

Original Article



Value changes in transforming China

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Abstract: The People's Republic of China (PRC) is back on the global agenda. In the late 1970s, the process of modernization (reform and opening up under Deng Xiaoping) brought enormous changes to the economy, society and cultural landscape. China has rapidly emerged as a major world power, despite the current global economic crisis. This article explores the changes in Chinese values caused by the expanding economic and cultural exchange processes within the country. Of specific theoretical interest is the role played by the mass media and information and communication technologies (ICT), and their bearing on modern Chinese society. Empirically, we first examine China's placement on a global map of values (based on the World Value Survey), noting recent value shifts. We then offer a comprehensive view of attitudes of Chinese managers, drawing on a quantitative study from Beijing and Shanghai, to highlight the importance of cultural differences deeply rooted in Chinese society. Finally, implications for cultural relations between West and East are discussed.

Keywords: value change, modernization, cultural proximity, Beijing and Shanghai, identity and lifestyles

Introduction: Cultural proximity in times of globalization

In today's era of globalization cultures cannot be perceived as homogeneous units, because they are complex and diverse in themselves. Distances are getting smaller and the world seems to be growing together, as captured by the expression 'time-space compression' (Harvey 1990). The 'Other' no longer seems so far away. Welsch (1999) coined the term 'transculturality' to describe how cultures are becoming interconnected, with similar lifestyles merging and getting assimilated. As Welsch notes (1999: 197f), 'Cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other. Lifestyles no longer end at the borders of

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national cultures, but go beyond these and are found in the same way in other cultures. The way of life for an economist, an academic or a journalist is no longer German or French, but rather European or global in tone.’

With globalization, processes of cultural exchange have expanded dramatically, based mainly on communication activities between and among members of society. All negotiation is communication, with the inherent cultural connotations. Communication is central in shaping relations between individuals as well as on the societal level. It serves as a vehicle for cultural negotiations in a world of economic cooperation, wider political debates and cultural exchanges. To optimize mutual understanding and minimize conflict, communication activities must be adapted to cross-cultural challenges. Interconnectedness is an unavoidable fact: it may prove an important stimulus facilitating constructive cooperation in facing new global challenges.

Other authors, however, hold that globalization does not lead to homogenization, and maintain that the binary logic of homogeneity/heterogeneity or unity/diversity must be discarded (see Featherstone 1990: 2). The local culture must be taken into consideration, and this leads to a cultural mix. The connectedness of the local and global and the ‘linking of localities’ (Robertson 1995: 35) are reflected in terms like ‘indigenisation’ (Appadurai 1996), ‘glocalisation’ (Robertson 1995), ‘hybridity’ and ‘third space’ (Bhabha 1994), ‘third culture’ (Featherstone 1995), ‘creolisation’ (Hannerz 1987), vernacularization and métissage, among others.

A way out of this dispute between these two theoretical approaches is to differ precisely between cultural globalization on a macro-level (e.g. Beck, 2000), influencing certain institutions in society and cultural patterns at the micro-level (e.g. Schwartz, 1994). Cultural habits are deeply grounded in society, transmitted from generation to generation and clearly reflected in certain basic values of the citizens. In this article dealing with value changes in contemporary China we highlight the thesis of a *cultural surface synchronization* which means that cultural globalization should be seen hierarchical, influencing and changing culture more on a superficial level while the basic value structures of the Chinese are more or less unviolated.

Consensus or conflict: the role of mass media, ICTs and other forms of communication

Communication as symbolic interaction is carried out through intermediaries such as language, signs, gestures, symbols. As Blumer (1969: 14) puts it, the human being is an organism ‘that engages in social interaction with itself by making indications to itself and responding to such indications’. Meanings are negotiated between dialogue partners, so subjective experiences and cultural backgrounds play an important role in the communication process. Meaning is constructed within a context of cultural processes by (verbal and nonverbal) communication activities and influenced by media, ICTs and other forms of communication. Information and images are disseminated around the globe, with an undeniable impact on our worldview.

Appadurai (1996) sees the complexity of today’s world as involving certain disjunctures of economy, culture and politics. He operates with five different streams of global cultural flows, which he calls ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, finanscapas and ideoscapas. These five factors contribute to the global exchange of ideas and information and will lead to a deterritorialization of identities in a culturally hybridized world. With the shared suffix ‘scape’, Appadurai indicates that these flows are not objectively given relations but

perspective constructs. They are fluid, constantly shifting and irregularly shaped. These set of landscapes he calls ‘imagined worlds’ (1996: 296). Mediascapes suggests the global scale of information and refers to the rise in media production and distribution. Mediascapes involve both the ‘distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information’ as well ‘the images of the world created by these media’ (Appadurai 1996: 298f).

Interconnectedness has increased dramatically since the turn of the millennium. China’s infrastructure, once a white spot on the digital map, has developed with enormous speed. Traditional mass media, ICTs and various forms of communication (interpersonal, verbal, non-verbal, visual) have all facilitated greater cultural proximity in Eastern and Western encounters. The once insular Chinese culture – strange, unknown and unapproachable for people from the West – now seems much closer, perhaps even familiar. Media and ICTs speed up these intercultural exchanges via worldwide distributed images, virtual meeting places and interpersonal encounters, facilitating connectedness and resulting in a form of perceived intimacy.

China’s rising importance in the world economy has boosted its presence in new coverage around the world. However, this does not mean that what gets disseminated is a complex and finely nuanced picture. Information is often reduced to simplified images, producing stereotypes that may lead to misunderstanding and prejudice. In the German media, for instance, simplified, stereotyped pictures of China are presented (Wobst 2007; Richter and Gebauer 2011), and this necessarily has an impact on popular perceptions. The German public have been shown to hold negative view of China: some 69% of Germans evaluate China’s influence in the world as ‘mainly negative’; only 11% rated China’s influence 2009 as ‘mainly positive’ – even lower than in 2008 (28%) and 2005 (34%) (Bersick 2010: 247f). A recent research report (Richter and Gebauer 2011) confirms this. The study collected 8,766 reports from seven German media sources¹ throughout 2008. Even in the most opinion-influential media, over half of the contributors were found to refer to China in stereotyped form, and these articles spread images and clichés already commonplace in society.

