

10 Years China Platform



10 YEARS CHINA PLATFORM

From Rabbit to Monkey

Further developments since the 5th Anniversary

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1 Preface

Prof. Dr. ir. Guido van Huylenbroeck

Academic Director Internationalisation, Ghent University

As Academic Director Internationalisation of Ghent University, it is with great satisfaction and pride I present to you the publication at hand in light of the celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the Ghent University China Platform.

As indicated in its Integrated Policy Plan for Internationalisation, Ghent University wishes to strategically focus its international efforts and consolidate its presence in those regions where academic cooperation already exists and/or where a difference can be made, and academic opportunities lie ahead. Ghent University does so by investing additional funding as well as clustering the existing expertise in regional platforms.

This is ever more the case with a global actor such as China which has become more externally oriented, not only economically, but also on the academic level.

At its start, the idea behind the China Platform was to create mutual awareness and understanding, as well as to deliver support and assistance, so as to facilitate cooperation, student and research exchange between academia in both Ghent and China. Over the past decade, the platform brilliantly succeeded in its purpose, and facilitated Sino-Belgian cooperation not only in China and at Ghent University, but also outside of Ghent University's settings within the Flemish region via close cooperation with its strategic partnership with the City of Ghent, the Province of East Flanders, the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce and the Port of Ghent.

Since its inception, the China Platform has paved the path for a vast extension of Ghent University's activities and contacts with the Chinese subcontinent, which has led to mutual cooperation and agreements with over 40 universities and research centres, and a steady increase of student exchange and joint research. Whereas 10 years back, the presence of Chinese students was less obvious at our institute, Ghent University now counts 352 Chinese students, researchers and scholars. Moreover, the majority of the international PhD students at Ghent university originate from a Chinese higher education or research institute.

The present publication is proof of the excellent pioneer work the China Platform has conducted over the past 10 years, and illustrates how it has stimulated not only academic, but also entrepreneurial cooperation and long-lasting Sino-Belgian friendships.

However successful, many opportunities still lie ahead and the China Platform's role is far from outplayed. It is therefore with confidence that I look forward to the future activities and achievements of our China Platform. In the meantime, I proudly invite you to browse through this publication and look back on the accomplishments of the China Platform celebrating its second lustrum.



2 China Platform: accomplishments and ambitions

Prof. Dr. ir. Luc Taerwe

Director China Platform, Ghent University

Mr Frederik De Decker

Head International Relations Office, Ghent University

Mrs Inge Mangelschots

Coordinator China Platform, International Relations Office, Ghent University

Origin

Over the past 30 years, Ghent University has intensively strengthened its cooperation with China as the interest in collaboration with China continued to increase in the different university departments. But as not all professors and administrative staff, active in China or with an intention to set-up a cooperation, have a thorough knowledge of Chinese society and the Chinese culture, they sometimes failed to set up a concrete cooperation due to administrative obstacles and cultural differences. Furthermore, the fact that year after year, the number of staff members and students (both incoming and outgoing) in need of assistance steadily increased, showed that the need for a central point of contact for China within Ghent University could no longer be ignored at a certain point. China, with all the developments it went through during the last decade, will surely continue to offer numerous opportunities for academic cooperation in the field of research and education and Ghent University did not want to leave this source untouched.

Consequently, the need for an institution-wide coordination point for all matters related to China at Ghent University led to the establishment of the China Platform within the university's International Relations Office in 2006. And since then, the cooperation, in both education and research, has grown continuously.

As a partner country, China occupies a crucial place in the university's internationalisation policy. The China Platform acts as the central point of contact for students, professors, researchers, embassies and governments, in all China-related affairs. The China Platform stimulates, facilitates and supports cooperation initiatives from Ghent University and from external partners.

In 2008, in order to structuralise and jointly approach the academic, political, social-cultural and economic aspects of cooperation with China, the China Platform became part of a strategic partnership with the Province of East Flanders, the City of Ghent, the Port of Ghent and the Flemish-Chinese Chamber of Commerce. In principle, the term *China Platform* denotes two different entities. On the one hand, there is *Ghent University's China Platform* based in the International Relations Office of the university, whose mission is to design, further develop and implement an institutional policy related to educational cooperation and research at the university. On the other hand, there is the formal cooperation agreement for a *Strategic Partnership* on China between Ghent University and the Province of East Flanders, with the City of Ghent, the Port of Ghent and the Flemish-Chinese Chamber of Commerce acting as additional partners.

Establishment of representation office in Beijing in 2008

With a view to strengthening its visibility in China, and to creating and perpetuating an extensive and permanent network of Chinese economic, institutional and academic partners, the Province of East Flanders and Ghent University joined forces and established a representation office in Beijing. The present representative is Mr Zhang Chi. A local presence in China means closer contact with embassies, universities, government-bodies, companies and chambers of commerce.



Personal contacts are very important for the success of any undertaking in China. The representation office also offers direct assistance to incoming and outbound students and helps professors and researchers to find and transmit information.

The representation office also plays a crucial role in detecting and identifying strategic partner institutions, and in following trends in the Chinese (educational) landscape.



China Platform within Ghent University's Internationalisation Policy

Within Ghent University, the China Platform aims for the dynamic and coherent conduct of all activities connected with cooperation with China. Specifically, this includes supporting students and faculties in their initiatives and projects related to China:

- Incoming Chinese students and researchers are guided through administrative procedures related to obtaining a visa, accommodation, registration at Ghent University, APS screening, extension of residence permits, etc. In order to smoothen such processes, the China Platform regularly dovetails its activities with other Ghent University departments such as student administration, the personnel department and research coordination unit; with the Belgian consulates in China; with the city of Ghent etc.;
- Chinese students and researchers are also encouraged to become involved in ongoing activities, answer third-party questions (e.g. the from media) and apply for vacancies for which they qualify. In such matters, the China Platform works closely together with ChiSAG (the Chinese Students and Scholars Association Ghent).
- The China Platform offers support to professors and researchers in facilitating and establishing contacts with Chinese institutions and individual cooperation partners. It also offers incentive for exploratory visits and other activities in China.

The role of the China Platform is not limited to a supportive function: it also takes central initiatives with a view to starting up new education and research projects. These are achieved by opening up new forms of cooperation and by maintaining and consolidating existing contacts with Chinese partners, governments and embassies. As a result, we can exchange relevant information immediately so we can capitalise on current events, new trends, calls for newly announced funding and exchange initiatives in an efficient manner.

Based on these networks and the expertise of the China Platform, Ghent University was able to enter into the Erasmus Mundus calls, which led to the very successful LiSUM and Lotus projects which have played a pivotal role in enhancing close cooperation between Ghent University (and some of its strategic European partners) on the one hand and many renowned Chinese universities on the other hand. Both projects are discussed in detail later in this publication.

In 2014 Ghent University capitalised on its rapidly growing reputation and realm, particularly in Asia, by opening a branch campus in South Korea as part of the emerging Global Campus in Incheon (Songdo), near capital Seoul. There, and with a particular aim to focus not only on Korean students, but on other Asian students (and especially Chinese students) as well, Ghent University offers English-taught bachelor programmes in three STEM-disciplines, viz. Molecular Biotechnology, Environmental Technology and Food Technology since 2014–15. These programmes should be particularly appealing to Chinese students because of their

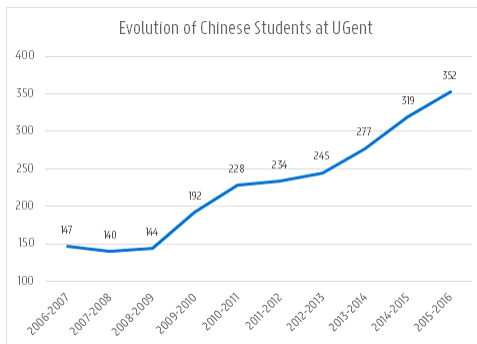
dual accreditation (Flemish (NVAO)/Korean), the combination of programmes with a firm theoretical background combined with hands-on research experience, one semester at the main campus in Belgium and intensive internship opportunities.

The China Platform has also gradually extended its activity range to other Chinese-speaking universities, e.g. to Hong Kong and Taiwan, thusly widening opportunities for scholars to embark on joint endeavours with their peers there or for students to study in a Chinese speaking environment.

However, the main focus logically remains on the cooperation with mainland China. To boost cooperation with Chinese universities and attract more Chinese (PhD) students, the China Platform launched a few initiatives:

- Tuition fee waivers for all Chinese PhD students and reimbursement of enrolment fees for defending PhD theses
- Reimbursement of the costs of APS screening for Chinese students that actually enrol at Ghent University
- A co-funding programme in collaboration with the Research Department for Chinese PhD students with a scholarship of the CSC (China Scholarship Council). This co-funding covers travel expenses, accommodation, insurance and bench fees.

These measures do not only ensure that Ghent University becomes more attractive to Chinese students, a financial contribution also enables Chinese PhD students with a CSC scholarship to study in Ghent because CSC considers a tuition fee waiver by the recipient university a minimum requirement for a scholarship request.



The figure on the left very clearly shows that this policy has proven to be very effective, with a continuous growth in the numbers of Chinese students over the last years (source: UGI, 1 November 2016).

But the China Platform does not only want to profile itself as an internal, inward-looking, closed club. It has been and wants to remain also a

point of contact (and in many cases an important partner) with regard to China-related matters for third parties such as the Chinese diplomatic representation in Belgium and the Chinese representation at the EU, the Taipei Representative Office, research institutions (e.g. the European Institute for Asian Studies – EIAS), other universities and institutions of higher education, the media, companies, etc.

The combination of academic, political-diplomatic and economic expertise related to China has increasingly been translated into more resources and more opportunities for Ghent University, and will do this equally for all parties involved in the long run. The China Platform aims to remain a point of contact, literally a platform, in which all partners can exchange ideas and information and can start up concrete initiatives.

This outward and forward-looking attitude is one of the reasons why one of the main objectives for the future is to invest more in the network of Chinese UGent alumni (and by extension other international alumni) and to look for ways in which we can capitalise on the enthusiasm of our grateful alumni.

Launch of the UGent Alumni Network in 2013

In September 2013, Ghent University with its China Platform and China representative in Beijing launched the UGent Alumni Network in Shanghai and Beijing. A delegation of Ghent University headed by Vice Chancellor Paul Van Cauwenberge visited China for this occasion. The launch event was celebrated together with representatives from the different EU embassies; several Chinese officials; Mr Matthias Reusing and Mrs Jady Wang from the EU Delegation to China in Beijing; Mr Zhang Cheng, the President of the Erasmus Mundus Alumni China Chapter, many UGent alumni and other Ghent University supporters. In fact the Delegation of Ghent University was part of a bigger mission to China: the Economic visit of Flemish Minister-President Kris Peeters to China, which proved to be a very successful visit as many agreements were inaugurated in the field of education and industry. This was a perfect opportunity for our Rector to put the scholarship opportunities for two-way mobility between Ghent University and its partner institutions in China in the spotlight as well as strengthen the ties with the different stake holders in China.

For Ghent University, strengthening the relationship with its international alumni is a priority. China was the pilot project in the development of an international alumni policy. The importance of recruitment in this region is increasing, particularly in the context of the branch campus of Ghent University in South Korea, which officially opened on September 1st, 2014 in the presence of our Vice Chancellor, Prof. Anne De Paepe.

As such the Chinese UGent Alumni Networks in Shanghai and Beijing were some of the first to be launched by Ghent University, together with networks in the Western Balkans, the United States and a few more Asian countries e.g. Vietnam and Indonesia. This shows the importance and pathfinding role of China in the overall international alumni policy of Ghent University.



A New Step: Active Recruitment and Marketing Strategy of Ghent University.

China was the logical choice as a pilot country for the implementation of Ghent University's recently adopted strategy, focusing on the development of an active policy for recruiting international students. The reason for this is the framework outlined above, taking into account the many current and former Chinese Ghent University students and alumni and especially the pathfinding role of China in the overall international alumni policy of Ghent University. This new endeavour will entail many different actions of which the first one will be to set up and to develop an online social media strategy focusing on Chinese media and the search for a broker company that can act on behalf of Ghent University in China.

The first action will be set up in close cooperation with NextportChina, a full service China-focused Digital Marketing Agency with offices in Amsterdam and Beijing. NextportChina's team is specialised in developing creative marketing campaigns to link Ghent University with our Chinese target audience, or in our case students and (very importantly in the Chinese context) their parents, by using a diversity of marketing channels. This means that in the near future Ghent University will not only boost of an official website in Mandarin, we will also have registered official accounts on typical Chinese social media such as WeChat, Sina Weibo, Youku, Baidu Baike and Qihoo 360. Even more than in the rest of the world, these media play a crucial role in the day-to-day life of the Chinese (youngsters), including in life-changing decision-making processes such as these related to university studies abroad. One of the strongholds of this approach is that the content of these official Ghent University social media accounts will largely originate from authentic material coming from our current Chinese students and our active alumni, who have enthusiastically and massively responded to our call for support. Undoubtedly, this will become a milestone in the way we address our prospective students, not only for our home campus but also for our new campus in South Korea, where we are also actively recruiting Chinese students.

A further look towards the future

All the above clearly indicates that a lot has been achieved at Ghent University, in which the China Platform has played a decisive role, and that novel initiatives arise at a quick pace. Yet we see new initiatives and cooperation opportunities emerging at the horizon. The quite recent trend to create joint labs between Chinese and Ghent University-researchers seems to have become increasingly successful and has caught the attention of industrial partners and governmental agencies. In general, focusing more on so-called “triple helix” cooperation seems to be the way forward, also for the cooperation with China. This is one of the reasons why the Ghent University China Platform will continue to invest, also by means of its joint representation with the Province of East Flanders, in strengthening its ties with the worlds of industry and official authorities. This is of course fully in line with its ambition to be not only supportive for the internationalisation of Ghent University but to remain an outward looking platform.

