimated that the town accommodated more than 100 companies and 1,200 shops from different industries including active family business (Lijiang Prefecture Committee for Editing Local Records, 2000). Most of the local businessmen inherited their shops through the generations. Senior *Naxi* can draw on many historical images: selling special products on certain bridges; chatting and trading in the squares, and celebrating festivals with firework. This wave of commercialization, albeit transient and hasty, ostensibly portrayed a grand picture of the town's commercial prosperity in the past.

After the end of the Ming Dynasty in 1644, the emperors were determined to incorporate the indigenous groups in peripheral regions into the *Han* to prevent them from acts of rebellion challenging the domination of the empire. As a result, the officials brought *Han* and Confucian practices and thoughts to educate the minority groups in Lijiang. This policy, referred to as *gaituguiliu* has brought dramatic changes to the indigenous culture, while enhancing cultural and economic exchange in this area.

Business development in the old town of Lijiang continuously stimulated Sino-Indian trade as an important channel to provide necessities. The trade was carried on horseback and its main commodity was tea. This commercial link between Yunnan, Tibet and India was known as the 'Tea Horse Road'. Sifang square in Lijiang was the main market and the starting point for caravans on their way to Tibet and India (Ebbe and Hankey, 2000). During the era of the Republic of China, the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) blocked all trade routes into China, but gave rise to the overland trade in which goods were carried from India to Kunming through Lijiang. This brought a sudden expansion of the trade through the town of Lijiang, thus contributing to its prominence as a market centre.

The globalization process in Lijiang took place when Western scholars and the mass media entered this town at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first image of Lijiang was invented by James Hilton's novel *Lost Horizon* (1933), as a paradise of Shangri-la, where the town was viewed as a romantic forgotten place frozen in time (Su and Teo, 2009). Later, Joseph Rock and Peter Goullart, who had both successively stayed in Lijiang, published descriptive texts of the town, reinforcing the image of China's peripheral area as an oriental paradise marked by tradition and nature. Peter Goullart, the Russian officer who spent eight years in Lijiang from 1941 to 1949, recorded it as an ancient forgotten *Naxi* kingdom of Southwest China (Goullart 1957). During the early 1980s, the town was relatively closed when Lijiang was almost marginalized as it was far away from the agitated centres of reforms occurring in the China's coastal regions. Many western backpackers and Japanese group tourists visited the town and were fascinated by this remote area of China.

However, the Shangri-la mythology in Hilton, Rock and Goullart's dreams and imaginaries has dramatically changed due to millions of international and domestic

tourists, ever since Lijiang opened to the global tourism market in the late 1990s. Lijiang was listed as a World Heritage site in 1997 because of its material landscapes depicting its urban fabric and residential buildings, and its vernacular landscape constituted by religion and language in the form of pictographic words and music. The World Heritage Committee of the UNESCO described the site in the following words:

“The Old Town of Lijiang, which is adapted to the uneven topography of this key commercial and strategic site, has retained a historic townscape of high quality and authenticity. It has an abundance of historic buildings and bridges, a canal system several hundred years old that is still functioning. Water is channelled through several meandering tributaries, yielding a complex network of water supply. Besides sustaining everyday life, this water system also beautifies the cityscape. The alignment of the streets to the canals renders Lijiang a unique urban fabric, which contrasts sharply with the rigid grid-like layout in many other old cities in the central plain” (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/811>).

As mentioned before, the symbol of the landscape, the architecture and the water system have been evaluated and highlighted for the criteria of heritage nomination, and have also become the most attractive icons of tourism promotion. UNESCO and the nomination of the old town of Lijiang as a world heritage site brought new actors to the network of the site. Lijiang has become a ‘hot spot’ heritage site in China, with frequent population migration and cultural flows. In 2009, Lijiang attracted 7.6 million visitors with 8.8 billion *yuan* (approx. 1.4 billion US Dollars) in revenue drawn from tourism (Lijiang Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The influx of modern tourists has accelerated the production of new cultural and social capital, bringing dramatic changes to the place and its culture. By linking capital and politics, the process of heritage production has converted the *Naxi* ethnic culture and the town into “a predominantly capitalistically organized place, driven by the inherent and defining social dynamics of the system” (Britton, 1991: 475). This transformed the meaning and symbol-making procedure of the local ethnic community. As a result, the original Western imaginaries of Lijiang as an ‘oriental lost kingdom’ transformed into the ethnic, authentic and beautiful remote area of China. Nowadays, the former historic image of the trade town has inevitably been utilized by the local government to justify the economically-motivated flooding of the town with tourism.