Whereas mass media distributes worldwide information and images, ICTs facilitate interpersonal contacts. The internet community communicates through bits and bytes: e-mail, VoIP, video conferencing, social media, etc., enabling people from all over the world to stay in frequent contacts, even with permanent real-time interconnectedness readily available on a cost-effective basis. In the course of merely the past five years, the number of internet users quadrupled. According to data from CINNIC (2011) the proportion of internet use rose from 103 mil (6.9% of the population) to 420 mil. (31.6%) in 2010. Even medium-sized and small enterprises rely on computers (94.8%), and 92.7% of them have Internet access. For 57.2% of these enterprises (again, according to CINNIC 2011) the Internet has become a main channel for communication and providing customer service. Despite the explosive growth of Internet use in China there are huge differences regarding the access. Amnesty International reported about violations of the freedom of expression and the suppression of dissent (Amnesty International UK 2006). It is important to have a close focus on the current shifts regarding these issues: “The tools and methods used by the authorities to control the content and flow of information, and the emerging dynamics between Chinese Internet users, or “netizens,” and censors shows that the expansion of the Internet and Web-based media is changing the rules of the game between state and society.” (Xiao 2011: 47)

Besides mass media and the ICTs, visual communication plays an important role in levelling out cultural differences. This can be noted in such varied forms of communication as

vestimentary communication (similar clothing styles), synchronization of body language (observable at international meetings), forms of visual synchronization (as when China's hutongsⁱⁱ is replaced by anonymous apartment blocks and modern skyscrapers; living styles), availability of globally distributed products (the 'McDonaldization of Society', Ritzer 1996), language (English as lingua franca), etc.

This globalized synchronization is accelerated by personal mobility, both long-term (expatriatism) and short-term (business trips, tourism). With these exchanges comes transculturalism, which 'sketches a different picture of the relation between cultures, not one of isolation and conflict, but one of entanglement, intermixing, and commonness' (Welsch 1999: 205).

On the other hand, several studies (e.g. Schwartz, 2006) have shown that cultural values still vary profoundly between countries. Signs and symbols as basis of communication are deeply culturally rooted. Culture plays a central role in social relations: it is 'the way the social relations of a group are structured and shaped: but it is also the way those shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted' (Clarke et al. 1976: 11). The more the one culture differs from the other, the greater are the chances of misunderstanding. More effort is needed to implement communication, precisely because norms and values, the models of 'correct' behaviour, differ so widely. Successful communication is achieved when the participants can correctly interpret the symbols in the interaction of the interlocutor.

Deciphering the map of meaning through cultural values and norms

Culture is 'the learned set of beliefs, values, norms, and material goods shared by group members' (Thompson and Hickey 1999: 68). Values and norms are culturally dependent, and representations of reality differ. Here Korzybski (1933: 58) has applied a geographical metaphor: 'a map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness.' Objective reality is an illusion, just as a map represents the landscape by using symbolic meaning. 'The 'culture' of a group or class is the peculiar and distinctive 'way of life' of the group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations, in system of beliefs, in mores and customs, in the use of objects and material life... A culture includes the "maps of meaning" which makes things intelligible to its members' (Clarke et al. 1976: 10). Culture functions as codes of meanings which are constructed and can be conveyed and understood. This social-constructivist view of culture sees the human being as 'suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun' (Geertz 1973: 5). Analysing those webs of significance cannot be done by experimental science in search of laws, but requires 'an interpretative one in search of meaning' (Geertz 1973: 5). This subjective dimension of these maps of meaning is determined by individuals who share the same values and norms: thus, a 'culture has to be studied in term of its own meaning and values' (Giddens 1997: 24).

Values provide an important gateway for deciphering the hidden dimension of culture, because values are 'key aspects of variations in human culture. What individuals value is strongly influenced by the specific culture in which they happen to live' (Giddens, 1997: 586). But culture is not a fixed entity. Especially in times of globalization – as highlighted by the concept of transculturality – culture is dynamic, not static. It is an ever-changing matrix, 'a constant invitation to change, not their "systemness"' (Bauman 1999: xxix).

Baumann's view on culture can be applied to the processes underway in China, where modernization interferes with traditions, which can lead to breaks in society: "Culture" is as

much about inventing as it is about preserving; about discontinuity as much as about pattern-braking; about norm-following as much as about the transcendence of norm; about the unique as much as about the regular; about change as much as about monotony of reproduction; about the unexpected as much as about the predictable.’ (Bauman 1999: xiv)

The present study follows this dichotomy, with empirical research based on this assumption. Modernization, globalization, cultural dynamics and changing patterns of social relations are affecting the values of China’s people today. The fast-paced development and increasing relevance in the world economy, with World Trade Organization membership from 2001 and the resulting opening of the country, the influx of foreign cultures through internationalization – all these necessarily have a bearing on China’s society, its culture and therefore its values. As pointed out by Inglehart and Baker (2000: 50), ‘Economic development is associated with major changes in prevailing values and beliefs’. A closer look at Chinese value systems and their shifts can help us to understand what appears to be a transformation spurred by current developments in this rapidly-changing country.

Aims of the empirical research

The focus of the study is on people who have been brought up in and are living the local lifestyle, but who are also exposed to Western lifestyle influences. The specific target group are managers who work on a daily basis with people from the West, who travel frequently, dealing with business partners in international ventures and are in ongoing contact with them.

First, the value characteristics of China are presented in relation to several countries, on the basis of the World Value Survey (fourth wave 2005–2008). Cultural characteristics are measured with the value concept of Schwartz (originally developed 1992), which seems currently to be the leading approach to measure values. The value theory of Schwartz was operationalized in the European Social Survey, the main cross-national survey in Europe and a short scale (10 items) was also included in the most recent World Value study. This database is used to illustrate Chinese values in relation to those of other countries. Based on the individual value concept of Schwartz (1992) major value transitions over the last decades within China are measured by comparing different value studies using the Schwartz concept in Shanghai.

After this secondary analysis, which seeks to provide insights into value characteristics and value transitions in China, we present the main results of our own empirical study. We begin with the procedures followed (sampling, fieldwork, operationalization). Next, due to the explorative character of the study, we formulate broad research questions instead of highly specific hypothesis. These research questions structure the presentation of our empirical analysis. Concerning basic values, grounded in personality we deal with the following research questions:

- What values have high priority in the managerial sphere in China?
- Are there differences between Beijing and Shanghai?
- What socio-demographic and occupational characteristics influence the importance of basic values?

Besides the basic value approach of Schwartz also central opinions of Chinese managers regarding identity and lifestyle, the working sphere and internationalization were measured. With a dimensional approach, several exploratory factor analysis (see Fabrigar et al., 1999) were conducted to elucidate the central constructs hidden behind the scales used in the study.

Two research questions guide the analysis of the second part of the survey:

- What central constructs of identity formation, attitudes towards work and internationalization can be observed within Chinese managerial culture?
- What differences emerge regarding the two major cities, Beijing and Shanghai?

In summary, then, our study examines whether the above-mentioned processes and recent experiences have led to shifts in the value system of the Chinese people, resulting in fundamental changes in society. Our preliminary hypothesis would expect this to be a matter of a kind of cultural proximity that develops through visible transcultural lifestyles, but that on the whole, people's values remain deeply rooted and little altered.