At the same time, it is noticeable that in China too (and in the rest of Asia for that matter) internationalisation is becoming more than just mobility or research cooperation. As in Europe, where we have seen the Bologna process heavily impacting the higher education system in general, internationalisation is also becoming a driver for educational innovation and systemic changes in China e.g. regarding credit systems, education based on learning outcomes, qualification frameworks, quality assurance mechanisms, etc. Our strong status in the region is offering us the opportunity to be at the forefront of cooperating on these topics with Chinese counterparts, often in a broader Asian context. The China Platform, together with the more recently established prospect ASEAN+ platform, will cherish this unique position enabling Ghent University to further build on its reputation and to become a wanted partner for cooperation that goes beyond the traditions of internationalisation. Therefore, let there be no doubt that there is more than enough new territory for the China Platform to discover in the decades to come.

3 The UGent Alumni Association China Chapter

Mr Zhang Chi

Background

Ghent University has always been a very strong player in Europe with regard to internationalisation. The fact that Ghent University, over the past few years, has been steadily improving its position in some important ranking systems, such as the Shanghai Ranking and the THE ranking, forms a strong factor for Ghent University to secure its reputation in the long term and strengthen its international network. Moreover, in order to meet this objective, Ghent University decided in 2013 that the establishment of a worldwide UGent Alumni Network should be one of its priorities.

With view on the implementation of a structured international alumni network at Ghent University and to avoid a patchwork of different approaches by our different regional platforms, Ghent University drafted a regional policy based on a few important general principles.

First, regions have clearly been outlined based on the number of alumni present in a specific region, the presence of a platform and Ghent University expertise in a certain region as well as already existing informal alumni networks or on special request of diplomatic posts abroad. On the basis of these criteria, Ghent University successfully established its first official network in China (Shanghai and Beijing, September 2013), followed by the Western Balkans (Skopje and Belgrade, October 2014), Vietnam (Hanoi, December 2014) and the U.S.A. (New York, May 2015).

China Chapter

As the China Platform had already established an alumni association for all Chinese students, researchers and visiting scholars who had spent some time at Ghent University, in the spring of 2011, the path for establishing an official alumni chapter had already partly been paved. This Chinese UGent Alumni Association included all Chinese students, researchers and visiting professors who spent at least one month at Ghent University in the framework of a degree, exchange, or other institutional cooperation programme at higher education level (such as

Erasmus Mundus). Its aim has always been to foster a mutually beneficial relationship between the university and its Chinese alumni.

By incorporating the already existing Chinese UGent-Alumni Association in the official China Chapter of the UGent Alumni Network, Ghent University can further promote its institution in China, attract a bigger number of alumni and it can keep track of the professional careers of its Chinese alumni. The official China Chapter is coordinated by a "Ghent University Ambassador", Mr Fan Peng, who closely cooperates with the representative of Ghent University in Beijing, Mr Chi Zhang.

The main activities of the China Chapter of the UGent Alumni Network are defined as follows:

- To serve as a bridge between Ghent University and the alumni in their professional careers, e.g. by means of distributing vacancies and attending in network events.
- To provide a forum through different social media channels, lectures, local network events, etc. for alumni to stay in touch with each other but also to offer current students and alumni nice opportunities to relate with one another, participate in continuing education programs and stay informed about Ghent University.
- To offer each Ghent University alumnus a chance to become a member of this network and thusly to be registered in the designated Ghent University alumni database. The alumni can also make use of the generic mailing address alumni@ugent.be.
- To involve the alumni in the Active Recruitment and Marketing Strategy of Ghent University by asking them to participate as a "Ghent University Ambassador" in certain education fairs, etc.
- To offer the alumni to attend events organised by network partners of Ghent University in



China, such as the Benelux Chamber of Commerce, the Belgian diplomatic posts, the local Belgian community, etc.

- To organise an annual conference for the members of the UGent Alumni Network.

The China Alumni Network has been very active in recent years and Mr Fan Peng continues to play a crucial role as the Ambassador of this network. Together with the Ghent University representative in China, he has organised the following events in China between 2014–2016.

- July 19, 2014, the UGent Alumni Network China Chapter had their first event in the *Refter Bar* in Shanghai
- October 29, 2014, reception in Shanghai for UGent alumni during the visit of the Rector of Ghent University, Prof. Anne De Paepe, to China.
- December 19, 2015, UGent Alumni China Event in Shanghai, Conference of “Discussion of consumers’ demands upgrade at Internet economy era in China” at incubator IPO Club.
- June 3, 2016, the UGent Alumni Network China Chapter was invited to participate in the Belgian East Flanders Province Investment Seminar during the Mission of Province East Flanders.
- June 3, 2016, the UGent Alumni Network China Chapter co-organised an event of the famous oil painter, Prof. Hu Zhenyu called “Hu Zhenyu’s One-man Paintings Exhibition”. Prof. Hu Zhenyu has studied and lived in Ghent for many years. During the exhibition, we could see views of Ghent and Belgium in his paintings. Prof. Kristiaan Versluys, Director of Educational Affairs, Mrs Inge Mangelschots, Coordinator of the China Platform, Mr Zhang Chi, representative of Ghent University in Beijing and “Ghent University Alumni Network Ambassador” Mr Fan Peng attended the official opening of the exhibition together with many Ghent University Alumni.

As a token of our appreciation for his brilliant paintings, we presented Prof. Hu Zhenyu with a T-shirt with the logo of Ghent University. For many of the alumni, these artworks brought back memories of their days in Ghent.

Upcoming events:

- December 2016, the UGent Alumni Network China Chapter will celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the China Platform by organising a big event in Shanghai.
- Date to be decided, Annual Conference



4 Activity report: achievements, events, missions and delegations

Mrs Inge Mangelschots

New publication: 10 Years China Platform. From Rabbit to Monkey. Further developments since the 5th Anniversary

For an overview of the activities in the first five years, we refer to the first book "[From Dog to Rabbit – 5 Years China Platform](http://www.ugent.be/chinaplatform/en/)". <http://www.ugent.be/chinaplatform/en/>
It goes without saying that it is impossible to list all the activities that take place every year, so we have chosen to highlight some main events or happenings per academic year.

2011 – 2012

Ghent University continued with its strong focus on internationalisation and again submitted several proposals in the framework of the [Erasmus Mundus Action 1 and 2 programme](#), which resulted in a few new projects. Out of these projects, there was one EM Action 2 project with focus on the region China and Southeast Asia, called "Lotus III".

To support Ghent University in building a strong internationalisation policy, the China Platform further strengthened its cooperation with the city of Ghent, the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce (FCCC), the Port of Ghent and the Province of East Flanders. With this "[strategic partnership on China](#)" growing stronger, the interaction of the different partners increased significantly. Ghent University participated in many events organised by one of these partners, who often join forces in order to bring a multi-faceted programme with visits and missions of high level delegations from China.

In September 2011, [Mr Domien Proost was appointed the new representative of the China Platform](#) and the Province of East Flanders in Beijing. The presence of a representative in Beijing remains an important element for the China Platform as it allows us to maintain and strengthen our network at all times and interact with our Chinese partners and Chinese students without being hampered by the time difference between Belgium and China. Furthermore, our representative in Beijing plays an important role in the search for new partners and funding possibilities in order to increase the mobility between Ghent University and China.

On 21 November 2011, Ghent University celebrated the [5th Anniversary of the China Platform](#) in the presence of many prominent guests such as H.E. Karel De Gucht and the Chinese Ambassador.

In February 2012, Ghent University became a [structural partner of the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce](#). This resulted in a meeting of professors from Ghent University with an interest in China with the FCCC during which they discussed opportunities for cooperation and stipulated several points of action for the next academic year.

On 18 April 2012, Ms Isabelle De Coen, coordinator of the China Platform, participated in [the first round of the EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue \(HPPD\) in Brussels](#). Ms Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth and Ms Liu Yandong, State Councillor of the People's Republic of China co-chaired the dialogue. The two leaders signed a Joint Declaration, by which they expressed their willingness to upgrade cooperation in people to people related areas with a view to contributing to the knowledge and common understanding between China and the EU, through the enhancement of contacts between the peoples of both sides.

In June 2012, [Ghent University participated in a Mission to China organised by the Province of East Flanders](#). During this mission, the Ghent University delegation visited different partner

institutions and undertook some prospection visits to potential future partners. Furthermore, the Provincial government signed a decision to offer financial support to research projects between Ghent University and the Hebei Province.



2012 – 2013

In September 2012, the [China Platform launched the "Lecture Café"](#). Through a series of monthly lectures the China Platform would like to put research with China by the different faculties in Ghent University in the spotlight. These lectures are open to students and staff from Ghent University as well as for external participants. One or more professors from Ghent University give the monthly lectures in order to present their specific activities in China and with China.

In September 2012, the China Platform also [joined the EU-China Higher Education Research Centre \(ECHE\)](#) that is being coordinated by the [Vrije Universiteit Brussel \(VUB\)](#).

To establish a general [international Alumni Network in Ghent University, China will serve as pilot project](#). It is the goal of Ghent University to build regional alumni networks within the frame of its general international umbrella network. The official launch of this Ghent University Alumni Network is planned for September 2013.

One of the highlights during this academic year was that the Department of Research Coordination established a programme for co-funding: with support from its [“Special Research Fund” \(BOF\), Ghent University will be able to provide co-funding for Chinese PhD students holding a PhD-grant from the Chinese Scholarship Council \(CSC\)](#). Candidates can apply for this co-funding through a call that will be launched every year. The co-funding includes financing for living and accommodation (about €5.400/year), insurance (about €500) and a bench fee for the promoter (€3.720/year).

As a result of the strong relationship with the Mission of China to EU in Brussels and with reference to the many positive outcomes for the Chinese students and Chinese partners of the LiSUM and Lotus projects, [Ghent University was nominated to be the coordinator for the official announcement of the scholarship opportunities for European students of the Chinese government in the framework of the EU-China Window](#). As a result of the EU-China High-Level People to People Dialogue, the Chinese government yearly offers 200 grants to European students.

2013 – 2014

The structural partnership between [Ghent University and the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce \(FCCC\) resulted in a big network event for Chinese students and Belgian companies that are member of the FCCC](#). In September 2013, [Ghent University and FCCC organised a joint economic mission to China headed by H.E. Kris Peeters, Flemish Minister-President](#). During this mission, Ghent University launched its Alumni Network in Shanghai and Beijing in September 2013 and concluded several agreements with partner institutions (Sichuan University, Capital Medical University in Beijing). A delegation of Ghent University headed by Rector Paul Van Cauwenberge went there for this event as part of the Economic mission. Furthermore, on 7 September 2013, the Rector of Ghent University also signed an agreement for the Joint Lab on Mycotoxin Research between Ghent University (Prof. Sarah De Saeger, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences) and Shanghai Jiaotong University.

[In February 2014, the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture of Ghent University hosted a “China Week” in close cooperation with the China Platform](#). During this week several lectures and workshops were organised with “China” as central theme. And in order to boost the outgoing mobility from Ghent University to China, Ms Isabelle De Coen gave a presentation on the different scholarship opportunities.

On 10 March 2014, the China Platform launched a “[Taiwan Week](#)” in cooperation with the Taipei Representative Office in the EU and Brussels. The Photo Exhibition “A Narrative of Light and Shadow, Female Photographers from Taiwan” featured the work of five Taiwanese female photographers, covering a rich variety of images ranging from portraits, humanitarian concerns, landscape and aboriginal culture. Furthermore, contemporary Taiwanese cinema culture was shown at Ghent University, screening two famous Taiwanese movies “Go Grandriders” and “Taipei Factory”.

During the [State Visit of the Chinese President, H.E. Xi Jinping, to Belgium from 31 March until 1 April 2014](#), Prime Minister Di Rupo and several Belgian Ministers signed the [agreement to establish a Joint Laboratory on Global Change and Food Security in the presence of President Xi Jinping](#). This as a result of the long cooperation of the Department of Geology of Ghent University (Prof. Eric Van Ranst) and the China Academy of Agricultural Sciences. As part of this State Visit, the Rector of Ghent University welcomed a delegation from Sichuan University headed by the President of Sichuan University, Prof. Xie Heping, and they signed the renewal of a Memorandum of Understanding to mark another milestone in the long-lasting cooperation between both universities in the fields of political sciences, engineering sciences and medicine.

On 1 April 2014, Ghent University organised its yearly [Job Fair for Doctoral Students](#). During this edition a special “China Corner” was built to put a stronger focus on China. The China Platform also helps in the preparatory phase of this event and put the organisers in contact with several corporate Belgian and Chinese FCCC members.

The [China Platform was also actively involved in the set-up of the Huawei Telecom Seeds Programme](#), which offers internships in Huawei Technologies (China) to 10 engineering students of Ghent University.

In July 2014, [Ghent University was part of a joint mission to Weihai \(China\) together with the city of Ghent](#). The city of Ghent namely signed a cooperation agreement with the city of Weihai during the EU-China Summit in 2013. The delegation was headed by Mr Daniel Termont, Mayor of the city of Ghent. During this mission, many valuable academic, commercial and political contacts were established. Ms Isabelle De Coen is also part of a Task Force that is responsible for developing a strategy to strengthen and expand the cooperation with Weihai. This Task Force also includes the City of Ghent, Flanders Investment and Trade and the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce.

2014 – 2015

On 8 October 2014, the Province of East Flanders accepted a [new regulation for subsidies to promote and support international cooperation initiatives of knowledge institutions from East Flanders](#). And since the implementation of this funding regulation, yearly five professors of Ghent University have enjoyed financing from the Province of East Flanders for one of their research projects with partners in the Hebei province.