During this transformation, the old town has become a popular site of the commercialized tourism industry. The limited number of shops, formerly exclusively for the inhabitants, have mostly transformed into tourism facilities. In 2002, 69.66 percent of the shops were solely targeted at tourists, whereas only 19.92 percent catered to both tourists and locals (Lijiang Bureau of Statistics, 2010). In the past decade, the number of shops and tourism facilities in the old town has dramatically increased. Main streets around the town centre like Dongda Street, Xinhua Street, Xinyi Street, Wuyi Street and Qiyi Street are full of tourist shops, selling souvenirs, dresses, videos, and local food. Most shops’ names start with *Dongba*, *Naxi* or *Mosuo* to stress the alleged ethnic component. These shops are eliminating the living heritage of the old town. Original inhabitants are moving to the new town and most of their original houses are transformed into hostels and souvenirs shops.

Scholars have different opinions on the commercialization of the town. Bao and Su (2004) illustrate that the commercialized-constructed tourism leads to a homogenization of tourism products in the market. Public facilities for tourism are far more than living facilities for local inhabitants. This change destroys the original form of the urban living culture. However, a government official argues that the old



town of Lijiang used to be a trade town, and the current situation is only a reflection of its glorious history. This licenses the government to promote the tourism industry with various activities. However, the commercialized-constructed tourism does change the urban functions physically and vernacularly. The locals as the original owners of the town have left the space to the new inhabitants to develop their business. Many new elements that do not originally belong to the town have been added during the process of commercialization.

In short, from a historic trade centre to a commercial popular tourism destination, the image of Lijiang has been continuously changing due to the flows of people. The transition of actors has influenced the symbols, the meaning of culture and the imaginaries of the site. These changes have also influenced the life of the local community. Particularly, the notion of love in Lijiang has been romanticized during the process.

#### IV. FROM LOVE TO ROMANCE

Since successfully listed as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1997, tourist imaginaries of Lijiang have been changing continuously; among the most attractive ones is the theme of love from the ethnic marriage customs. Two ethnic customs of *Naxi* history have been transformed in a new aura of romance by the gaze of the tourism industry: firstly, the old custom of committing suicide in the name of love (*xunqing*) and secondly, the ‘walking marriage’ tradition of the *Musuo* Group.

Committing suicide is a long-time tradition in the *Naxi* culture which has been described in the *Naxi* ancient narrative poem *lubanlurao*, which says ‘we have kin but we do not want to know them. The heart only has love. The heart only has honey’. This reflects the naturalization of youthful male sexuality, which is beyond the control of parents and opposed to the practice of parentally arranged kin marriage common among the *Naxi*. The phrase ‘they have kin but do not want to know them’ suggests the fact that young people lack interest in their own kin as prospective marriage partners, and would rather pursue partners on their own.

Suicides occurred frequently among unmarried young *Naxi* people. Most cases took place in isolated or remote areas far from the victims’ home villages. An underlying supposition associated with suicides followed this pattern that the victim’s intention was to reach the paradise and reunite with their friends and lovers who also killed themselves. Lovers dying together indicated that they shared the same notions of the paradise and the eternal reunion. They donned their best clothes and fled to remote sites. The notions of rebirth in paradise made them bind their bodies together to ensure a collective transmission to paradise. It was not merely for a fleeting taste of marriage that couples killed themselves, but for the eternal happiness promised in the popular tale of the Jade Dragon Mountain’s third kingdom. In the Buddhist discourse, suicide may be reflective of a bond of emotion, passion, love or friendship; the hope of the survival of love in paradise is preferable to the continuation of suffering in the mundane world (Chao, 1995).