Basic values of China in a cross-national and time perspective

This study uses the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS), an empirically sound concept of cultural values grounded in cross-cultural psychology, as its theoretical and empirical basis (Schwartz 1992). The SVS takes into account the complexity of culture and is well suited for comparative research. Its value approach refers to basic values which can be seen as encompassing fundamental beliefs referring to desirable goals and inextricably linked to affect. Important here is Schwartz's claim for universality. The theory 'concerns the basic values that people in all cultures recognize' (Schwartz, 2009, p.1). The major assumption of the Schwartz concept is that value types are arranged in a circular position. The closer two values are in either direction around the circle, the more similar are their underlying motivations, whereas values located opposite to each other represent conflicting and incompatible orientations. The first comprehensive measurement, the Schwartz Value Scale (SVS) itself, gathers 57 multiple values categorized into ten value types: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, conformity, tradition, security. These ten value types can be subsumed into four value dimensions: openness to change, self-enhancement, conservation/conservatism, self-transcendence (see figure 1).

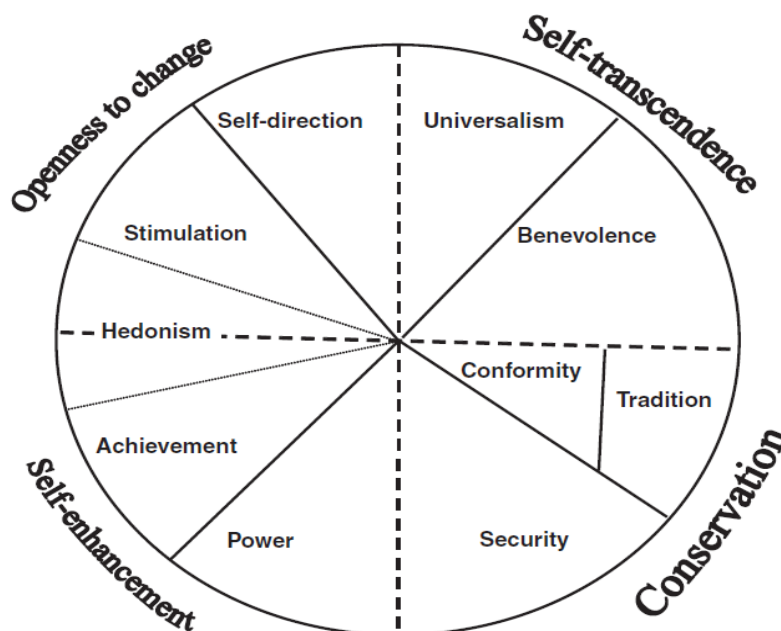


Fig.1: Circular structure of individual values according to Schwartz (1992)

These four value dimensions form two bipolar conceptual dimensions, yielding a spectrum with successive closely-related values: the dimension of openness to change (individualistic efforts and action) vs. conservation (preservation of the existing order) and the dimension self-enhancement (pursuit of one's own success and dominance) vs. self-transcendence (acceptance of others as equal individuals).

Schwartz et al. (2001) decided to develop the Portraits Value Questionnaire (PVQ) because the SVS was not considered appropriate for studies involving persons with low formal education. The new version of the PVQ (40 items) has high proven reliability and appears more suited for measuring basic values in representative samples within cultures. The designers of the European Social Survey opted for a shorter version of this scale, consisting of 21 portraits, in their survey, with the consequence that the ten value orientations are only poorly measured with at least two items, and with low reliability. The current leading role of the Schwartz concept due to extensive research based on ESS data has led to the decision to include a very short battery (every value is operationalized with only one item) of the PVQ in the fourth World Value Survey (2005–2008). Due to the short scale it is feasible to compare cross-nationally only the two bipolar value dimensions conservation vs. openness (6 items) and self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence (four items). The items used in the worldwide comparison based on WVS data are listed in table 1.

Indicator	Value orientation → Dimension
Adventure and risk-taking are important to this person: to have an exciting life	Stimulation → Openness to change
Being very successful is important to this person: to have people recognize one's achievement	Achievement → Self-enhancement
It is important to this person to be rich: to have a lot of money and expensive things.	Power → Self-enhancement
It is important for this person to have a good time: to indulge oneself	Hedonism → Openness to change
It is important to this person to think up new ideas and be creative: to do things one's own way.	Self-direction → Openness to change
Looking after the environment is important to this person: to care for nature.	Universalism → Self-transcendence
It is important for this person to help others: to care for their wellbeing.	Benevolence → Self-transcendence
Tradition is important to this person: to adhere to the customs handed down by one's religion or family.	Tradition → Conservation
Living in secure surroundings is important to this person: to avoid anything that might be dangerous.	Security → Conservation
It is important for this person always to behave properly: to avoid anything people would say is wrong.	Conformity → Conservation

Table 1: The 10 item version of the PVQ in the World Value Survey (fourth wave 2005-2008)

Source: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder_published/article_base_136

Based on these ten items, the two value dimensions conservation vs. openness to change and self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence were constructed. To avoid scale-use differences across cultures, the values were centred around the mean rating of all value items (MRAT) (following the instructions of Schwartz, 2009). The four dimensions represent the average rating on those items belonging to the higher order constructs. Due to the expected high

negative correlation between the two bipolar dimensions ($r = -0,74$ between conservation and openness and $r = -0,52$ between self-enhancement and self-transcendence), it was justified to construct two major value orientations: openness vs. conservation and self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence. Figure 2 draws a worldwide map of value orientations based on the country-samples of the World Value survey. All data is based on the fourth wave of the survey (2005–2008).