At the end of [October 2014](#), [Rector Anne De Paepe headed a delegation during an official visit to China](#), organised by the China Platform. Other delegation members were Prof. Luc Taerwe, Prof. Guy Smagghe, Prof. Philippe De Maeyer, Prof. Guido Van Huylenbroeck, Prof. Sarah De Saeger, Prof. Bart Dessein and Prof. Marcel Aerts. The delegation visited several partner institutions, such as China Agricultural University, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Beijing Tongren Hospital, Shanghai Jiaotong University and Tongji University. During this visit three cooperation agreements were signed:

- Cooperation Agreement with Nanjing Agricultural University (Prof. Van Huylenbroeck, Faculty of Bioscience Engineering)
- Trilateral Memorandum of Understanding with the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography and the Turpan Bureau of Cultural Heritage (Prof. De Maeyer, Faculty of Sciences)
- Cooperation Agreement with China Agricultural University (Prof. Van Huylenbroeck, Faculty of Bioscience Engineering)

Furthermore, a network event was hosted both in the Belgian Embassy in Beijing as in the Belgian Consulate General in Shanghai with the UGent Alumni Network China Chapter. This mission was linked to a Mission of the Vice Governor of East Flanders and the Flanders-China Chamber of Commerce to China.



Together with the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy (Prof. Ann Heirman and Prof. Bart Dessein), the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (Prof. Em. Marc De Clercq) and the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences (Prof. Jan Orbie), the China Platform worked out the [“Taiwan Studies Programme at UGent/RUG/UGOE”](#) which will initially continue for five academic years from the effective date. The professorial fellowship that will be offered by the programme may be occupied by one or more people in sequence, with a minimum of four months and a maximum of eight months



per stay per year. The Professorial Fellow will teach a Taiwan Studies related course on one or more aspects of international relations in an East Asian context. The term 'international relations' broadly encompasses the areas of foreign policy, global and regional governance, international law, international political economy, IR theory, and security studies.

On 1 February 2015, [Mr Zhang Chi, succeeded Mr Domien Proost as representative of Ghent University and the Province of East Flanders in Beijing](#). The representative in Beijing offers support in the implementation of Ghent University's China policy in China; he keeps contact with the extensive network of universities, companies and government institutions in China, thus keeping track of all developments and changes in the academic and scientific landscape in China in order to detect new trends and opportunities. He also participates in the monthly meeting organised by the Belgian Embassy in Beijing for all the big Belgian stakeholders.

On 28 May 2015, [a delegation of 3 professors and 27 students from Dalian University of Technology \(DUT\) visited the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture of Ghent University](#). During the visit the focus was put on the fields of mechanical engineering and electrical technology. During a second visit on 26 October 2015, a cooperation agreement for student and staff exchange was signed in the presence of Vice Rector, Prof. Freddy Mortier.

In June 2015, [a delegation from Ghent University headed by Rector Anne De Paepe participated in the State visit of King Filip and Queen Mathilde to China](#). During this visit, the China Platform was responsible for the organisation of all the academic activities. Professors from Ghent University participated as speakers in a seminar about Cleantech and one about urbanisation and in an event about the cooperation with the China Academy of Sciences.

An agreement was signed for a Joint Lab between [Ghent University \(Prof. Sarah De Saeger, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences\), Shanghai Jiaotong University and the Shanghai Institute for Biological Sciences \(SIBS\)](#) and two other agreements were concluded:

- One cooperation agreement between the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture of Ghent University and Harbin Engineering University
- One Joint PhD agreement between the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences of Ghent University and Hebei Medical University (Faculty of Medicine).



On 3 July 2015, the European Commission visited Ghent University together with a group of Buddhist monks upon the suggestion of the former Prime Minister of China, H.E. WU Guixian. The goal of the visit was to have a general meeting with the Centre for Buddhist Studies of Ghent University to discuss Buddhism in Belgian and in Europe.

2015 – 2016

At the invitation of the Taiwanese government, Rector Anne De Paepe visited Taiwan from 3 until 7 November together with a delegation of professors from different faculties of Ghent University.

The delegation from Ghent University visited six institutes. With one of these institutes Ghent University already had a cooperation in the past (Academia Sinica) and with others Ghent University has established a close cooperation in the past few years, either on educational or on research level: National Chengchi University, National Sun Yat Sen University, National Pingtung University of Science and Technology and National Taiwan University. During their visit to the above-mentioned institutions the delegation came to a mutual agreement that they would take the necessary steps to further consolidate and intensify the existing ties.

The official visit of the Rector also offered an opportunity for the signing of one agreement: Cooperation agreement (CA) with The Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts (DILA) – (Christoph Anderl, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy). Furthermore, the parties involved from both sides agreed that following this visit, they will extend some existing cooperation projects and sign a few new agreements, e.g. an agreement with Academia Sinica, the biggest and most renowned research institute in Taiwan, was signed a few months after this visit.

On 1 February 2016, Ghent University joined The Brussels Academy for China and European Studies (BACES). BACES is an academic platform with four founding universities: Renmin University of China, Sichuan University, Fudan University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel. BACES was officially established on 31 March 2014. BACES acts as a critical think tank in support of the High-Level People-to-People Dialogue. The platform performs research on issues of contemporary China and the EU. Currently it is externally financed by the China Scholarship Council and Huawei (through a chair for Contemporary China Studies).

BACES–cluster: EU-China relations. Within BACES, the Ghent University EU-China relations research cluster welcomes research regarding the political, economic and cultural relations between the EU or EU countries and China. The research cluster is a joint initiative of the 'Centre for EU Studies' (CEUS) of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences (responsible professor: Jan Orbie) and the research group 'East Asian Culture in Perspective: Identity, Historical Consciousness, Modernity' (EACP) of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy (responsible professor: Bart Dessein).

EACP focuses in his research on the cultural and historical roots of modern East Asian societies, the historical consciousness of these societies and on the history of mutual interaction and exchange between Asian countries. CEUS is specialized in the external policies of the EU with emphasis on the bilateral relations of the EU with third countries, enlargement and neighborhood policy of the EU, and the EU's role in multilateral organizations. Through this unique combination the cluster offers expertise on policy making and implementation with a historical perspective applied to EU-China relations. This expertise may further complemented with other expertise available in the Ghent university China platform.

From 15 until 17 February 2016, Ghent University had the honour of welcoming a delegation from the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography (XIEG) of Chinese Academy of Sciences in China and the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences (UCAS). The three-day visit to Ghent University comprised a Workshop in Het Pand on 15 and 16 May and an official Welcome programme hosted by Prof. Guido Van Huylenbroeck, Academic Director for Internationalisation, on 17 May. The two-day workshop was organised by Prof. Philippe De Maeyer, Department of Geography, Faculty of Sciences in cooperation with Prof. Alishir Kurban from the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography (XIEG) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in China.

On Tuesday evening 16 February, the delegation attended the Chinese New Year Event of the Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce (BCECC) in the Egmont Palace in Brussels, where they met H.E. Mr Qu Xing, Ambassador of People's Republic of China to the Kingdom of Belgium.

On Wednesday 6 April, the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Kingdom of Belgium, H.E. Qu Xing, visited Ghent University with a few people of the Chinese Embassy at the invitation of Prof. Anne De Paepe, Rector of Ghent University. During his visit to Ghent University, the Ambassador also had a meeting with 26 Chinese students and researchers, currently studying and/or conducting research at Ghent University. During this session the Chinese students and researchers had the chance to discuss several matters regarding their time studying abroad and life in Ghent/Belgium with the Ambassador and his delegation. The visit officially concluded with a closing meeting during which several Ghent University professors received the chance to elaborate on their activities with China and discuss some new opportunities for cooperation with China.





From 9 until 12 May 2016, a delegation of five Taiwan universities visited Ghent University during three days. The goal: to strengthen existing partnerships and to explore new opportunities, both in terms of research and education. During the three-day “Taiwan Match-making Event” (9–12 May), five Taiwanese universities visited eight faculties at Ghent University. The goal is to discuss which research topics and specific plans are possible, for example in the form of joint doctoral programs. The visit to the faculties was preceded by a one-day symposium, including a discussion about the best strategy to establish and maintain a [sustainable cooperation](#). Student exchanges were discussed as well. The three-day event ended with a round-up session with the entire delegation. Represented Taiwanese universities were: National Sun Yat-Sen University, National Pingtung University of Science and Technology, National Taiwan University, National Cheng Kung University, National Chengchi University.

In May 2016, the Ambassador of Belgium in Beijing, H.E. Michel Malherbe brought an official visit to the [Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region](#). The main reason for his visit was the signing of the Joint Lab agreement between Ghent University and the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography. The establishment of this Joint Lab is a direct outcome of the close cooperation between Prof. Philippe De Maeyer, Department of Geography, Faculty of Sciences, Ghent University and Prof. Alishir Kurban, Associate professor from the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography (XIEG), Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) in China. Furthermore, a diploma was rewarded to the first double PhD degree student, Dr. Fang Gonghuan, who successfully defended her doctoral thesis on Sunday 22 May in front of a jury comprising Belgian and Chinese professors from the relevant domain.

In May 2016, Prof. Kristiaan Versluys, Director of Education (Dean of Studies) of Ghent University, officially represented Ghent University during the Mission of the Province East Flanders to China, which was jointly organised by VOKA East Flanders. He was accompanied by a small delegation from Ghent University that comprised Prof. Luc Taerwe,

Pro Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture and Director of the China Platform and Mrs Inge Mangelschots, Coordinator of the China Platform. The delegation from Ghent University visited five institutions in three different cities. With four of these institutions Ghent University already has a very active cooperation (Beijing Foreign Studies University, Tongji University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Hebei University). With the fifth one, the prestigious Tsinghua University, Ghent University signed a cooperation agreement in the presence of H.E. Geert Versnick, Vice Governor of East Flanders during this mission.

During their visit to the above-mentioned institutions, the delegation came to a mutual agreement that they would proceed taking the necessary steps to further consolidate the existing cooperation.

Furthermore, the delegation from Ghent University visited the Chinese Scholarship Council in Beijing, with whom Ghent University also has an agreement. The goal of this specific visit was to intensify the ongoing cooperation between Ghent University and CSC and to discuss the mobility flows of the CSC grant holders to and from Belgium.

On 8 September 2016, Ghent University had the honour of welcoming a delegation of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) headed by Prof. Dr. BAI Chunli, President of Chinese Academy of Sciences. Some members of the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography and the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences were also part of the delegation. During this visit Prof. Dr. Bai Chunli and Prof. Dr. Freddy Mortier, Vice Rector of Ghent University, unveiled the "Sino-Belgian Joint Laboratory of Geo-Information" Board in the framework of the agreement of the Joint Laboratory between Ghent University and the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, Chinese Academy of Sciences.



5 Partner universities in China

Mrs Elisabeth Velle, Mrs Rein Reynebeau

As the number of cooperation agreements with partner universities in China has increased significantly, we thought that the best way to give you a clear overview, was to provide you with a separate list of the different types of cooperation.

The majority of these cooperation agreements concern student and staff exchange, but the overview also shows that Ghent University is gaining ground in the field of establishing Joint Laboratory cooperation agreements, agreements on Collaborative Research and agreements for joint supervision and double degrees of doctoral research.

Furthermore, Ghent University is aware of the increasing importance of innovation through the triple helix concept. Currently, Ghent University does not count many multilateral agreements yet, but there are a few initiatives in the pipeline indicating that this will change in the near future.

CA = Cooperation Agreement

MoU = Memorandum of Understanding

ADD = addendum (if an existing agreement is being extended to an additional faculty)

LoI = Letter of Intent

1. Cooperation agreement for staff and student exchange

University	Type of cooperation	Start date	End date	
Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences	CA	8/30/2016	8/30/2021	
City University of Hong Kong	CA	9/28/2016	9/28/2021	
Fudan University	MoU+ADD	4/29/2015	4/29/2020	
Dalian University of Technology	CA	10/23/2015	10/23/2020	
East China University of Political Science and Law	CA	7/12/2016	7/12/2021	
Harbin engineering University	CA	8/27/2015	8/27/2020	
Harbin Institute of Technology Campus Weihai	CA	8/27/2015	8/27/2020	
Harbin Institute of Technology Campus Harbin	CA	12/11/2015	12/11/2020	
Hebei Medical University	CA	4/30/2015	4/30/2020	
Hebei University	CA	4/27/2016	4/27/2021	
Institute of Oceanology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences	CA	1/23/2013	1/23/2018	
Liaoning University	CA	12/3/2014	12/3/2019	
Liaoning University	CA China Semester	12/3/2014	12/3/2019	
Nanjing Agricultural University	CA+ADD	10/27/2014	10/27/2019	
Nanjing Normal University	CA	11/7/2012	11/7/2017	
Nanjing University	CA	9/2/2013	9/2/2018	
Peking University	CA	4/3/2015	4/3/2020	
Renmin University	CA	signing in progress		
Shanghai Ocean University	MoU+CA	6/2/2015	6/2/2020	
Sichuan University	CA	6/13/2012	6/13/2017	
	CA	9/3/2013	6/13/2017	
Shenyang University of Chemical Technology	CA	8/5/2015	8/5/2020	
South China University of Technology	CA	9/1/2012	9/1/2017	
Southwest University	CA	6/23/2015	6/23/2020	
Southwest University of Political Sciences and Law	CA	12/15/2011	12/15/2016	
Tianjin University of Science and Technology	CA	4/5/2012	4/5/2017	
Tongji University	CA	6/9/2014	6/9/2019	