After the *Han* Chinese Confucian custom of betrothal was brought to *Naxi* people with strict sexual repression and *baoban* marriage<sup>2</sup> around 1723, young *Naxi* lovers showed a strong tendency to fight for their free love relationship, which made the tradition of *xunqing* more popular. The adoption of the *Han* Chinese customs of

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<sup>2</sup> The term refers to a form of marriage that is arranged by the parents of the couple.



marriage and morality directly resulted in indigenous schemes of romantic courtship and, in some cases, premarital sexual activities. Practitioners of love suicides were aware of the legitimizing effects of marriage and thus constituted suicides in their likeness (Chao, 1995). In Mao's era, the local government has implemented many measures to prevent young couples from committing suicide. Although fewer cases occurred than before, the image of young couples fighting against the society by suicides and dreaming of their freedom in paradise has been propagated by the mass media in the context of the tourism promotion.

In 2003, a TV series entitled 'One Meter Sunshine' was filmed in Lijiang. In this drama, Lijiang was projected as a land of sacred love where the lead actress chose to commit suicide on the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. This TV drama was hugely successful on a national scale, and Lijiang started to be viewed as the 'town of romance'. After that, a number of novels, films and popular music have been produced to strengthen this image. Since 2006, the 'Chinese Valentine Festival' has been launched in the old town of Lijiang in August each year. During the festival, various programmes like cultural performances, dance and singing have been staged in the town to attract young tourist couples to celebrate the Chinese Valentine Day (*qixi*). It is still unclear how far the custom of committing suicide is linked to the modern image of the 'town of romance', but the custom does romanticize the tourist imaginaries of Lijiang, especially for young couples from urban areas.

The second element of tourist imaginaries of love originates from the 'walking marriage' custom of the *Mosuo* people who are officially identified as a branch of the *Naxi* in the Yunnan Province<sup>3</sup>. In the *Mosuo* community, the Western conception of marriage is replaced by the 'walking marriage'—a unique marriage custom that is deeply rooted in the *Mosuo*'s social and cultural tradition of the matrilineal family system. The marriage and the propagation of offspring are realized by men who 'walk' at night, spend time with women and return home early next morning. The couples do not marry each other, and both of them stay in their own matrilineal families for their whole life. Children that come out of such relationships are raised by their mothers and the mothers' families. It is possible for a *Mosuo* woman to change partners as often as she likes—and in fact, the majority of *Mosuo* women only have one partner at a time. The 'walking marriage' custom is described as "serial monogamy" (Yang and Mathieu, 2003) and, indeed, many such pairings may last for a lifetime.

The *Mosuo* culture initially became well-known nationally by way of the book *Walk out of the Kingdom of Women* written by a local *Mosuo* girl named Yang Erche Namu in the early 1990s. Hereafter, a large body of literature has been published to cultivate a mysterious atmosphere of love. The *Mosuo*'s matrilineal system and the walking marriage custom are described in terms of various images of romance, such as "the living fossil of matrilineal kingdom," "the mysterious eastern kingdom of Women", or "the last matrilineal family of human being". However, due to the commercial promotion by tourism operators, ethnic elites, and the local government, the image of the *Mosuo* and their 'walking marriage' has been further romanticized and even misunderstood in the public. Most information about the *Mosuo* portray them as a sexually promiscuous culture in which women change partners frequently, and as a kind of sexual utopia where women often seduce men. This image has been

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<sup>3</sup> *Mosuo* is a small ethnic group located at the border of the Yunnan and the Sichuan Province. Although *Mosuo* are culturally distinct from *Naxi*, the Chinese government has placed them officially in the group of *Naxi* since both of them originated from the group of ancient *Na*. Most Chinese tourists are not aware of the difference between these two groups and often fail to distinguish between them.

utilized particularly by tourism operators who seek to attract more tourists (especially men) to visit, with the result of developing the prostitution industry in the town.