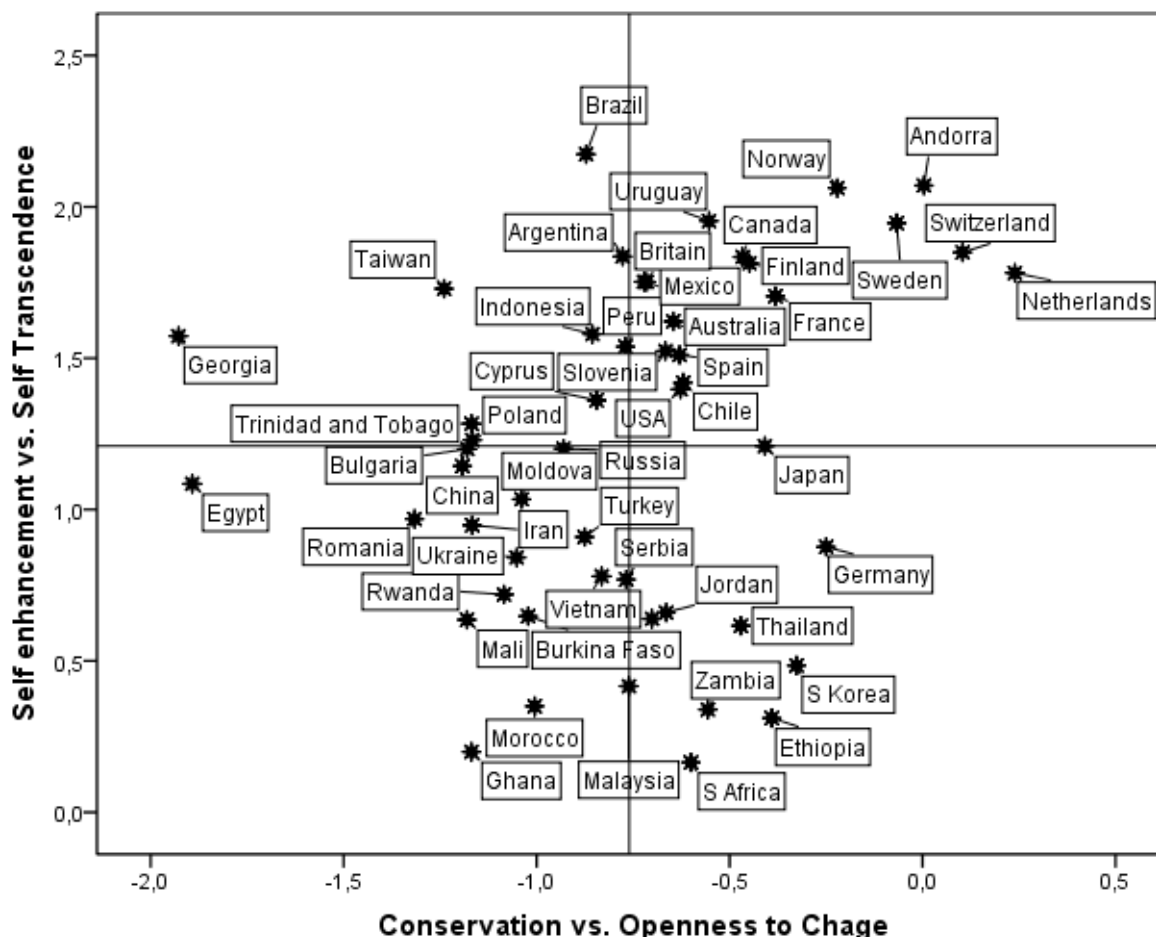


Fig.2: A global map of Schwartz values (based on 10 item PVQ measurement of the WVS)
Source: own computations based on the WVS data (<http://www.wvsevadb.com/wvs/WVSDData.jsp>)

It is evident that China belongs to the lower left-hand quarter of the figure. Preserving the existing order ('conservation', in Schwartz's terminology) as well as self-enhancement values rank high compared to the worldwide average. The position of China is close to that of former communist countries of Eastern Europe like Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova. Also Arabic and African countries are located in the lower left of the figure, but in general with a higher relevance of conservatism/conservation (as with e.g. Egypt) or self-enhancement (e.g. Ghana, Morocco). Compared to the denizens of other power states like the United States or Japan, the Chinese people still seem to see the preservation of order and achievement as being more important than benevolence and universalism. Western European countries are variously located. Particularly the Scandinavian states, together with Switzerland, the Netherlands and France, can be seen as advocates of self-transcendence and progressive values. Germany is as

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an outlier, according higher relevance to achievement and power than other Western European countries. Some emerging nations in Latin America (like Brazil or Argentina) are characterized by a completely different value structure. Self-transcendence is far more important than self-enhancement, with Brazil occupying the very global position on this value dimension.

This worldwide comparison of value characteristics clearly shows that there is no universal, global unification of values. There are still cultural spheres with distinctions between African/Arabic, Asian and Eastern European, Latin American and Western European countries.

Analysing value transitions over time on the basis of survey data is difficult, because until recently comparable value data have hardly existed for China. In addition the quality of the samples (also in the WVS) is open to criticismⁱⁱⁱ. The Schwartz Value Survey Dataset included at least two student samples from Shanghai (1988, 1995). For this study, we decided to compare those samples with our sample of managers from Shanghai (2007)^{iv}. Again, we followed Swartz's instructions for computing the ten value orientations and four value dimensions (Schwartz 2009).

These three timepoints lead us to conclude that no clear value changes are evident in the metropolitan area of Shanghai: values have remained basically stable from 1988 to 2007. Only slight changes appear, in particular within the dimension of self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence. Values such as status, power and achievement seem to have gained in importance in Shanghai, but on the dimension of conservation vs. openness to change, no clear trend emerges. We can note a resurgence of conservative values between 1988 and 1995, but otherwise the managers demonstrated more progressive values in 2007 than did the student samples.

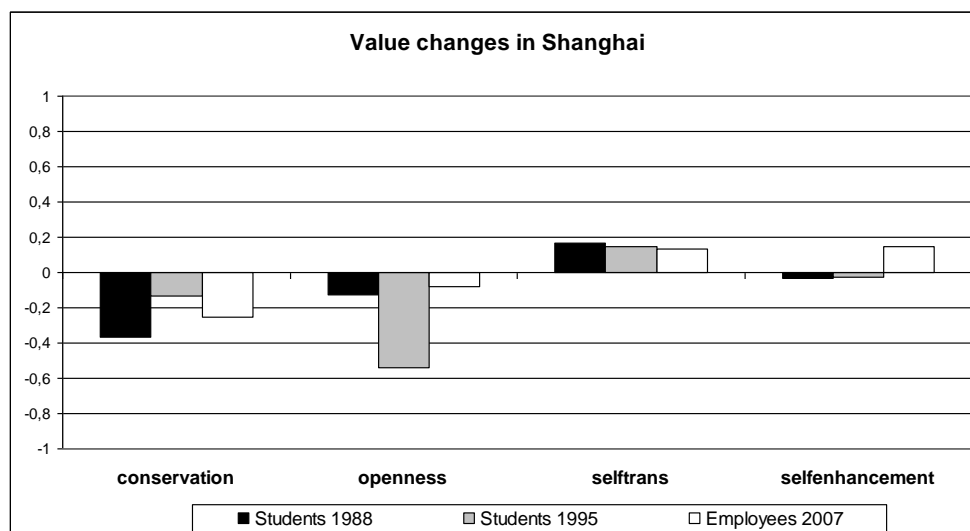


Fig.3: Value changes in Shanghai based on three different samples with SVS

Procedures and empirical findings of our survey

Sampling procedures and fieldwork

For our own empirical study, we decided to select a homogeneous sample of managerial personnel and to restrict our analysis to the metropolitan areas of Beijing and Shanghai, instead of attempting to achieve a representative sample all over China. The study was conducted in close cooperation with Chinese colleagues^v to avoid ethnocentric research bias and to ensure a cultural-linked approach.

Based on our theoretical approach, we saw Chinese business people as driving forces of modernity, and we wanted to distinguish between generations (those who have experienced the eras of Consolidation, Cultural Revolution and Social Reform; see Egri & Ralston, 2004), type of firm (foreign, joint venture, Chinese private, Chinese public) and managerial position (lower, middle, upper management). Therefore we decided to select our sample in China's two major cities on the basis of certain criteria as to age, gender, occupational position and type of firm, and a Chinese company was engaged to arrange the fieldwork accordingly. The study was conducted in May 2007.