	Duration	Faculty in Ghent University	Professor in charge
	5 years	Faculty of Sciences	Dominique Van Der Straeten
	5 years	Faculty of Economics and Business Administration	Ignace De Beelde
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy Faculty of Law Faculty of Economics and Business Administration	Marc De Vos, Marc De Clercq, Bart Dessein
	5 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Roel Baets
	5 years	Faculty of Law	Marc De Vos
	5 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Geert De Schutter
	5 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Ludwig Cardon
	5 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Ludwig Cardon
	5 years	Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences	Wei-Hong Zhang
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Bart Dessein
	5 years	Faculty of Sciences Faculty of Bioscience Engineering	Patrick Sorgeloos, Magda Vincx
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Ann Heirman
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Ann Heirman
	5 years	Faculty of Bioscience Engineering Faculty of Sciences	Guido Van Huylenbroeck, Wilfrieda Decraemer
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy Faculty of Sciences	Patrick Bultinck, Ann Heirman
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Ann Heirman
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Kristoffel Demoen, Ann Heirman, Bart Dessein, Christoph Anderl
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Ann Heirman
	5 years	Faculty of Bioscience Engineering	Peter Bossier
	5 years	Faculty of Political and Social Sciences	Jan Orbie
	5 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture: addendum, runs together with CA	Luc Taerwe
	5 years	Faculty of Sciences	Pascal Van Der Voort
	5 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Wilfried Philips, A. Pizurica
	5 years	Faculty of Bioscience Engineering	Guy Smagghe
	5 years	Faculty of Law	Hans De Wulf
	5 years	Faculty of Bioscience Engineering	Patrick Sorgeloos
	5 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture Faculty of Arts and Philosophy Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences	Luc Taerwe, Ann Heirman, Claus Bachert

Wuhan University Law School	CA	9/24/2013	9/24/2018	
Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, Chinese Academy of Sciences	CA	4/3/2012	4/3/2017	
Zhejiang University	ADD	1/23/2015	1/23/2020	
	ADD	1/23/2015	1/23/2020	

Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts	CA	12/11/2015	12/11/2020	
National Chengchi University	CA	24/10/2012	24/10/2017	
National Sun Yat-sen University	CA	5/10/2014	5/10/2019	
	ADD	14/01/2016	5/10/2019	
National Taiwan University	CA	14/01/2014	14/01/2019	
	CA	16/04/2015	16/04/2020	

2. Memorandum of Understanding

University	Type of cooperation	Start date	End date	
Fudan University	MoU+ADD	4/29/2015	4/29/2020	
Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (Beijing)	MoU	11/20/2004	/	
Ocean University of China	MoU	4/8/2013	4/8/2018	
Shanghai Ocean University	MoU+CA	6/2/2015	6/2/2020	
Sichuan University	MoU	4/1/2014	4/1/2017	
Southwest University	MoU	8/27/2015	8/27/2020	
The Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences	MoU	11/13/2013	11/13/2018	
Xinjiang Turpan Bureau of Cultural Heritage	MoU	10/27/2014	10/27/2019	
Zhejiang University	MoU	1/23/2015	1/23/2020	
Asia Euro Automobile Manufacturing (Taizhou)	MoU	5/17/2016	5/17/2019	

National Taiwan University	MoU	27/11/2013	27/11/2018	
Academia Sinica	MoU	2/02/2016	2/02/2019	

	5 years	Faculty of Law	Hans De Wulf
	5 years	Faculty of Sciences	Philippe De Maeyer
	5 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Luc Taerwe, Jan Vanhellemont
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Kristoffel Demoen, Bart Dessein, Ann Heirman, Christof Anderl

	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Christoph Anderl
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Bart Dessein
	5 years	Faculty of Economics and Business Administration	Alex Vanderstraeten
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Ann Heirman
	5 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Daniel Dezutter
	5 years	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Ann Heirman

	Duration	Faculty in Ghent University	Professor in charge
	5 jaar	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy Faculty of Law Faculty of Economics and Business Administration	Marc De Vos, Marc De Clercq, Bart Dessein
	/	Faculty of Bioscience Engineering	Oswald Van Cleemput, Pascal Boeckx
	5 jaar	Faculty of Bioscience Engineering	Peter Bossier
	5 jaar	Faculty of Bioscience Engineering	Peter Bossier
	3 jaar	Faculty of Political and Social Sciences Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Fabienne Bossuyt, Ludwig Cardon, Luc Taerwe
	5 jaar	Faculty of Bioscience Engineering	Guy Smagghe
	5 jaar	Faculty of Sciences	Erik Van Ranst
	5 jaar	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy Faculty of Sciences	Philippe De Maeyer, Jean Bourgeois
	5 jaar	all faculties	Luc Taerwe, Jan Vanhellemont, Kristoffel demoen, Ann Heirman
	3 jaar	Faculty of Economics and Business Administration	Veronique Limère

	5 jaar	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Daniel Dezutter
	3 jaar	Faculty of Arts and Philosophy	Christoph Anderl

3. Letter of Intent

University	Type of cooperation	Start date	End date	
Tsinghua University	Lol	7/14/2016	14/0/2017	
Zhejiang University	Lol	1/20/2016	1/20/2017	

4. Other types of agreements

University	Type of cooperation	Start date	End date	
Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences	Agreement Joint Laboratory	3/31/2014	3/31/2019	
East China University	ADD	5/12/2015	5/12/2018	
Beijing Foreign Studies University	A Dutch Year Programme Agreement	7/8/2015	7/8/2020	
Shanghai Jiao Tong University / Shanghai Institutes of Biological Sciences	Joint Laboratory collaboration agreement	12/8/2015	12/8/2020	
Tongji University / Shanghai Construction Group	Joint Laboratory for Industrial Construction	signing in progress		
Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, Chinese Academy of Sciences	Sino-Belgian Joint Laboratory of Geo-information	24/5/2016	24/5/2021	

CA = Cooperation Agreement

MoU = Memorandum of Understanding

ADD = addendum (if an existing agreement is being extended to an additional faculty)

Lol = Letter of Intent

	Duration	Faculty in Ghent University	Professor in charge
	1 year	Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences	Jan Philippé
	1 year	Faculty of Bioscience Engineering	Guy Smagghe

	Duration	Faculty in Ghent University	Professor in charge
	5 years	Faculty of Bioscience Engineering	Eric Van Ranst
	3 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Rik Van de Walle
	5 years	University Language Center (UCT)	
	5 years	Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences	Sarah De Saeger
	5 years	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	Luc Taerwe
	5 years	Faculty of Sciences	Philippe De Maeyer



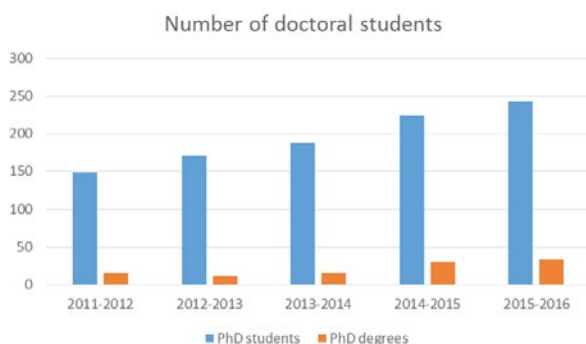
6 Research cooperation with Chinese universities anno 2020

Dr. Dirk De Craemer

Head of the Research Coordination Office, Research Department, Ghent University

Ghent University professors have numerous contacts with their counterparts in Chinese universities and research institutes. These contacts sometimes remain just contacts or even perish overtime but a number of them evolve towards a true research collaboration and lead to new insights and research output. The number of research collaborations between Ghent University and Chinese partners is growing and this is not only reflected by the number of student exchanges but is also confirmed by the number of junior Chinese researchers that opt for Ghent University as institution to obtain a PhD degree.

Over the last five academic years the [number of Chinese PhD students increased with more than 60%](#): in the academic year 2011–2012, 149 Chinese PhD students enrolled at Ghent University. In the academic year 2015–2016, the number of Chinese PhD students increased to 243. In addition the number of junior Chinese researchers obtaining a PhD degree at Ghent University is also increasing over the years from 15 (in the academic year 2011–2012) to 33 (in the academic year 2015–2016). This stands for an increase of 120%.



Successful research collaborations may also result in co-publications. Based on the publications covered by the Web of Science, the number of co-publications between Ghent University researchers and researchers affiliated to Chinese universities and research institutes show an uninterrupted increase in number of co-publications: from 35 co-publications in 2006 to 336 co-publications in 2015. Preliminary data on the number of already published co-publications in 2016 (source: Web of Science) suggest that the total number of co-publications between Ghent University and Chinese research partners in 2016 will surpass the number of co-publications of 2015.



Furthermore, the number of requests for a Joint PhD agreement is increasing yearly, so we are convinced that the possibilities to continue, strengthen and widen the cooperation with our partner institutions in China in the field of research will remain and that many of the departments in Ghent University, that currently have an active collaboration with China will choose to keep their focus on China in the years to come. We also hope that, based on the successful experiences by these departments, other Ghent University departments, for which China is still an unexplored frontier, will consider to set up collaborations with China in the next years.

Academic year	Total number of defences	Defences of Joint PhDs with a Chinese partner university
2005–2006	2	0
2006–2007	7	0
2007–2008	9	0
2008–2009	12	0
2009–2010	14	0
2010–2011	19	1
2011–2012	25	4
2012–2013	32	3
2013–2014	30	0
2014–2015	45	0
2015–2016	53	4
2016–2017	already 2	Several expected in the coming months

- First defence of a joint PhD on 19 Mai 2006
- Expectations of the Coordination team for Joint PhD in Ghent University: the number will keep rising steadily
- 741 entries in the Joint PhD database = joint PhDs awarded, joint PhDs with an agreement and joint PhDs in negotiation
- (Numbers on 10 Nov. 2016)



7 EU and China: the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects LiSUM and Lotus

Mrs Inge Mangelschots

former project manager of the LiSUM and Lotus projects, International Relations Office,
Ghent University

EU and China: why we regret the disappearance of Erasmus Mundus Action 2 (EMA2)

A case study through the LiSUM and Lotus projects

LiSUM and Lotus (I, II, III and Lotus Unlimited) are five exchange projects financed by the European Commission in the framework of the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 programme (formerly known as Erasmus Mundus External Window launched by the European Commission in 2006).

Aim of this programme:

- To contribute to the mutual enrichment of societies by developing the qualifications of men and women so that they possess appropriate skills, particularly regarding the labour market, and are open-minded and internationally experienced;
- To promote mobility both for students, researchers, academics and administrative staff from third countries, especially from vulnerable groups, selected on the basis of academic excellence, to obtain qualifications and/or experience in the European Union;
- To contribute towards the development of human resources and the international cooperation capacity of higher education institutions in third countries through increased mobility streams between the EU and third countries in accordance with the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

The LiSUM project was the first project and focused entirely on the cooperation with China. It was coordinated by the International Relations Office at Ghent University and its consortium existed of ten European and ten Chinese universities. Our partner universities in China were strategically chosen, partly in consultation with the China Platform, in order to guarantee that the project would not only reach the beating economic heart of China but also its rural areas.

- Budget: 4,592,150 euros
- Eligibility period: 15 July 2009 – 14 July 2013
- Incoming and outgoing mobility
- Total number of scholarships granted: 247 (73 European and 174 Chinese grant holders)

Zhejiang University – ZJU (PR China): *Mobility does not only entail an exchange of knowledge, experience and technology, but also an input of financial resources to the host universities. As China continues to deepen its "Opening up-policy" to the outside world in the context of globalisation, the internationalisation of the higher educational institutions is inevitable.*

Currently, Ghent University still has active cooperation agreements with 7 of the 10 Chinese partners of this consortium, i.e.:

- Liaoning University
- Nanjing University
- Peking University
- Sichuan University
- Southwest University of Political Science and Law
- Tongji University
- Zhejiang University

However, it must be stressed that there is still cooperation between the three other Chinese universities as well, outside of the framework of a concrete cooperation agreement, e.g. Xi'an Jiaotong University, Wuhan University and the University of Science and Technology.



Lotus I, II, III and Lotus Unlimited

LOTUS – Linking Organisations Through University Synergies

Unlike LiSUM, the Lotus project involves not only China but the whole of Southeast Asia. To be more specific, the consortium includes six countries: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. The partners in this project are nine European and eleven Southeast Asian universities.

Since 2010, Ghent University has been coordinating four EMA2 projects in the Asia Regional cluster. By communicating with all the partners and associates on a regular basis; respecting the instructions, advice and comments of EACEA (the agency of the European Commission), learning from the best practices of our partners and fellow project coordinators; by constantly working on strengthening and expanding our network in that specific region and involving the relevant authorities in the third countries in question, the consortium has succeeded in establishing a strong, interactive and well-balanced partnership. A “family” as it were, in which all the members are being treated equally and are aware of their responsibilities and the role they should fulfil within the partnership.

Thanks to the strong feeling of solidarity that was established over the past six years, the partnership was able to provide the Asian partner universities with specific expertise especially in the field of International Student Support and the general management of mobility, ECTS, academic recognition and internationalisation in general. The partner universities that were less experienced with Erasmus Mundus Action 2 projects were able to learn from the best practices of some of the stronger partners, which led to real and concrete outcomes (e.g. the restructuring of International Relations Offices; incorporation of guest lectures by staff from the EU partner universities into some third country partner institutions' curricula; the introduction of Portuguese language courses in some of the Chinese partner institutions etc.)