The emergence of images like the ‘town of romance’ and the ‘sexual utopia’ of Lijiang reflects the transition of the contemporary Chinese society. The social, political, and cultural transition in modern China have sped up the rhythm of urbanization, modernization and industrialization in the context of globalization. Chinese people, especially the young generation, are fed up with the modern urban life with conventional social norms and regulations; it is their demand to enter the liminal space of tourism, which provides them with opportunities to participate in the temporary forms of transgression, for example, the rites of freedom for love and romance. A young tourist travelling in Lijiang describes it like this:

“How fantastic, that the *Mosuo* men have no love responsibility and family burden! How great, to chase girls on my trip to Lijiang, the town of romance, during the Chinese Valentine Festival” (personal conversation).

The images of ‘dying for love’ and the ‘walking marriage’ are entangled, and create a perfect destination for Chinese urban tourists who are searching for romance. As indicated, these imaginaries are jointly produced by different actors including the local government and tourism operators and spread through books, television, newspapers and the internet. Tourists to Lijiang meet friends, celebrate the Valentine festivals, and spread their love affairs on the internet. The information circulation even stimulates the expectation of tourists for their imaginaries of this site, in which the bars of Lijiang become the perfect places for constructing the image of the romance.

## V. FROM BAR CULTURE TO YANYU

Since the reform and opening up of China, bars gradually developed in the country. In big cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai, going to bars has become one of the major leisure activities for modern young people; they make new friends or release the stress resulting from their ordinary urban life. When bar culture entered Lijiang, global demands of consumption have channelized the cultural flow from urban cities into the town, putting new romance and erotic flavour into it. The commercial heritage site helps to ethnicize, eroticize and romanticize the tourism imaginaries of the bars in the town.

There was no bar in Lijiang until in 1996 ‘Sakura King’ (shortened as Sakura) was opened as the first bar on Xinhua Street, which is close to Sifang Square, the centre of the town. When the owner of the bar first came to Lijiang as a tourist, he fell in love with a Korean girl called King. They decided to open a bar and named it ‘Sakura King’ to memorize their love story. When the bar opened, it was only a simple café with four tables and a few seats. Their customers mainly came from Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and other developed countries. Along with the dramatic commercialization of the old town in 1999, Sakura quickly expanded its business to welcome the domestic mass tourists. Meanwhile, numerous businessmen came to Lijiang, bringing new capital into the local tourism industry. Many of them followed the example of the ‘Sakura Bar’ and opened their bars along the same street. Since 2005, this area is regarded as the ‘Bar Street’ (*jiuba yitiao jie*), and has become the most popular and lively area in the town especially in the evening.

The tourists have mainly two motivations to visit the site: first, a curiosity for the ethnic *Naxi* culture; and second, a search for leisure and relaxation from their stressful urban life. For them, a bar is a place both for gazing (Urry, 1990) and participating. The symbols that are created by the bars in Lijiang perfectly match these two motivations. Apart from the ethnic performance, the alcoholic drink and the charming singers, the posters and the texts which decorate the walls of the bars become an important part of the bar culture to express these symbols. For example, some posters present the philosophy of leisure and enjoyment: ‘We have time when we don’t know how to enjoy our life, but when we know how to enjoy our life, we don’t have time’; ‘More bestiality, less humanity’; ‘It’s easy to make simple life complicated, but difficult to make complicated life simple’; ‘Too many choices means no choice; too many opportunities means no opportunity’. Some posters encourage the tourists to get drunk: ‘People can easily get drunk at the same time, but they have different reasons’; ‘Eat and drink, you will get healthier’; ‘It is a nightmare to get drunk but still keep awake’. Besides these texts, some posters encourage the tourists to start love affairs<sup>4</sup> in the bars: ‘All the men in the world are *Wu Song* and all women are tigers made of paper<sup>5</sup>’; ‘Hunting girls is the only basic principle for guys’; ‘Love affairs are not wild animals, but lovely deer you occasionally meet in the zoo’. These texts produce symbols to enhance the romantic atmosphere of the bars.

As seen from different elements of bars, the tourist imaginaries created by the interaction between the tourists and the place release people from the ordinary life and lead them into a liminal space. The symbols, along with the texts on the posters, the love stories of the bar owners, the romantic candlelight and the ethnic love music motivate tourists to create their Lijiang stories in the bars. Different from the ‘collective effervescence’, the term coined by Durkheim (2001) to illustrate the perceived energy that is formed by a gathering of people, the place of bars presents a collective experience of people meeting, communicating, relaxing, dancing to loud music, and sometimes searching for love affairs.