Table 2 shows the main sample characteristics regarding socio-demographic and occupational variables. Due to the strict quota selection procedures, several characteristics (age, gender, type of firm and career position) are highly equivalent between the two cities, but there are several differences as regards educational background. Apprenticeships and professional schools are slightly overrepresented in the Shanghai sample. Considerable differences emerge with regard to university degrees. While in Shanghai nearly 60% of the sample has achieved a basic university or master's degree, the corresponding share in Beijing is below 30%. Interestingly, reported incomes are quite similar between the two cities, with only a slight overrepresentation of higher incomes (> 7500 RMB) in Shanghai.

	Shanghai (N=559; 50.5 %)	Beijing (N=549; 49.5 %)	Total Sample (N=1.108)
Age			
<i>M</i>	39,25	39,43	39,34
<i>SD</i>	10,56	10,17	10,36
<i>Range</i>	20–59	21–59	20–59
Gender (valid %)			
Males	277 (49.6 %)	275 (50.,1 %)	552 (49.,8 %)
Females	282 (50.4 %)	274 (49.9 %)	556 (50.2 %)
Education (valid %)			
Compulsory School	3 (0.5 %)	3 (0.5 %)	6 (0.5 %)
Apprenticeship	13 (2.3 %)	0 (0.0 %)	13 (1.2 %)
Professional institute	26 (4.7 %)	8 (1.5 %)	34 (3.1 %)
University entrance diploma	60 (10.7 %)	92 (16.8 %)	152 (13.7 %)
Professional institute requiring diploma	143 (25.6 %)	229 (41.7 %)	372 (33.6 %)
University degree	281 (50.3 %)	191 (24.8 %)	472 (42.6 %)
Master	33 (5.9 %)	26 (4.7 %)	59 (5.3 %)
Firm (valid %)			
Foreign firm	139 (24.9 %)	135 (24.6 %)	274 (24.7 %)
Joint venture	142 (25.4 %)	139 (25.3 %)	281 (25.4 %)
Chinese – private	138 (24.7 %)	137 (25.0 %)	275 (24.8 %)
Chinese – public	140 (25 %)	138 (25.1 %)	278 (25.1 %)
Career position (valid %)			
Lower management	188 (33.9 %)	183 (33.4 %)	371 (33.6 %)
Middle management	184 (33.1 %)	182 (33.2 %)	366 (33.2 %)
Upper management	183 (33.0 %)	183 (33.4 %)	366 (33.2 %)
Income (valid %)			
1,001 – 2,000 RMB	17 (3.0 %)	41 (7.5 %)	58 (5.2 %)
2,001 – 3,000 RMB	127 (22.7 %)	110 (20 %)	237 (21.4 %)
3,001 – 5,000 RMB	166 (29.7 %)	178 (32.4 %)	344 (31.0 %)
5,001 – 7,500 RMB	103 (18.4 %)	108 (19.7 %)	211 (19 %)
7,501 – 10,000 RMB	87 (15.6 %)	66 (12.0 %)	153 (13.8 %)
10,001 – 15,000 RMB	42 (7.5 %)	26 (6.6 %)	78 (7.0 %)
15,001 – 20,000 RMB	16 (2.9 %)	7 (1.3 %)	23 (2.1 %)
> 20,001 RMB	1 (0.2 %)	3 (0.5 %)	4 (0.4 %)

Table 2: Sociodemographic and occupational characteristics of our sample

Operationalization

Although the samples from the two metropolitan areas of Shanghai and Beijing can be seen as rather homogeneous, we expected different values and attitudes on three major criteria. Therefore we opted to select our sample based on theoretical assumptions.

The first independent variable refers to a generation cluster. Respondents were divided into three generation categories: ‘future’ (20–35 years; they did not experience the Cultural Revolution), ‘opening up’ (36–45 years; experienced the Cultural Revolution as adolescents, as well as the ‘Reform and Opening Up’) and ‘cultural revolution’ generation (over 45 years of age; have experienced two difficult times, the ‘Cultural Revolution’ as well as the ‘Three Years of Natural Disasters’) (similar to the concept of Egri & Ralston, 2004).

In addition the ‘working area’ represents another central variable of our survey: whether the respondent is working in international surroundings like foreign companies (e.g. joint ventures), in Chinese private companies or in state-owned institutions. A further factor is the individual’s career position within the firm. People in higher positions might experience more freedom and Western working values in foreign firms, while those working in Chinese firms might be still attached to Chinese values and hierarchical working styles.

The dependent variables were the basic values of Schwartz as well as some ‘secondary values’. Secondary values represent a broader value concept similar to the approach of Inglehard and Welzel (2005). We developed several item batteries to measure the lifestyle and identity of Chinese managers (e.g. determination in life through family or society, fears of the future, responsibility and commitment to family and society, expenditures for work and leisure time), the working environment (e.g. career objectives, attitudes towards leadership, importance of qualifications, working styles) and attitudes towards internationalization (consequences of foreign investment, view of Chinese managers and people, view of European managers and Europeans, connections with Europe and China). All scales were constructed as Likert scales (five categories with equal intervals). Explanatory factor analysis (PCA with varimax rotation) and reliability analysis were used to detect latent constructs behind the indicators, which were used for further analysis.

Before we turn to these secondary values, the analysis will refer to basic values of managers surveyed in Beijing and Shanghai based on the Schwartz Value Survey as well as on predictors explaining certain value orientations.

Empirical findings

Table 3 shows the operationalization of the first two research questions of our survey. We want to explore which of the ten value orientations enjoy high priority in Beijing and in Shanghai and which socio-demographic and occupational characteristics are linked with the importance of specific values. In a first step, the ten value orientations (based on the Schwartz concept, Schwartz 1992) were compared between Beijing and Shanghai using a t-test to bring out mean differences with regard to the importance of values. In a second step, four hierarchical OLS regressions (see Urban & Mayerl, 2011) were computed to compare the influence of socio-demographic and occupational characteristics on the Schwartz higher-order value dimensions.

Socio-demographic characteristics ^{vi}	Occupational characteristics	Basic values and dimensions	measurement
City (Shanghai/Beijing)	Income (five categories) Education (non-academic/academic) Middle management level	Security Conformity Tradition	Index based on the instructions of Schwartz (1992), additionally scale use corrections because of individually different response styles
Gender (male/female)	Upper management level Company (foreign/Chinese) Experience with European colleagues (no/yes)	Self-direction Stimulation Hedonism Power	
Age (in years)	Experience with European bosses (no/yes)	Achievement Benevolence Universalism	Index based on Schwartz (1992) with scale-use corrected values
Marital status (not married/married)	Work experience in other countries (no/yes)	Value dimensions: Openness to change Preserving the existing order Self-enhancement Self-transcendence	
Children (no/yes)			

Table 3: Overview of predictors on basic values and value dimensions

As regards value differences between Beijing and Shanghai, we note significant results on nearly every value orientation. Conformity and security are of higher importance to respondents in Beijing, whereas tradition is seen as slightly more relevant in Shanghai. Respondents in Beijing can be characterized by a higher social value orientation as reflected in the values of universalism and benevolence. This result is also backed up by higher achievement orientation in Shanghai, a value which is negatively correlated with universalism and benevolence. Business people in Shanghai tend toward an individualistic orientation, expressed by higher relevance accorded to self-direction and stimulation. The only values where no differences can be seen are hedonism and power: both these are basically neutral in importance to respondents in both cities.