Lotus I

- Budget: 2,463,375 euros
- Eligibility period: 15 July 2010 – 14 July 2014
- Incoming mobility from China and Southeast Asia only.
- Total number of scholarships granted: 150

Chen Qiuju – Postdoc exchange – from Shanghai Institute of Planned Parenthood Research to Ghent University: *This is a good chance to express my gratitude to the project team of the Lotus project. I have spent three months in Ghent University last year (2013). I really had many impressive experiences although the mobility duration was too short. The most important points are the direct contact with the “daily life and the spirit of Europe”. The big differences between Ghent and my home city resulted in a broader mind of thinking. I enjoyed myself in the beautiful churches and art exhibitions. I directly faced the eternal beauty, and experienced the strong influence of the culture and faith. The inspiration and enlightenments will be unconsciously influencing my way of thinking and my choices in the future.*

Lotus II

- Budget: 1.999.950,00 euros
- Eligibility period: 15 July 2011 – 14 July 2015
- Incoming mobility from China South East Asia only.
- Total number of scholarships granted: 105

Nanjing University – NJU (China): *Students who have received grants through the Lotus II project can have better chances to be successful in the job interview of international joint ventures, or be given an internship opportunity. For instance, some students got an internship in an international company. According to our students, many international companies showed great interest in our students' mobility stay in the European countries. This study experiences will surely assist students to distinguish themselves from other competitors.*

Lotus III

- Budget: 2.499.875,00 euros
- Eligibility period: 15 July 2012 – 14 July 2016
- Incoming mobility from China and Southeast Asia only.
- Total number of scholarships granted: 127

Sichuan University – SCU (PR China): *We do our best to get more cooperation between partners, for example, with VUB: both Chinese and European sides have officially opened the Brussels Academy for China and European Studies (BACES) on September 6th, 2014 in Beijing. At the end of 2014, SCU handed in the official application to CSC in Beijing for the PhD double degree and joint training of PhD in the framework of BACES, in order to get funding from the CSC. To support SCU's existing cooperation and graduates' mobility and also to encourage and enable the double PhD degree, the European partner supervisors include professors from VUB and Ghent University.*

On 1 February 2016, Ghent University was officially included as a partner of BACES. BACES is an academic platform initiated by four founding universities: Renmin University of China, Sichuan University, Fudan University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel. BACES was officially established on 31 March 2014 and was inaugurated by Vice Premier Liu Yandong and EU-Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou on 6 September 2014, on the occasion of the 2nd High-Level People-to-People Dialogue in Beijing.

BACES is a platform for exchanging academic ideas, supporting academic activities and for promoting understanding between Chinese and European people. The Academy mandated to carry out activities in the field of post-initial education, research, academic services including policy advice, and is supported by scholarship schemes. BACES acts as a critical think tank in support of the High-Level People-to-People Dialogue. The platform performs research on issues of contemporary China and the EU. It is currently externally financed by the China Scholarship Council and Huawei (through a chair for Contemporary China Studies).

Lotus Unlimited

- Budget: 3.049.425,00 euros
- Eligibility period: 15 July 2013 – 14 July 2017
- Incoming and outgoing mobility
- Total number of scholarships granted: 206

Quote from Nanjing University: *As Lotus Unlimited is coming to an end and the application of both students and staff mobility from Asia to EU has been closed, Nanjing University will no longer be able to send applicants to EU partners and receive candidates from EU partners in the framework of this project in the future. But as a host institution, Nanjing University will always be willing to accept mobility from the EU Partners and will continue to find ways to send its students and researchers to its partner institutions in Europe.*

One of the accomplishments of the above-mentioned projects:

It has always been greatly appreciated that EU-partners from the LiSUM and Lotus projects hosted so many Chinese students in the framework of the Erasmus Mundus Action 2 programme of the European Commission.

So, in the framework of China-EU High-Level People-to-People Dialogue (HPPD), the mission of PR China to the EU continues to provide the scholarship “EU Window” in 2015. This programme offers a full scholarship for students and scholars, who are citizens of an EU member state.

The total number of scholarships for the academic year 2015–2016 was 149. Applicants from Ghent University and the partner universities from the former LiSUM project and the Lotus projects remain a priority.

Continuation in the framework of Erasmus+:

- Given the success of the LiSUM and Lotus partnerships in establishing a real “family”, all the partners agreed that we MUST continue to involve each other in the projects that we coordinate in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme that was established in 2015.
- In this aspect, Ghent University has done well. The former projects namely paved the way for several new sustainable contacts which lead to many types of collaboration. When it comes to mobility of students/researchers/staff, cooperation agreements or bilateral agreements will stay the most sustainable cooperation models, but at the moment funding remains, of course, the biggest issue.

- The newly established Erasmus+ programme provides possibilities to continue the cooperation between several partner institutions and Ghent University remains a big player in this field.

But it remains an issue, in particular with view on the further cooperation with China and other regions, to secure other ways of funding towards the future in order to guarantee a smooth flow of two-way mobility.

Through hard times and good times the LiSUM and Lotus consortia aimed to achieve a high level of sustainability through institutional cooperation and trust amongst the partners and were able to establish a "Family for life"



Wonderful Experience of Studying Abroad

Zhou Caicai (alias)

Master degree student in the framework of the Lotus II project,
member of ngo Morning Tears

In 2012, I was granted a scholarship in the framework of the Lotus project, which offered me the opportunity to go to Ghent University for my master studies. And time goes fast indeed: already two years have passed since my graduation. But I can still remember many precious moments during my study period at Ghent University. Life was so beautiful over there.

I can still clearly remember my first “school day”. It was the first time that I met my classmates. We were asked to introduce ourselves one by one. At the end of the welcoming event, our programme coordinator informed us that in total there were 35 international students for this Master programme, coming from more than 20 countries. This made me a bit hesitant to interact with the group in the beginning but then I became so excited when I realised how much we could learn from each other.

One of the biggest challenges for me was to remember my classmates' names. It took me several days to remember all of them. During the two years' study in Ghent University, I was satisfied with all the aspects: our campus was very beautiful and equipped with advanced facilities; the professors were very knowledgeable and people in general were very friendly and kind. In short, everything was wonderful.

In addition to this, the school offered many international study and research opportunities. I myself was given the opportunity to conduct research in Sri Lanka and I got an internship in an international institute in Rome (Italy).

During the weekends, there were a lot of workshops, theme parties and other activities for international students. Sometimes international students were encouraged to bring a typical dish from their home country so that this could be shared with the entire group. I enjoyed these activities very much, because they gave me the chance to taste new and very delicious dishes. And in certain cases also hear the stories behind them.

I have made so many friends from all around the world and am still in touch with most of them. In the holiday periods, I travelled to many places which I dreamt of. I have visited France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Spain, Switzerland etc. What a wonderful memory these visits are.

During my two year-study period, the China platform supported me a lot. And the people from the Lotus project management team were very friendly and professional. No matter what trouble I was in or which problem I encountered, they always did their best to help me. All this made me feel safe and comfortable when I was abroad. I would also like to grab this opportunity to thank and express my appreciation for Prof. Patrick Van Damme and my tutor Kaat Verzelen as well as the ngo Morning Tears, that is associated member of the Lotus projects. They all helped me a lot both with my academic activities as in my daily life. In fact, it is thanks to my connection with the ngo Morning Tears that I was given the chance to apply as a candidate belonging to a vulnerable group. It has namely always been one of the objectives of the European Commission in the framework of its Erasmus Mundus Action 2 programme to promote mobility both for students, researchers, academics and administrative staff from third countries, especially from vulnerable groups, selected on the basis of academic excellence, to obtain qualifications and/or experience in the European Union.

It turns out that going abroad was my best experience so far. Even now that I have been back to my home country for more than two years, I still always think of Ghent and the people over there. For me it is my second hometown!



8 Chinese Students and Scholars Association in Ghent (ChiSAG) 根特中国学生学者联合会

Ms Ma Lingshan, Mr Liu Xiaojie

For many years now, the China Platform at Ghent University has had a very close and active cooperation with the Chinese Students and Scholars Association Ghent (ChiSAG).

ChiSAG is an association for all Chinese students and scholars in Ghent. It creates a platform through which Chinese students – and by extension also all Chinese citizens living and working in Ghent – can find and meet each other through several types of social media (such as WeChat, forum and mailing-list, etc.), and different types of activities. Besides academic activities, cultural events, sports games/competitions and informal get-togethers, ChiSAG also hosts an annual welcome event for new students at the start of each academic year and a “Chinese New Year” celebration to start the new year in a festive way together with all students and scholars as well as Chinese residents in Ghent and foreign friends. ChiSAG closely cooperates with Education Section, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Kingdom of Belgium, which provides financial support for many of the financial activities.

The China Platform sponsors the Chinese New Year event of ChiSAG for a small amount and every year ChiSAG can count on the presence of several academic and administrative staff members from Ghent University, who participate in a close cooperation with China in the field of education and/or research.

For the past two years, Prof. Guido Van Huylenbroeck, Academic Director of Internationalisation of Ghent University, had the honour of giving the keynote speech during the Chinese New Year event. Ghent University has offered the accommodation for this event on many occasions during the past years.

This year, CHISAG – under the chairmanship of Ma Lingshan – started with a new initiative called the “Chinese Academic Salon in Ghent”, which aims to build a platform for Chinese students and scholars in Ghent to share their research in different fields and find cooperation opportunities not only abroad but also for after their return back to China. This activity takes place on a monthly basis during the academic year.



Other recurring events are:

- The famous and festive Chinese New Year Event
- The yearly Welcome Event for Chinese newcomers, sometimes followed by an academic seminar
- Day-trips to famous touristic spots in Belgium/Europe, such as trips to Keukenhof, Luxembourg, etc.
- Many Chinese sports matches, such as table tennis, basketball and football matches, etc.
- Informal get-togethers and cooking activities
- Lectures in or outside the framework of the Chinese Academic Salon in Ghent

Furthermore, the China Platform and ChiSAG share a lot of information about each other's events and opportunities that arise for the Chinese students and scholars. Examples are the traineeships offered by the Flemish-Chinese Chamber of Commerce (FCCC), the China Career Day organised by the Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce (BCECC), vacancies for Chinese students in both Belgium and China, voluntary work, etc.

The Chinese Students and Scholars Association Ghent mainly operates through several popular Chinese social media channels: online platform, www.gente.be, WeChat public page, 根特学联, Sina Weibo, www.weibo.com/chisag2013.

They also established their own Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/GentChisag/>

In October 2016, the annual election of the new board of ChiSAG took place. The newly elected Board of ChiSAG now comprises a Chairman and six members.

This year, the Board of ChiSAG comprises doctoral researchers and a Master student from the different faculties in Ghent University.

Board ChiSAG – academic year 2016–2017:

- 刘晓杰 Xiaojie Liu – PhD student, Department of Biology, Faculty of Sciences: Chairman
- 龚盼 Pan Gong – PhD student, Department of Plant Biotechnology and Bioinformatics, Faculty of Sciences: Vice-chairman in charge of public relations
- 万新宇 Xinyu Wan – PhD student, Department of Biosystems Engineering, Faculty of Bioscience Engineering: Vice-chairman in charge of organisation
- 金春莲 Chunlian Jin – PhD student, Department of Plant production, Faculty of Bioscience Engineering: Vice-chairman in charge of finance
- 竺丹雯 Danwen Zhu- Master student, Department of Sustainable material science, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, Vice-chairman in charge of literature and art
- 曹湛 Zhan Cao – PhD student, Department of Geography, Faculty of Sciences: Vice-chairman in charge of propaganda
- 张佩华 Peihua Zhang – PhD student, Department of Biology, Faculty of Sciences: Vice-chairman in charge of organisation



清真牛肉王

9 Findings of the long-lasting cooperation with China: different perspectives towards the future

1. APS – The compulsory screening procedure for Chinese students: a sound procedure or an obstacle?
2. The Ghent University China Semester of the Department of Chinese Language and Culture
3. Food safety in Belgium and China
4. Centre for EU Studies: participation and contribution Summer School Sichuan University, Chengdu
5. Collaboration between Ghent University and the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, CAS
6. The uneven insertion of Chinese cities in the global economy
7. Airway disease in Belgium and China – what we learned from the differences
8. Environmental law cooperation with China
9. Chinese exchange students learn Dutch at Ghent University
10. Case Study: ICRH's activities in China from 2011 to 2016 (from the Year of the Rabbit to the Year of the Monkey)
11. China and school autonomy. An example of research set up in the Flanders-China collaboration
12. Cooperation with Chinese partner institutions: some research and practice-based reflections
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14. China: a fascinating experience

1. APS – The compulsory screening procedure for Chinese students: a sound procedure or an obstacle?

Prof. Em. Dr. ir. Guido Van Oost

Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, Department of Applied Physics, Ghent University

Preface

All Chinese students who want to study in Flanders with qualifications obtained in China are first submitted to an APS screening in China. APS stands for *Akademische Prüfstelle* (Academic Evaluation Centre). In cooperation with the '*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*' (DAAD; German Academic Exchange Agency), this service agency (www.aps.org.cn) belongs to the *Kulturreferat* (Cultural Department) of the German Embassy.

From 2001 onwards, APS has constituted a sort of entrance gate, where a Chinese student – after successful assessment – receives a certificate so that she or he can apply for a visa at the embassy. At the end of 2006 the *Ministry of Education & Training* of the Flemish Community entered into an agreement with Germany. Hence Chinese students who want to study in Germany and Belgium, but also in Austria, go through the same procedure. As a compensation for using the APS system, Flanders sends two academic evaluators to the APS each year to take part in the interviews over a total period of about a month.

After a renewed call in November 2015 I was assigned by the Flemish Community as an expert to participate in the academic evaluation

work of candidate students for Germany/Flanders at the APS centres in Beijing and Shanghai, for the first time in May 2016.