The term ‘love affairs’ is translated into Chinese as *yanyu*. Initially, *yanyu* means a beautiful encounter for a romantic feeling with somebody or even something like the wind, the cloud or the Jade Dragon Mountain. As an old town with traditions like ‘committing suicide for love’ by the *Naxi* and the ‘walking marriages’ by the *Mosuo* that were later romanticized for tourism promotion, Lijiang changes its reputation from the ‘town of romance’ to the ‘town of *yanyu*’ with tourists searching for love affairs. *Yanyu* can be romantic and sensational, but it can also be erotic and profane. Whatever the tourists interpret and how they project the image of *yanyu*, bars in Lijiang create the space for love affairs. The gaze of tourists towards the mystery and ethnicity of the town, their demands of searching and exploring, and the romantic atmosphere in the bars jointly constructs the transition of the tourism imaginaries of the site.

To sum up, the emergence of the bar street in Lijiang reflects the demands of modern tourists who come from urban cities and travel to this ‘exotic site’. These demands that arise from the tourists imaginaries of the destination stimulate them to participate in the temporary forms of transgressions and rites of consumption. The imaginaries are not solely based on the commercialized heritage site, neither on the

<sup>4</sup> In this context, it means searching for lovers in an unofficial relationship, very possibly as the form of a one-night stand. In Chinese it is called *yanyu*.

<sup>5</sup> In the Chinese classic novel *Water Margin (shuihu)*, Wu Song is a hero who kills a tiger after getting drunk. The analogy ‘tigers made of paper’ implies that hunting for women is easy.

alleged romance of acts such as ‘committing suicide for love’ and the ‘walking marriages’, nor on the booming bars phenomenon in the town. The imaginaries are embodied in multiple presentations of different faces of reality. In essence, the shift of tourism imaginaries from an exotic ethnic place and a commercial heritage site to a ‘town of *yanyu*’ and its circulation is based on the continuous transformation, diffusion and reconfiguration of the social network that involves different actors. As the major actors in the network, tourists received the symbols projected by the setting of the bars, and in turn produced new symbols through the unrestrained pursuit of hedonistic experiences. The tourist imaginaries add a special flavour to the tourist activities like *yanyu*, and give them meaning.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In the past two decades, tourism imaginaries of Lijiang have been produced, translated, negotiated and modified through the continuous circulation of the network and its flow of various actors. Tourism is embraced in such a way that the ancient town has to be popularized for the modern tourists, and made acceptable to the state authorities aiming to generate money for the city, as well as to the UNESCO, which is indirectly responsible for jettisoning the ancient town into the modern world. With the development of commercialization, the mass tourism helps to ethnicize, eroticize and romanticize the destination by the tourist gaze. In this context, the town has transformed its tourism imaginaries from a historic trade town to a commercial heritage site, to a town of romance, and even to a town of *yanyu*. In the bar street as a platform of the theme, the tourists enjoy their night-time with the expectation to search for love affairs. The ongoing transitional imaginaries are not created solely by the gaze. They are produced collaboratively by the tourism operators, the bar setting, the public media and the tourists themselves. The flow of different actors changes the structure of the network and promotes the social and cultural movements. Further, it stimulates the modified image of Lijiang as a tourism destination, and as a result revises the imaginaries of this place.

To conclude, tourism imaginaries are neither abstract cultural subjects defined by scholars, nor the expression of pure personal feelings of tourists. They are continuous dynamics in the network that respects both the symbolic and the social value. The tourism imaginaries are not as free as they seem to be, but closely connected with the relations in its network and the flow of actors. Each transcultural encounter or intervention from the outsiders with localities articulates the continuous process of the stimulation for meaning-making and value changing. Hence, the complex of the network and the dynamic flow of varied actors result in the multiple nature of the tourism imaginaries.