Regarding the importance of different value orientations, the Chinese managers of our sample in Beijing and Shanghai can be characterized by high achievement orientation combined with high relevance of security values as well as self-direction. Managers working in the prosperous and booming cities of Shanghai and Beijing clearly reject the more traditional view of life. While they are positive to benevolence, universalism values are only of neutral importance to them.

		N	Mean (centered)	SD	t-value	Significance																																																																																																
Conformity	Shanghai	555	-.02	0.63	-3.105	.002																																																																																																
	Beijing	548	0.09	0.61			Security	Shanghai	555	0.17	0.67	-2.502	.012	Beijing	548	0.27	0.67	Tradition	Shanghai	555	-0.91	0.94	4.362	.000	Beijing	548	-1.14	0.81	Benevolence	Shanghai	555	0.31	0.67	-2.419	.016	Beijing	548	0.39	0.50	Universalism	Shanghai	555	-0.05	0.69	-6.677	.000	Beijing	548	0.19	0.47	Self-direction	Shanghai	555	0.29	0.66	1.675	.094	Beijing	548	0.22	0.59	Stimulation	Shanghai	555	-0.65	1.47	6.671	.000	Beijing	548	-1.20	1.29	Hedonism	Shanghai	555	0.13	1.16	-.402	.688	Beijing	548	0.16	0.79	Achievement	Shanghai	555	0.44	1.03	3.226	.001	Beijing	548	0.28	0.57	Power	Shanghai	555	-0.14	1.11	-.844	.399	Beijing
Security	Shanghai	555	0.17	0.67	-2.502	.012																																																																																																
	Beijing	548	0.27	0.67			Tradition	Shanghai	555	-0.91	0.94	4.362	.000	Beijing	548	-1.14	0.81	Benevolence	Shanghai	555	0.31	0.67	-2.419	.016	Beijing	548	0.39	0.50	Universalism	Shanghai	555	-0.05	0.69	-6.677	.000	Beijing	548	0.19	0.47	Self-direction	Shanghai	555	0.29	0.66	1.675	.094	Beijing	548	0.22	0.59	Stimulation	Shanghai	555	-0.65	1.47	6.671	.000	Beijing	548	-1.20	1.29	Hedonism	Shanghai	555	0.13	1.16	-.402	.688	Beijing	548	0.16	0.79	Achievement	Shanghai	555	0.44	1.03	3.226	.001	Beijing	548	0.28	0.57	Power	Shanghai	555	-0.14	1.11	-.844	.399	Beijing	548	-0.09	0.85								
Tradition	Shanghai	555	-0.91	0.94	4.362	.000																																																																																																
	Beijing	548	-1.14	0.81			Benevolence	Shanghai	555	0.31	0.67	-2.419	.016	Beijing	548	0.39	0.50	Universalism	Shanghai	555	-0.05	0.69	-6.677	.000	Beijing	548	0.19	0.47	Self-direction	Shanghai	555	0.29	0.66	1.675	.094	Beijing	548	0.22	0.59	Stimulation	Shanghai	555	-0.65	1.47	6.671	.000	Beijing	548	-1.20	1.29	Hedonism	Shanghai	555	0.13	1.16	-.402	.688	Beijing	548	0.16	0.79	Achievement	Shanghai	555	0.44	1.03	3.226	.001	Beijing	548	0.28	0.57	Power	Shanghai	555	-0.14	1.11	-.844	.399	Beijing	548	-0.09	0.85																			
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	Beijing	548	0.19	0.47			Self-direction	Shanghai	555	0.29	0.66	1.675	.094	Beijing	548	0.22	0.59	Stimulation	Shanghai	555	-0.65	1.47	6.671	.000	Beijing	548	-1.20	1.29	Hedonism	Shanghai	555	0.13	1.16	-.402	.688	Beijing	548	0.16	0.79	Achievement	Shanghai	555	0.44	1.03	3.226	.001	Beijing	548	0.28	0.57	Power	Shanghai	555	-0.14	1.11	-.844	.399	Beijing	548	-0.09	0.85																																									
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	Beijing	548	0.22	0.59			Stimulation	Shanghai	555	-0.65	1.47	6.671	.000	Beijing	548	-1.20	1.29	Hedonism	Shanghai	555	0.13	1.16	-.402	.688	Beijing	548	0.16	0.79	Achievement	Shanghai	555	0.44	1.03	3.226	.001	Beijing	548	0.28	0.57	Power	Shanghai	555	-0.14	1.11	-.844	.399	Beijing	548	-0.09	0.85																																																				
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Table 4: Mean differences between Beijing and Shanghai in 10 basic values

The influence of socio-demographic and occupational characteristics on values can explain only a surprisingly low amount of variance. While conservation and self enhancement seems to be completely independent with regard to socio-demographic and occupational characteristics, only 4% of the variance of openness values and 3,6% of the variance of self transcendence values could be explained by the predictors. In total, only the city differences remain strong enough to achieve significance. Additionally, only three predictors exert an influence on value orientations. The experience of working in a foreign country leads to a slightly lower importance of ‘openness to change’ values, and experiences with European bosses leads to a somewhat lower relevance of ‘self-enhancement’ values. Higher income tends to go together with lower interest in benevolence or universalism.

Several assumptions predicting value differences with regard to generations or different styles of firms or different career positions could not be confirmed. It seems that only regional differences (Beijing vs. Shanghai) account for different value orientations in our sample.

Model 1: Socio-demographic characteristics	Beta	Model 2: Sociodemographic and occupational characteristics	Beta	Adj. r²	Basic values
City Beijing	-.16			3.6%	<i>Openness to change</i>
		City Beijing	-0.15	4.0%	
		Working in foreign country	-.07		
No influence				-	<i>Conservation</i>
		No influence		-	
No influence					<i>Self-enhancement</i>
		Experience with Europeans	-.085	0.5%	
City Beijing	.19			3.3%	<i>Self-transcendence</i>
		City	0.18		
		Income	-.08	3.6%	

Note: Hierarchical OLS-Regression on four value dimensions
Only significant influences (p<0,05) were shown (standardized coefficients)

Table 5: Results of the four OLS-hierarchical regressions

The second part of the empirical analysis focuses on secondary values, the attitudes towards identity formation in China, lifestyle features, working styles and internationalization. Because the design of our empirical analysis is explorative we tried to detect empirically which latent constructs are hidden behind the scales we used. We decided to use Principal component analysis (Varimax Rotation) to judge the quality of the scales. The following table provides all necessary information of our scales and our latent constructs (percentages of explained variance).