Procedure

At any time in the year a student can only apply to APS if s/he has completed at least one semester at one of the Chinese 'Project 211' universities (211 gongcheng) or if s/he has completed at least three semesters at another official Chinese university, and if s/he successfully completed 12 years of pre-university schooling.

The screening procedure comprises two parts: (1) verification of all documents provided and (2) an academic interview before a jury of two academic evaluators, one of whom, the more experienced in the student's discipline, poses the questions, while the other writes the minutes of the interview. In order to avoid fraud, all submitted documents (including supplements with detailed study results) are checked at APS for authenticity by Chinese logistical advisors. They contact the home institution of the student directly as well as the database of the Chinese Ministry of Education.

The interviews take place in the APS centres in Beijing or Shanghai or distributed over the year in Chengdu and Guangzhou during some

previously announced weeks. The following candidates are exempted from the interview: students with a CSC grant (China Scholarship Council), students from Chinese higher education institutions with whom Ghent University has concluded a bilateral cooperation agreement, and students who are studying in the framework of an Erasmus+ programme or a Flemish-Chinese agreement. For these candidates, the APS only conducts a document screening without interview.

Before the interview, the candidate is first asked to prepare and/or solve one or two short problems or exercises from the 'major' subject (preferably main subjects) for twenty minutes in a closed room in which the use of a mobile phone or other electronic device or any aid other than the locally available bilingual dictionaries is forbidden.

The interview is a continuation of the examination of documents and usually lasts twenty minutes. At the interview, which can take place in German or English or both for students applying for Germany but must be in English for those applying for Flanders, candidates have to present themselves, their discipline/training/preparatory courses and their study plans for Germany/Flanders in a concise manner. The candidate orally explains her/his solution of the posed problems, the evaluator tests if the s/he understands the content of a couple of courses chosen at random and certain topics related to those subjects are checked in depth.

In this process, it is crucial that the candidates are sounded out about their ready and applicable knowledge. Candidates who have already finished one higher education cycle are asked to describe and explain the outcomes of their thesis/final project. When the candidate comes

back for the second or third time s/he is also asked about the reasons for previous failures and what they have done in the meantime. There also asked to clarify the future study plans and possibly where they are planning to study in Germany/Flanders.

The interviewers are asked to take the utmost account of the cultural differences between the candidate and the evaluator, and to be kind and patient with the candidates who are often nervous.

The minutes written during the interview briefly record the questions of the evaluator and the answers of the candidates. They also offer assessments of the candidate's language proficiency (very good, good, restricted or very restricted) and subject-specific knowledge (assuming that proficiency in the language was sufficient for this to be assessed at all).

Finally, it is decided whether the candidate can present his or her knowledge in a way that matches his/her university documents, or whether this feasibility check could not be verified due to lack of knowledge of languages other than Chinese.



If the outcome of the screening is positive, the candidate receives an APS certificate after which s/he can apply to the German/Belgian Embassy for a student visa and submit study applications to specific higher-education institutions in Germany/Flanders.

Candidates pay about 200€ for the document verification and the interview. If no interview is required, the cost is 110€. However, the China Platform refunds these amounts to all Chinese students who enrol at Ghent University.

Comments

The APS certificate represents a fair indicator of the subject and language level of the students, guarantees the authenticity of the documents provided and yields a gain in precious time for student administrations in Europe.

The total number of Chinese students in the EU in 2010 was about 120,000 and generally concentrated in the fields of technology/engineering and economics/business. The number of applicants for Germany/Belgium/Austria is rapidly growing (10,000 per year; 20% increase per year). More than 60% of candidates for Germany opt for engineering. Since 2006, 4500 students have applied at APS for Belgium (318 in 2007; 640 in 2015); 81% in Flanders, 19% in Wallonia. About 65 % of interviewed candidates succeed at their first attempt. However, certain candidates apply for a second and even a third interview. Overall, about 85% of the candidates finally get a certificate.

Candidates for Flanders score on average better at APS because they have usually already previously been screened and accepted by a Flemish university.

The vast majority of the students are self-funded; more and more Chinese families can afford to pay education abroad. An increasing number of students is returning to China. Students think more carefully about where and what they will study abroad, and are seeking value for money on the international education market. When Chinese students are asked to give their reasons for wanting to study in Germany, the vast majority cite the very low costs involved. There is, then, no indication that higher tuition fees would attract more Chinese students.

(Statistical data was kindly provided by the APS, on 3 November 2016)

2. The Ghent University China Semester of the Department of Chinese Language and Culture

Prof. Dr. Ann Heirman

Department of Languages and Cultures of South and East Asia, Ghent University

Studying a language is never an easy undertaking. It becomes an even bigger challenge when one tries to learn a language that belongs to a different language family and that is part of a faraway cultural context. For students who have never tried to study a language such as Chinese, it is difficult to know what awaits them when they take upon themselves the task to become fluent in Chinese. Chinese indeed is very different, both in its linguistic and in its cultural dimensions. Andreas Guder summarised this in an interesting article entitled "The Chinese Writing System as Third Dimension of Foreign Language Learning" (in: Andreas Guder, Jiang Xin, and Wan Yexin (eds), 汉字的认知与教学 – *The Cognition, Learning and Teaching of Chinese Characters*, Beijing: Beijing Language

and Culture University Press (2007), 17–32). In this article, he aptly describes the difficulties but also the victories students will experience during their studies, and he demonstrates that Chinese in all its dimensions is very distant from German (in our case Dutch). Confronted with the linguistic and cultural difficulties students encounter when learning Chinese, the language courses of the Department of Chinese Language and Culture of Ghent University intensively focus on both linguistic and cultural aspects of Chinese/China. Still, we also felt a strong need for a Chinese partner who could help us achieving our aim: making students familiar with Chinese language and culture and training them to speak and write Chinese in a culturally relevant way.



Linguistic dimensions

Chinese differs from Dutch in virtually all linguistic aspects: phonetically, morphologically, syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically. We all know that Chinese sounds very differently from Dutch, and that it is a tonal language. Especially the tonality of Chinese makes it a very difficult language for students to understand (oral comprehension) and to speak – two elements that are intrinsically connected. In a tonal language, the meaning of words changes with the change of the tone, and so the four Chinese tones need to be trained intensively. Moreover, Chinese contains a large number of consonants that are unknown in Dutch – ‘tongue breakers’ one could call them. Dealing with all these sounds requires a sustained effort by students, and may result in a perceived slowdown of the language learning process.

Morphologically, Chinese might look simple at the start. Unlike European languages, Chinese does not know any conjugation or declension, no plural or singular, no masculine or feminine forms. The absence of such information channels we are used to, does not mean that all

these notions are non-existent in Chinese. Chinese uses syntax and semantics to denote them. This shift is at times difficult to digest, certainly for young students who do not particularly like syntax. Still, syntactical analysis is what is needed to (de)construct a Chinese sentence. Luckily for us, the word order of Chinese resembles what we know in Dutch: Subject (S) – Verb (V) – Object O, but contrary to Dutch, Chinese does (nearly) not make use of inversion. So, a Dutch sentence like ‘Wat ziet hij?’ (‘What sees he?’) is impossible in Chinese that consistently takes the order SVO: ‘Ta jian shenme’ (‘He sees what?’). Many other examples of syntactical differences could be given. Moreover, Chinese is a topic-prominent language, contrary to subject-prominent languages such as Dutch. When speaking a topic-prominent language, a speaker has to focus on the information structure and the situational context in which sentences are spoken. Known information (topic) tends to come first, and is followed by data on this topic.

Semantically, there is a gigantic gap between Chinese and Dutch. There are nearly no parallel words, apart from a few onomatopoeia, such as ‘mama’ (mother). All words are thus new,



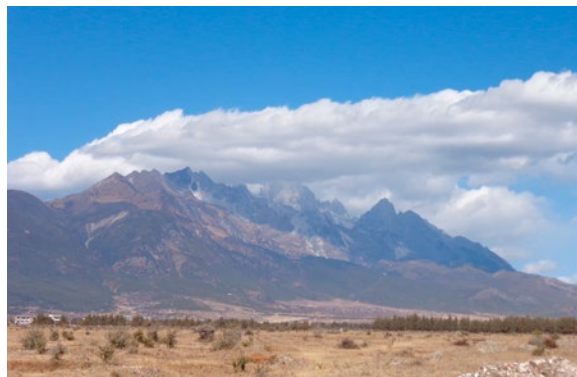
and need to be memorised. To aggravate the problem, all words are written with different characters. The precise number of words/characters a student needs to have memorised when graduating is difficult to determine precisely, but, generally, a figure between 5000 and 8000 is aimed at. Words are, of course, used in sentences, and these sentences make discourse. But discourse depends on a good knowledge of the context, so on pragmatical use of discourse. And also this varies importantly between Flanders and China.

Cultural dimensions

It is not hard to understand that learning Chinese is indeed a challenge. But, how rewarding it can be when one finally comes to understand Chinese friends who speak their mother tongue! After hours and hours of study, one finally comes to the point where one can start to discuss meaningful issues. This is where the cultural component of the language greatly increases in importance. Societies differ and so do their concerns to a certain extent. History, philosophy, religion,... all play a major role when we start to engage in conversations on more profound topics. It is such meaningful conversations a university training should aim at.

Practice, practice, practice

Given all the challenges that students face, it is clear that language and cultural training have to be done in mutual interconnection, and cannot be done solely at Ghent University, i.e., without a period of study in China. Until some ten years ago, only a few students had the opportunity to study in China for a longer period. Moreover, in those days, a first study period in China usually only happened at the end of one's studies. In view of the difficulty of



language learning, it is obvious that it is more logical to integrate a study period in China in the study curriculum. This conviction led to the implementation of a new programme with a twofold strategy:

- an integrated China semester in Bachelor 3 (as from the academic year 2005–2006)
- a free study period at the end of the master studies (as from the academic year 2017–2018, integrated in the curriculum of a two year master study programme).

For the Bachelor China semester, the Department of Chinese Language and Culture has opted for Liaoning University, Shenyang. There are several reasons to do so. First of all, Liaoning University has a good language training centre, which trains both foreign students and Chinese students who aim to become Chinese teachers for non-native Chinese learners.

This makes a good match. Secondly, living conditions are fine and affordable. The foreign students' compound is centrally located and has a homely feeling. Moreover, students do not live in an extremely international town, such as Beijing and Shanghai where the opportunities to engage in other activities than just studying are very tempting, and where English risks to become the everyday language. Liaoning University, with its mainly Russian, Korean, and Japanese students, offers a very different setting. And of course, two professors of Ghent University have themselves been members of the Liaoning University community: professor Bart Dessein as a student of Chinese (1987–89), and Ann Heirman as a teacher of French (1988–89). The friendship with other teachers remained, and is still visible at our yearly visit to Shenyang. This year too, we are looking forward to visit our friends again. Shenyang remains a second hometown.

Linguistically, Shenyang is very well situated. The language spoken on the street is very close to standard language, and for our students this is of crucial importance. After having been trained at Ghent University for two years, they finally have the opportunity to bring theory into practice, and to bring practice experienced in Ghent in the many classes devoted to listening, speaking and reading into the real world. Their China experience allows them to be well prepared for later (study) visits in areas where the spoken language tends to deviate more from the standard Chinese language. And for sure, our students do 'grow up' when in Shenyang. When, for many students (understandably so), it is pleasant to be taken to Shenyang in the good hands of our China Platform representative in Beijing, there is no more need of his assistance at the end of the China semester. On the contrary, many students take the opportunity

to discover China on their own, during the Christmas holidays.

Last but not least, the China Semester programme is well integrated in our Bachelor curriculum (first semester Bachelor 3). Only students who have mastered all linguistic skills of Bachelor 2 can participate, and since all of them follow the same courses in Shenyang, we perfectly know what they learned while in China. This allows us to build on their knowledge in the second semester of our Bachelor 3 programme. While the master programme allows more freedom to the students to follow their own interest, and allows them to study in the region that appeals to them most, the Bachelor programme aims at a group experience, carefully guiding students through their first steps in the Chinese academic world.

Organising the China Semester has been one of our most rewarding tasks at Ghent University. We are looking forward to the years to come!

3. Food safety in Belgium and China

Prof. Dr. PharmD. Sarah De Saeger

Laboratory of Food Analysis, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Ghent University

Food safety in Belgium and in China

Every human being wants to be sure about the safety of the food he or she is consuming. Both Belgium and China encountered food safety crises which became visible for the whole world: the dioxin crisis in Belgium in 1999 and the melamine crisis in China in 2008. Three hundred thousand victims among whom 54.000 hospitalised babies and six deceased ones was the result of this intentional adulteration of milk powder in China. However, some food safety issues remain rather unknown to the general public, although governments are continuously taking care of them, including the mycotoxins.

Mycotoxins: toxic fungal secondary metabolites present in food and feed

Mycotoxins are a series of secondary metabolites produced by various mould species (*Aspergillus*, *Penicillium*, *Fusarium*, *Alternaria* en *Claviceps* genera) growing on plant-based products either in the field or during storage. These contaminants are considered the most important chronic dietary risk factor, higher than anthropogenic contaminants, plant toxins, food additives or pesticide residues. They have been categorised into different groups based on their different origins, mainly including aflatoxins, ochratoxins, trichothecenes, fumonisins, zearalenone, and others. They can contaminate various food and feedstuffs, including cereal

crops, nuts, vegetables, fruits and botanicals all over the world. As this group of toxic fungal metabolites consists of a diverse set of chemical structures, different toxic effects can be expected. Mycotoxins are known to be carcinogenic, mutagenic, teratogenic, nephrotoxic and or liver toxic or can be immunosuppressive. Mycotoxins are very stable compounds and therefore not destroyed during food and feed processing. Due to the widespread occurrence and high toxicity, but also because of changes in their distribution due to climate change and globalisation as well as existence of modified and masked forms of free mycotoxins, management of the mycotoxin problem has become one of the prioritised food safety research topics around the world. Regular control using analytical methods has become common practice in different parts of the world, including Europe and China.