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## EPILOGUE

**Bidisha Chaudhuri and Lion König**

This special issue is fairly dynamic not only because of its diversity of cases and contexts but also in terms of the way each case is looked at in a new transcultural perspective. In these wide-ranging cases transcending disciplinary boundaries, ideas, institutions and practices are understood as constantly shifting entities emerging out of the interplay between structure and agency which are shaped by and embedded in the particular socio-cultural contexts. While on the one hand these papers uphold the significance of a context-specific analysis, on the other hand all of them draw our attention to the entangled nature of the phenomenon they espouse to study, be it citizenship or 'good governance', diplomacy, or tourism imaginaries. In weaving these seemingly divergent aspects together, the papers adopt a transcultural lens where all ideas, institutions and practices are understood as part of larger transcultural flows which are simultaneously absorbed and adapted. It is this very transcultural understanding that holds these rather disparate papers in a coherent whole.

Transculturality is an emerging and discursive process which challenges existing paradigms of the social sciences and the humanities for their monolithic frame of reference. As has already been mentioned in the introduction, the grand theoretical narratives of our times have mostly originated out of the particular historical junctures of Western Europe and hence carry with them inherent Eurocentric traits, which in turn render all other societies somewhat deviant or deficient. Transculturality with its analytical toolbox of flows, asymmetry, agency, and hybridity helps operationalise concepts which are more suited to contextual fabrics of different societies and polities.

Given this understanding of a transcultural perspective, it becomes imperative to explore Islamic political thought along with the modern political thought to fully comprehend Muslim citizen identity in postcolonial India, or to increasingly focus on the concept of 'cultural citizenship' in order to capture the hybridising strategy of cultural policy making and mass-media representation of citizen identity within a particular context. Similarly, the hackneyed modernising nature of a 'good governance' paradigm which thrives more on the supposed moral supremacy of a certain ideology than on the objective realities of rural India becomes even more evident under a transcultural lens. Also in the Chinese context, be it 'public diplomacy' or 'tourism imaginaries', flows of ideas and actors and their constant interaction with the structural forces reveal their being embedded in a wider transcultural process grappling with asymmetry and producing hybrid entities simultaneously.

In so far as these papers strive to present the importance of a transcultural perspective, we nevertheless deliberately refrain from defining transculturality. As a discursive process, transculturality transcends many analytical boundaries and hence defies all attempts to be confined to a single definition, as this would mean falling



into the same essentialist trap that it sets out to refute. At the same time, contributions in this special issue are all part of ongoing research dealing with rather amorphous concepts that are far from being clear-cut and thoroughly theorized. Therefore, the findings presented here are neither conclusive nor inert. Instead, this issue, with much humility, attempts to mark a point of departure in the broader debate on the widespread Eurocentrism of social science and the evolving transcultural turn.

The transcultural discourse as represented through these diverse contributions will hopefully appeal to scholars and policy-makers in a similar manner. Though especially analysing heterogeneous societies such as China and India, the papers in this issue do not intend to present them either as unique cases or as prototypes of non-Western developing societies. Instead, the overall aim is to sieve out some generalised arguments which can add rigour to the explanatory potential of a transcultural perspective across societies. In this sense, the Chinese and Indian contexts as analysed against the background of a transcultural framework will also have significant implications for Western societies which are more and more struggling with the issues of accommodation of diverse groups at a time when the the nation-state as originally conceptualized is severely challenged. Thus, the papers assembled here through their case studies contribute to an enhanced understanding of the politics underlying citizenship, governance, diplomacy and heritage, and thereby enrich the analytical as well as the methodological framework of comparative politics. With regard to the policy implications of such academic research, the entire gamut of policy-making endeavours in most of the developing countries is heavily influenced by the Western development paradigm. In their own ways, all the papers highlight the inadequacy of such paradigms not only in non-Western contexts but also in the fast-changing Western societies. Therefore, by turning to the structure-agency relationship, by focussing more on conflicts and asymmetries within the system, and by taking recourse to hybridisation as a political strategy, a policy formulation can be brought about which is informed by a transcultural perspective. Such an approach might in fact be better suited to deal with the realities of post-modern societies across the globe.