Values concerning the identity of the respondents refer on the one hand to general attitudes towards individual life in examination with society. We measured the individual and family responsibility in contrast with the commitment to society (embeddedness), the determination of life through reference groups and anxieties with regard to future developments. Here we could clearly distinguish between fears of societal changes and fears of a loss of status. The item battery referring to expenditures was more lifestyle-oriented and measures the importance of rather personal expenditures in comparison to classical leisure time expenditures. To measure attitudes towards the working environment we used classical item batteries measuring career objectives (such as like income, security of position and social climate in relation to further education and working in foreign firms). Concerning leadership it was possible to differentiate between a preference for an authoritarian leadership styles vs. a cooperative, liberal leading role. Qualifications like foreign experience, education, important contacts, foreign languages and experience in different occupational fields were all seen as important and could be summarized as one latent variable.

Values concerning identity	Operationalization	Values concerning working environment	Operationalization	Values concerning internationalization	Operationalization
Embeddedness in society	PCA with Varimax: - Commitment to society (Var. = 38,0%) - Responsibility for oneself, family (Var. = 20,2%)	Carrier objectives	PCA with Varimax: - Classical carrier objectives (Var. = 29,6%) - Further education, working for foreign companies (Var. = 23,5%)	Consequences of foreign investment	PCA with Varimax: - Positive consequences of Western firms (Var. = 29,9%) - Negative consequences of Western firms (Var. = 26,4%)
Determination of life	PCA with Varimax: - determination of life through society (colleagues, work) (Var. = 39,3%) - determination of life through self and family (Var. = 21,2%)	Leadership	PCA with Varimax: - cooperative leadership (Var. = 32,2%) - authoritarian leadership (Var. = 31,2%)	Attitudes of Chinese	PCA with Varimax: - Attitudes towards Chinese Managers (Var. = 20,7%) - Attitudes towards Chinese people (Var. = 17,6%) - Modern view of Chinese (Var. = 9,1%)
Anxiety about the future	PCA with Varimax: - Fear of societal changes (Var. 31,0%) - Fear of loss of prestige (Var. 30,4%).	qualifications	PCA with Varimax: - Importance of qualifications (Var. = 47,9%)	Attitudes of Europeans	PCA with Varimax: - Viewing Europeans as lazy and impolite (Var. = 16,6%) - Viewing Europeans as importunate, arrogant (Var. = 13,7%) - Viewing Europeans immoral and distant (Var. = 13,6%)
Financial expenditures	PCA with Varimax: - Expenditures leisure time (Var. = 42,7%) - Expenditures family and work (Var. = 23,8%)	Dependency of income	PCA with Varimax: - Income based on activities, performance and output (Var. = 39,2%) - Income based on age and qualification (Var. = 27,6%)	Associations Europe	PCA with Varimax: - positive associations Europe (Var. = 37,6%) - negative associations Europe (Var. = 24,4%)
		Working style	PCA with Varimax: - western working style (alone, own time management and ideas (Var. = 50,9%)	Associations China	PCA with Varimax: - positive associations China (Var. = 35,3%) - negative associations China (Var. = 27,8%)

Table 6: The scales with regard to secondary values (explained variance of Principal Component Analyses with Varimax rotation)

Regarding income, a clear distinction could be noted when viewing salaries on the basis of age and qualification or on activities, performance and output. Finally, also the working style was operationalized as one construct, in terms of preferences for a Western style of working. Attitudes towards internationalization focused on a comparison between Europe and China.

The first item battery referred to positive consequences (important business partner, new technologies, responsibility for booming cities) or negative consequences of foreign investment (e.g. exploitation, societal changes in values).

In addition, the perception of personality traits of European and Chinese people were compared. Interestingly, explorative factor analysis indicated that attitudes towards other Chinese managers could be clearly distinguished from attitudes towards Chinese people, while European people and managers were viewed in equal ways (lazy and impolite; arrogant and importunate; immoral and distant).

The final item battery concerned associations with Europe and China. Both principal component analyses showed a clear distinction between positive associations (economic power region, high quality of life, beauty of nature) and negative associations (like criminality and terrorism, bad manners).

All those indicators which were extracted through exploratory factor analysis were used as index variables (computing the mean attitudes towards items). Again, hierarchical regressions were run where socio-demographic and occupational characteristics as well as basic values were used to measure the influence on all different indicators. The analyses yielded virtually similar results: in general, we found very weak predictors^{vii}. Because city differences accounted for most of the explained variance in nearly all analysis, we decided to compare the mean importance of the index variables with reference to the two metropolitan areas, again using t-tests for independent samples.

We start with the analysis of differences regarding attitudes towards individual life in relation to society. All indicators show that Beijing respondents esteem this value more highly than do the Shanghai respondents, attaching considerably higher importance to several attitudes independent of the constructs measured. The values of self and family determination of life are ranked higher than determination through society in Beijing as well as in Shanghai. The fear of loss of prestige is equally important as fear of societal changes in Shanghai, whereas respondents in Beijing saw societal changes as a greater threat. Expenditures on leisure-time activities were not considered as important as expenditures for the family or for further education.

		N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
Self and family determination of life	Shanghai	559	4.20	0.63	-8.107	.000
	Beijing	548	4.49	0.57		
Determination of life through society	Shanghai	559	3.17	0.76	-9.030	.000
	Beijing	548	3.57	0.69		
Fear of loss of prestige	Shanghai	559	3.63	0.69	-4.421	.000
	Beijing	548	3.85	0.98		
Fear of societal changes	Shanghai	559	3.63	0.71	-	.000
	Beijing	548	4.07	0.73		
Having sole and family responsibility	Shanghai	559	4.24	0.62	-7.668	.000
	Beijing	548	4.49	0.47		
Commitment to society	Shanghai	559	3.38	0.66	-1.333	.183
	Beijing	548	3.43	0.69		
Expenditures for family and further education	Shanghai	559	4.26	0.70	-7.847	.000
	Beijing	548	4.55	0.48		
Expenditures for leisure-time activities	Shanghai	557	3.51	0.63	-9.896	.000
	Beijing	548	3.91	0.72		

Table 7: Mean differences between Beijing and Shanghai in identity and lifestyle scales

As to the working environment, the general conclusion of higher importance of values among the Beijing respondents remains the same. However, no significant differences could be observed concerning preferences as regards leadership or the relevance of income based on age and qualification.