Belgian-Chinese cooperation

The Belgium-Chinese cooperation on mycotoxins dates back from 2008 when the Laboratory of Food Analysis at Ghent University coordinated two consecutive mycotoxin-related projects: the BELSPO China-Belgium bilateral projects "Joint study of *Fusarium* and related mycotoxins in food: detection and control" (01/08/2008–31/03/2011) and "Mycotoxins and mycotoxigenic fungi in China: analytical tools, dietary exposure and *Fusarium* diversity" (01/01/2012–31/12/2014). The different project partners were experts in mycology, plant pathology, agronomy, toxicology, analytical chemistry, food safety and epidemiology. This diversity in expertise is a prerequisite to tackle the complex mycotoxin problem through a multi-disciplinary and holistic approach. Moreover, this cross-border research is of fundamental importance to better understand the impact of climate change on the mycotoxin burden. The Belgian partners in these projects were: Ghent University, Ghent University College (all together part of the MYTOX association research platform www.mytox.be), Université Catholique de Louvain and the Veterinary and Agrochemical Research Centre (CODA-CERVA). Next, there were six Chinese partners from all over China: Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China Agricultural University (Beijing), Huazhong Agricultural University (Wuhan, Hubei), Shanghai Academy of Agricultural

Science, Shanghai Food and Drug Administration and the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (Danzhou, Hainan).

These projects were the start of a very intense exchange of knowledge and experts between both countries as well as the organisation of different workshops. But, moreover, it resulted in the establishment of the Ghent University – Shanghai Jiao Tong University – Shanghai Institutes of Biological Sciences (Chinese Academy of Sciences) Joint Laboratory of Mycotoxin Research. This agreement was signed during the State Visit of the Belgian King in China in June 2015. It is a further strengthening of the sustainable Belgian-Chinese collaboration on mycotoxins and food safety.

Contact: Prof. Dr. PharmD. Sarah De Saeger
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Pharmaceutical Sciences, Ghent University;
www.mytox.be ; <https://www.ugent.be/fw/bioanalysis/en/research/foodanal>.

*"Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life".
(World Food Summit, 1996)*

4. Centre for EU Studies: participation and contribution Summer School Sichuan University, Chengdu

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When we hear about EU-China cooperation, a lot of it is lost in the abstract. What does cooperation mean, how do we come to a better understanding of each other, how do we create space for real dialogue? The Centre for EU Studies has been very fortunate to have had the possibility to have both lecturers and students participate and contribute to the annual Sichuan University Immersion Programme (UIP) for the past four years. Since 2012, more than 50 of our students have participated in this Summer programme. This experience has been valuable for all of those involved, and has shaped how we look at China as political scientists. In what follows, we learn about the experience of Arne Joye and Marjolein Derous.

China. A political scientist learns about it every week. China as trade partner, China as threat to our European standards, China as emerging superpower, China as violator of human rights, China as polluter, China as creator of solar energy, China as ancient culture, China as country of modernisation, China as capitalist, China as communist. One stays behind with an

image that seems actually more like a collection of incoherent impressions. Nevertheless, there is a possibility to make a whole out of the pieces. Visiting the country, not just as a tourist, but as a part of society, offers the opportunity to talk with Chinese friends about their view on the world and about their dreams and aspirations, and to see the Chinese way of life first-hand. And that is exactly what we did during the Summer School at Sichuan University in Chengdu at the end of our graduation year. For two weeks, we lived on the Wangjiang campus. We went to class with our Chinese “buddies”, had dinner together, played soccer against each other, visited the city centre, went for a drink, climbed a holy mountain nearby, etc. Besides having a great time, this experience has shaped us as political scientists, more specifically Master students of European Union Studies at Ghent University. In a globalised world, most of us will collaborate internationally, and with China in particular, during their professional career. But a successful collaboration starts with a better understanding of the other's background, ideas and objectives. From this

point of view, the Summer School was a big step in the right direction. Do we totally understand a huge and complex country as China after two weeks of summer school? Definitely not! However, the collection of impressions that we had about China does not look so incoherent anymore right now, and we will definitely be able to better frame future input from the land of dragons.

Arne Joye, participant Summer School, Sichuan University 2016 & Master European Union Studies, Centre for EU Studies

The 2016 Sichuan University UIP was a valuable experience for me, both as a teacher and as a researcher. I taught a course on the EU-East Asia trade relations to an audience of young and eager Chinese students, most of them in Business Administration. As I was teaching, I learned so much. About my own teaching skills, about how the group of young Chinese students looks at the European Union, and about what they aspire to achieve in the future. Moreover, the day-to-day life in the city of Chengdu was wonderful, and friends and former colleagues were happy to show me around: the food, the inner city, the shopping malls, the pandas! The dialogues with students, other lecturers,

Sichuan University staff, my own wonderful buddy Sophia, and new friends made the abstract image I had of China more real. It made me understand more about the meaning of dialogue: that it goes into two directions, even if you disagree. My research will be different and better because of my time in China. The experience triggered critical thinking in questioning what we 'take for granted' in the EU context. It also confronted a stereotyped view of China with reality, one where people want the good things in life: pass their exams, see the world, be in touch with friends and family, and have good food. That sounds a lot like me.

Marjolein Deraus, lecturer, Summer School, Sichuan University 2016 & PhD Candidate at the Centre for EU Studies

The Centre for EU Studies has collaborated actively with Sichuan University's European Studies programme over the past five years. In addition to the Sichuan University Immersion Programme (see above), this has also involved staff mobility from Sichuan University (prof. Jian SHI, prof. Zhuyu LI, prof. Ren WEN) and Ghent University (Prof. Jan Orbie, Dr. Fabienne Bossuyt) as well as exchange and joint guidance of PhD students (Dr. Yuan HANG, Zhuang YEN, Zeren LANGIA). We have also organised several seminars and conferences on EU-China relations and have recently started research collaboration into the area of mutual perceptions: how do EU students perceive the EU and how do Chinese students perceive the EU?





5. Collaboration between Ghent University and the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, Chinese Academy of Sciences

Prof. Dr. Philippe De Maeyer

Department of Geography, Faculty of Sciences and

Prof. Dr. Jean Bourgeois

Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

The collaboration between Ghent University and the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography (XIEG) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences started in 2005 when Philippe De Maeyer was invited by Prof. Alishir Kurban (XIEG) and Prof. Vladimir Tikunov (Lomonosov Moscow State University) for a summer school in Urumqi, in the framework of the International Cartographic Association (ICA). Since then the exchanges between Ghent University and XIEG have become increasingly intensive.

In 2007 a first cooperation agreement was signed between the two institutions, which was renewed in 2012 for another five years; on that occasion Ghent University vice-chancellor Prof. Van Cauwenberge went to Urumqi for the signing ceremony. In 2014 a tripartite Memory of Understanding was signed in Beijing by vice-chancellor Prof. De Paepe between Ghent University, XIEG and the Xinjiang Turpan Bureau of Cultural Heritage.

In the framework of these agreements, several exchanges of academic staff, PhD students and master students took place during the last 10 years. Four geography and geomatics students of Ghent University realised their fieldwork in Xinjiang in preparation of a master thesis and this under the joint supervision of the academic staff of Ghent University and XIEG.

The research by Ghent University master students includes land use and land cover change analysis in the Turpan region using satellite imagery, the creation of a database system for managing and analysing the karez irrigation system and the processing of aerial and terrestrial imagery for realising a 3D model of Yar City.

In May 2016 an agreement was finally signed for the “Sino-Belgian Joint Laboratory for Geo-information” in the presence of H.E. Michel Malherbe, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to China and representatives of the Xinjiang Bureau of Foreign Experts, the Xinjiang Foreign Affairs Office and the Xinjiang Department of Science and Technology.

Several short archaeological expeditions have been realised in the last years. They have focussed on the landscape archaeological survey of the karez around Turpan, on the study of a remarkable rock carving site representing a prehistoric mountain landscape, on the assistance to the 3D recording of the ancient city of Yar City (Yaohe) and on a general archaeological potential of the area from Turpan to the border with Mongolia and Russia. These topics fit in the different themes Ghent University and XIEG are collaborating in:

1. geo-archaeology and the use of different geographical techniques, including image processing;
2. understanding the land cover and land use change in a long term and short term perspective in Xinjiang and by extension the whole central Asian (sub-)arid zone;
3. including aspects of climatological and hydrological modelling and how climate change will affect human activities and how at local and regional level human activities is influencing climate evolution;
4. this type of research will also be a preferential subject of collaboration in the near future, as it requires the set-up of large databases including socio-economic data, imagery (esp. satellite images) and physical data (e.g. hydrology), also on a transnational level, and a collaboration between Ghent University and XIEG expertise on geographical data platforms allowing managing, analysing and visualisation of the data.

Ghent University researchers are involved in projects granted by Chinese authorities, such as CAS-funded project on cultural adaptation and environmental change in the core arid zone in Central Asia in the past 3500 years, but also projects of the State Administration of Foreign Expert Affairs of the PR China.

Ghent University and XIEG, together with the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, are involved in the co-promotorship of double PhD s. In 2014–2015 three XIEG PhD-students were at the Department of Geography during one year; in 2016–2017 five students will start to prepare a double PhD between both institutions, and another four will arrive in 2017–2018.

Dr. Fang Gonghuan successfully defended her PhD on “The impact of climate variability on

hydrological processes in the Kaidu river basin (China)” in May 2016 and is thus the first to benefit from the fruitful research collaboration in geo-information between XIEG and the Department of Geography of Ghent University.

XIEG, located in Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region – the largest and most western province of China – also has a strategic position on the Silk Road Economic Belt, which together with the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road, focuses on the development of the connectivity and cooperation among countries in the belt between China and Europe. This initiative launched by president Xi Jinping has not only an economic objective, but will also bring people and scientists from (western) China, the Central-Asian republics and Europe closer together. Additionally, the collaboration between XIEG and Ghent University is an opportunity of bringing together the different scientific communities; especially by linking the Chinese and Central-Asian network of XIEG and different Belgian and European universities and research institutions.

Webpage <http://cartogis.ugent.be/yarcity3d/> with 3D models on Yar City.



6. The uneven insertion of Chinese cities in the global economy

Prof. Dr. Ben Derudder

Department of Geography, Faculty of Sciences, Ghent University

There is now considerable scientific literature on the role of cities in an increasingly globalised economy. Within this scientific literature, the research carried out at the Department of Geography in the context of the Globalisation and World Cities Research Network (GaWC) has pioneered a *relational* approach to understanding cities in economic globalisation: cities are analysed in terms of their insertion in global corporate *networks*. One particular area of focus has been the analysis of Chinese cities, a research agenda that has been developed through academic collaborations with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing), the Chinese Academy of Sciences (Nanjing), the South China University of Technology (Guangzhou), and Tongji University, East China Normal University and Shanghai Normal University (Shanghai).

Here I present a straightforward overview of some of the main findings for Chinese cities, which necessitates a brief introduction to our analytical framework. In our research, we use custom-gathered data on the (importance of the) urban presences of corporate service firms active in finance, law, advertising, management consultancy and accountancy. We particularly look at the presence of the most globalised of these firms (e.g. Deutsche Bank, Deloitte, Bank of China) in the world's largest and economically thriving cities (e.g. London, Wuhan and

Geneva). Although such corporate service firms obviously only represent a specific segment of urban economies, they assume an increasingly important strategic role as they have evolved into key facilitators of global business: they produce, interpret and channel information, knowledge and interpretations of business environments, thus allowing other firms and institutions to function in a complex and variegated global economy. In the latest data collection for 2016, we gathered information on the relative importance of the offices of 175 such firms in 707 cities. The resulting data were then used as the input to a network model that estimates, for every firm, the strength of the flows of information, knowledge, capital and instruction between each pair of cities. Aggregating these flows across cities and firms then allows exploring how cities are hierarchically and geographically connected in the office networks of the world's major corporate services providers.

A range of specific measures can be derived from this network model, but here I focus on what is arguably the most straightforward measure: a city's global network connectivity, which is basically the aggregation of its connections with all other 706 cities for each of the 175 firms. To aid in the interpretation of this measure, it is commonly presented as a percentage of the global network connectivity

Rank	City	Global Network Connectivity
1	Hong Kong	73.5
2	Beijing	69.2
3	Shanghai	66.7
4	Taipei	45.9
5	Guangzhou	43.5
6	Shenzhen	32.4
7	Chengdu	28.4
8	Tianjin	27.2
9	Nanchang	23.2
10	Hangzhou	23.0
11	Qingdao	22.7
12	Dalian	21.3
13	Chongqing	21.1
14	Xiamen	20.3
15	Nanjing	19.9
16	Wuhan	19.4
17	Suzhou	18.4
18	Changsha	18.2
19	Xi'An	17.6
20	Shenyang	17.5
21	Jinan	16.9
22	Nantong	16.8
23	Kaohsiung	15.2
24	Kunming	14.6
25	Fuzhou	14.1
26	Macao	13.3
27	Taiyuan	13.0
28	Changchun	12.4
29	Hefei	12.2
30	Ningbo	11.4
31	Zhengzhou	10.9
32	Harbin	10.6
33	Urumqi	10.1

of the most connected city in our data (i.e. London). A detailed discussion of data, measures, results, and interpretation can be found in the recently published book *World City Network: a Global Urban Analysis* (2nd edition, published in 2016 by Routledge, authored by Peter J. Taylor and Ben Derudder). Here I present and briefly discuss some of the main findings for China (Table 1).