		N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
Classical career objectives (income, security, climate)	Shanghai	559	4.08	0.54	-7.914	.000
	Beijing	548	4.33	0.48		
Further education and working for companies	Shanghai	559	3.61	0.67	-6.235	.000
	Beijing	548	3.85	0.63		
Authoritarian leadership	Shanghai	559	3.42	0.77	-1.491	.136
	Beijing	548	3.49	0.84		
Liberal leadership	Shanghai	559	4.18	0.62	.015	.988
	Beijing	548	4.18	0.66		
Importance of qualifications	Shanghai	559	3.96	0.58	-15.508	.000
	Beijing	548	4.44	0.43		
Income based on age and qualification	Shanghai	559	3.49	0.80	-.683	.495
	Beijing	548	3.52	0.79		
Income based on activities. performance and output	Shanghai	559	4.21	0.66	-7.337	.000
	Beijing	548	4.45	0.45		
Western working style (own ideas and time management)	Shanghai	559	1.55	0.33	5.003	.000
	Beijing	548	1.44	0.37		

Table 8: Mean differences between Beijing and Shanghai regarding attitudes towards work

In general, classical career objectives seem to be more important than further education or working for foreign or Chinese companies. All respondents opt more for a liberal leadership than for an authoritarian leadership. The majority thinks that income should be based on activities, performance and output, and not too strictly on age and qualifications. Interestingly, preference for a more progressive working style (being able to manage one's own time and develop one's own ideas) was found to be more common among respondents in Shanghai than in Beijing.

The attitudes towards internationalization reveal finally a clear and coherent view of managers in Beijing in comparison to Shanghai. In Shanghai the view towards Chinese people as well as towards Europeans is expressed more critically than in Beijing. There are also less positive and more negative associations with Europe and less positive and more negative associations with China. Regarding the consequences of foreign investment, respondents in Beijing see more positive signs but considerable fear negative developments such as effects on Chinese values and identity or a potential exploitation of Chinese workers.

		N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
Positive consequences of foreign investment	Shanghai	559	3.86	0.57	-8.825	.000
	Beijing	548	4.14	0.49		
Negative consequences of foreign investment	Shanghai	559	3.22	0.66	-	.000
	Beijing	548	3.76	0.64		
Negative view of Chinese managers	Shanghai	559	0.36	0.28	3.021	.003
	Beijing	548	0.31	0.31		
Negative view of Chinese people	Shanghai	559	0.29	0.29	10.763	.000
	Beijing	548	0.12	0.21		
Modern view of China	Shanghai	559	0.30	0.37	.345	.730
	Beijing	548	0.29	0.37		
Europeans lazy. impolite	Shanghai	557	0.18	0.23	10.529	.000
	Beijing	548	0.06	0.14		
Europeans arrogant. importunate	Shanghai	559	0.44	0.31	4.136	.000
	Beijing	548	0.36	0.35		
Europeans immoral. distant	Shanghai	559	0.36	0.33	4.912	.000
	Beijing	548	0.26	0.30		
Positive associations with Europe	Shanghai	559	3.95	0.56	-	.000
	Beijing	548	4.35	0.43		
Negative associations with Europe	Shanghai	559	3.18	0.83	2.297	.022
	Beijing	548	3.06	0.93		
Positive associations with China	Shanghai	559	3.71	0.74	-3.682	.000
	Beijing	548	3.87	0.70		
Negative associations with China	Shanghai	559	2.73	1.00	3.368	.001
	Beijing	548	2.52	1.03		

Table 9: Differences between Beijing and Shanghai (attitudes towards internationalization)

Discussion of the results - a cultural surface synchronization?

The first empirical part of the paper (secondary analysis of value characteristics of China in a cross-national and time perspective) demonstrated that basic values held in China remain stable over time, and quite distinct from values held in Europe or Latin America. Also at the managerial sphere, as our own survey clearly demonstrates, the homogeneity of values is striking. Neither socio-demographic characteristics nor occupation predictors could explain the evolution of different value orientations. Only between the two metropolitan areas, remarkable differences in basic values and central attitudes could be found. Respondents in Beijing tend to be more socially open and tolerant while respondents in Shanghai favour achievement and individualism. Concerning identity and lifestyle, business people in Beijing give a higher priority to several identity and lifestyle features, which may reflect their higher personal involvement with Chinese society. This can also be confirmed with regard to attitudes towards internationalization. Respondents in Shanghai clearly express a critical view towards Europe and China. It seems that respondents in Beijing see themselves in the heart of China while respondents in Shanghai demonstrate a tendency to develop a more independent and critical perspective towards domestic and foreign influences.

Do these empirical results represent a form of equalization of values between Europe and China through greater integration – or a shifting apart (particularization), or perhaps a higher form of hybridization? It seems that Western values have at most penetrated only the outer cultural surface in China. Otherness is no longer so strange or exotic: everything seems within personal reach, whether physical or virtual. The impression is that globalization leads to a global blend. The regional differences between the two metropolitan areas are a sign of a pluralisation of lifestyle values within China and between different social classes. This modernization process involves various components: the physiological-analogue dimension (work mobility as well as tourism generates a higher degree of interpersonal contacts), the virtual-digital component (frequent virtual encounters are accelerated by omnipresent and low-cost modern information and communication technologies) and visual synchronization in a globalized world and through international exchange (transcultural lifestyles, distribution of images through mass media and cultural artefacts). From these indicators, we might expect that, through globalization, a cultural synchronization is developing – but, as this study has shown, this is only superficial and manifests itself only at the level of secondary values. Our analysis of the basic values of Chinese business people has shown that these developments have not led to a merging or synchronization with Western values: traditional Chinese values remain deeply rooted. Rather than ‘hybridization’, the term ‘cultural surface synchronization’ seems a more apt description for the situation. There are still huge differences in value systems, East and West, that are not visible because they are nested deep in the hidden dimension of culture and grounded in personality.

Notes

ⁱ Quality dailies and Information formats from the public-service television broadcasting network

ⁱⁱ A hutong is an ancient city alleyway or lane lined with single-story dwellings in which generations of families have lived together. In recent decades these hutongs have been replaced by modern buildings, and this has had a massive influence on the collective way of life in China.

ⁱⁱⁱ It is highly questionable, if the Chinese sample of the World Value Survey can be seen as representative for the Chinese population. Representativity means in a strict sense that all inhabitants of China should have an equal chance to be part of the proposed sample of about 2000 per country individuals in the WVS.

^{iv} Again, the conclusions based on three different samples must be recognized as limited, but at least the same survey instrument (the 57 item SVS) was used in all samples.

^v from Fudan University/Shanghai, Tsinghua University/Beijing and Beijing Foreign Studies University/Beijing

^{vi} Socio-demographic and occupational characteristics were dichotomized to use the variables as predictors in multiple regression analysis. It was decided to use age in the original form to avoid a theoretical determination of regression models based on the three-generation approach.

^{vii} Due to space limits, the full analyses are not reproduced here, but can be obtained on request from the authors

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