Probably, the key result is that in spite of booming and now widespread urbanisation in China – the United Nations estimates that today there are almost 100 cities in China that have more than 1 million inhabitants – only a select few of these cities serve as sizable business gateways between China and the rest of the world. Table 1 shows that Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai clearly tower over the rest of the Chinese cities in terms of global network connectivity. These cities globally rank 4th, 6th and 8th in terms of global network connectivity, respectively, with Beijing and Shanghai having closed the initial gap with Hong Kong over the last 20 years or so. Paralleling China's wholesale rise in the global economy, these cities now have connectivity comparable to that of Tokyo, Singapore and Paris.

These three leading Chinese cities have remarkably similar levels of connectivity, which can be traced back to the presence of 'triple-headquarter strategies', reflecting there being three major, complementary urban-economic markets as China has increasingly linked up with the global economy: many corporate service providers have established three offices in China, reflecting the putative need to maintain a presence in each of these three specific urban markets – Beijing as centre for political decision-making in the world's second largest economy, Shanghai as the main gateway for

international business in/from that economy, and Hong Kong's continued role as an extra-mural financial centre for Pacific Asia in general and Mainland China in particular. Amongst the other Chinese cities, it is above all those in the relatively more open economy of the Pearl River Delta that have become strongly connected in the corporate networks of the world's leading service providers, with Guangzhou and Shenzhen standing out. These cities are followed by megacities such as Tianjin, Chengdu, Qingdao, and Wuhan. Although many of these cities are not substantially smaller than Shanghai and Beijing, they are much less connected from this particular vantage point: it is in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing that information, knowledge and interpretations about doing 'global' business in and from China are being assembled, a feature also reflected and co-produced by the uneven access of Chinese cities in, for example, global airline networks.

7. Airway disease in Belgium and China – what we learned from the differences

Prof. Dr. Claus Bachert and Dr. Zhang Nan

Upper Airways Research Laboratory, Ghent University

At the URL (Upper Airways Research Laboratory, Head: Claus Bachert), we intend to decipher inflammation and remodelling in upper airway disease, such as chronic rhinosinusitis (CRS). CRS affects about 11% of the population in Europe nowadays, and may be differentiated clinically in disease with and without nasal polyps. Nasal polyps in Europe have a predominant “type 2” inflammation, characterised by eosinophils, such as in asthma; nasal polyp patients in our place suffer from asthma in about 50%, and both diseases share a lot of common features.

When we wanted to expand our studies to China about 10 years ago, we expected that we would find the same disease characteristics as we knew them from Europe. We started a first collaboration in Chengdu, ENT-department at Huaxi Hospital, Sichuan University, and shared with our colleagues at that department how to measure cytokines in the tissue. To our great surprise, we soon realised that things were completely different in China.

Nasal polyps from Chengdu did show a type 2 inflammation, but only in 15% vs. 85% in Belgium. At the same time, we observed only little asthma comorbidity in Chengdu, whereas asthma comorbidity was high (50%) in Belgium, and also recurrence of disease was frequent in Belgium, but not in Chengdu.

Prof. Zhang Nan, who worked as an ENT doctor in the Peoples Hospital in Zhongshan near Hong Kong and supported my efforts after learning the techniques here in Ghent, collected samples of CRS patients from her patients, and colleagues (Prof Zhang Lou, Prof Wang Xiang Dong) from Tongren University Hospital in Beijing joined the group later. This made it possible to for the first time recognise a certain pattern of inflammatory cells and proteins and their relationship with asthma comorbidity and disease recurrence, or in other words clinical disease severity! These achievements were published in leading international journals (esp. the J Allergy Clin Immunol, IF 12.5, the number one in the field), and later extended to other countries and continents! They also led to longitudinal studies to recognise the course of disease and possibly the causal agent, as we realised that the share of type-2 disease is impressively increasing over the last decade. These observations are of high relevance at the time of personalised medicine, endotyping and the introduction of innovative biologics for the treatment of the most severe patients. A true success story of Belgian-Chinese cooperation!





8. Environmental law cooperation with China

Prof. Dr. Luc Lavrysen

Director Centre for Environmental and Energy Law, Faculty of Law, Ghent University

A Chinese Environmental Law Professor in my Office

This story begins some ten years ago. On a sunny day in August 2006 Prof. Qin Tianbao from the Research Institute of Environmental Law (RIEL) of Wuhan University pops into my office at the Law Faculty of Ghent University. It happened that he was attending a Summer School on Biotechnology at the Faculty of Sciences and was looking for Ghent scholars working in the field of environmental law. RIEL, he explained, was co-founded by the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences and Wuhan University in 1981. In 1988, the Institute came under the joint leadership of the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) and Wuhan University. This makes RIEL the oldest of the environmental law research institutes in China and one amongst the oldest worldwide. In 1982, RIEL initiated the first programme for awarding master's degrees for environmental law in China. In 1998, it was accredited for awarding doctoral degrees in environmental law and became the second authorised institute in this field. It was appointed a National Key Research Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences in 1999. In 2001, RIEL established a post-doctoral research centre of environmental law. The Chinese Association of Environment and Resources Law (CAERL) and its secretariat are based in RIEL. Prof. Qin invited me and my colleague Frank Maes to visit RIEL in 2007.

Visiting Wuhan and Lanzhou

We decided to go in April 2007 to Wuhan, a place I had never heard of before, for one week. I was amazed to learn that Wuhan is the capital of Hubei province and is the most populous city in central China, situated at the intersection of the middle reaches of the Yangtze and Han rivers. It was believed at that time to have a population of around 8 million (around 10 million today), so the size of Paris or London let's say. Wuhan University is situated at Luojia Hill, near East Lake, with palatial buildings blending the Chinese and Western style. It is commonly regarded as one of the most beautiful campuses in China, has over 50.000 students and ranks within the top five of Chinese universities in recent years.

During our first visit we gave some lectures on International and European Environmental Law, presented our LLM programme and discussed the possibilities for Wuhan masters to do doctoral research at Ghent University and to formalise our cooperation. One of the students proposed to translate an article I wrote on the Flemish Soil Sanitation Legislation into Chinese, which he did.¹ RIEL and the Chinese Society of Environment and Resources Law were at that moment indeed engaged in a comparative study for the Chinese authorities on soil sanitation

1. 比利时土壤污染立法 – 以弗拉芒地区为例 [比利时]
Prof. Dr. L. Lavrysen 著，赵小波 译

legislation. Soil pollution due to unsound industrial and agricultural practices is a major problem in China. The comparative study proved that the Flemish Region of Belgium at that time had the most comprehensive piece of legislation in that field worldwide. That was the reason why I was invited, together with Eddy Van Dyck of the Flemish Agency OVAM, to attend the annual conference of the Chinese Society of Environment and Resources Law in Lanzhou in August 2007. The results of the comparative study were presented during a workshop with members of the Environmental Committee of the National People's Congress, representatives of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) and academics. Presentations were also held by a selected number of foreign experts from countries believed to represent best practices (apart from the Flemish Region of Belgium, Singapore, Australia and Japan). Prof. Wang Shuyi, director of RIEL, coordinator of the study, and a politically influential man, made a strong case for learning from the Flemish example while drafting the upcoming Chinese Soil Sanitation Legislation. In 2013, six years later, a first draft of a Soil Environmental Protection Law was released and is, after much consultation and debate, now discussed in the NPC Standing Committee. A 231-clause, 13,000-Chinese character Action Plan for Soil Pollution Prevention and Control was released in May 31 2016 by the State Council, China's cabinet, after undergoing some 50 draft revisions over the previous three years.² Soil Legislation is now announced for 2020. It seems that work on this big problem will thus start in the coming years.

Chinese Ph.D. students and Bi-annual Conferences

In that same year the first Chinese PhD candidates in environmental law, with or without a CSC scholarship, arrived in Gent. At the moment, five Chinese students have already obtained their PhD in environmental law under supervision of Frank Maes³, An Cliquet⁴, myself⁵, while other PhD students are finalising their research. Every year we have at least one Chinese scholar (postdoc, professor) or PhD student staying for a shorter (2–3 months) or longer time (1 year) as visiting researcher in our Centre.

In September 2010 we organised the first Sino-European Environmental Law Conference at Ghent University, with focus on comparative environmental law in the EU and China. Around 10 Chinese professors from different Chinese Universities and European professors from various universities gave presentations. The command of English of the majority of the Chinese colleagues was not sufficient to organise the conference in English. The use of translators to and from Chinese was time-consuming and hindered discussions. Most of the presentations by our Chinese colleagues were also rather general presentations of the Chinese statutes and regulations on the various topics at stake, without much detail about their application, enforcement and effectiveness. Pretty much the same could be said about the second Sino-European Environmental Law

2. http://english.gov.cn/policies/latest_releases/2016/05/31/content_281475361737430.htm

3. LIU Nengye, *Prevention of vessel-source pollution, a comparative study between European and Chinese law* (2012); CHEN Ping, *A comparative legal study of emissions trading systems in the European Union and in China* Ghent University (2014); HE Qin, *Combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing: a comparative study between European and Chinese law* (2014).

4. HE Miao, *A human rights-based approach to conserve protected areas in China: lessons from Europe* (2014).

5. Xiang Wen, *Risk governance of GMOs in the EU and in China* (2013).

Conference in Wuhan in September 2012 and the third one in Ghent in June 2014. Over time however the command of English of our Chinese colleagues improved remarkably – while our own command of Mandarin is stable at the lowest thinkable level. Chinese environmental law is developing at high speed, as is the level of critical analysis of environmental problems and legislation in China. Besides the drafting of new or improved environmental law, compliance with and enforcement of environmental legislation receives a lot of attention as well. At the recent and fourth Conference, which was a part of the International Conference on Compliance and Enforcement of Environmental Law (Wuhan, September 2016), environmental law professors from other continents were invited. It was the first conference completely in English with the participation of a new generation of Chinese Scholars, most of whom had studied or conducted research abroad.⁶ The level of critical and in-depth analysis of environmental law in China has improved tremendously during the 10 years of our cooperation.

Environmental Justice

Since 2002 I am, as a Judge in the Belgian Constitutional Court, involved in activities of the Global and European Judiciary concerning Environmental Law, being since 2008 the president of the EU Forum of Judges for the Environment.⁷ This includes involvement in the judges' programmes of UNEP, IUCN and UNECE. That capacity brought me to China. The New Environmental Protection Law of China was passed on 24 April 2014 and was made effective on 1 January 2015. It includes a chapter on information disclosure and public participation, which allows NGOs

to bring public interest litigation against polluters. The provision concerning public interest litigation (Art. 58) is rather general and vague. In the Chinese legal system this means that the Supreme People's Court must come up with so-called "Judicial Interpretations". These are binding guidelines for the judiciary with the aim to further specify general and vague rules and make them operational.

On 29th September 2014, an EU-China Seminar on Environmental Justice was held by the *EU-China Environmental Governance Programme*⁸ together with senior Chinese policy makers. The Seminar invited several European experts on environmental justice to discuss in-depth environmental public interest litigation and environmental damage assessment systems. The Seminar was attended by officials from the National People's Congress, the Supreme People's Court and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and included senior officials from the Office of Administrative Policy and Law, the Legislative Affairs Committee, the NPC Standing Committee, the first Environmental Tribunal created in China and the Supreme People's Court. During the seminar, Mr James Thornton, founder and CEO of *Client Earth*, myself and Mr Christoph Sobotta of the Chambers of Advocate General Juliane Kokott of the Court of Justice of the EU, introduced experiences and challenges, presenting specific cases concerning environmental public interest litigation in Europe. The participants were able to discuss the draft judicial interpretations, which were adopted later on as *The Supreme People's Court Interpretation on Several Issues Regarding the Application of Law in Public Interest Environmental Civil Litigation*

6. <http://fxy.whu.edu.cn/archive/detail/102170>

7. www.eufje.org

8. http://www.ecegp.com/index_en.asp

2015.⁹ There is some evidence that the Seminar had a positive influence on the final draft of that Interpretation.

That China has started to take environmental law seriously and will rely strongly on the judiciary for the enforcement of it, is also noticeable in the creation of more than 450 Environmental Tribunals within the general Court system since 2013, including one in the form of a division of the Supreme People's Court. Those Courts have treated over 250,000 criminal, administrative and civil environmental cases in the period 2014–2015. The first Environmental Tribunals in China (the Guiyang Environmental Tribunal and the Qinzhen Environmental Tribunal in Guizhou Province), created in 2007, which are believed to have performed very well in solving serious local pollution cases, are now part of a very big family. Additionally, the EU-China Environmental Governance Programme sponsored the training of environmental judges in three provinces (Shaanxi, Guangxi and Gansu) and was involved in other capacity building activities on environmental justice and environmental rights in Western China. In June 2015, there was a Conference at the end of those capacity building programmes, with the participation of the trained judges, to take stock of the progress made.

The fact that the EU-China Environmental Governance Programme came to an end does not mean that cooperation in the field of environmental justice will come to an end too. UNEP is e.g. organising a *High-Level International Symposium on Environmental Justice for Sustainable Development: the Role of Judiciary in Advancing Environmental Rule of Law for*

Achieving SDGs and Ecological Civilisation (Beijing, 7–8 December 2016) with the Supreme People's Court, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the China University of Political Science and Law to discuss the role of the judiciary in advancing environmental justice for sustainable development and eco-civilisation, to analyse trends in judicial institutional specialisation for improving the efficacy of environmentally adjudication in China and other countries and to share best practices and lessons learned for effective environmental adjudication in China and other countries.

To conclude

Environmental law, when properly designed, applied and enforced, is a powerful tool to combat environmental pollution and degradation. We all know that due to the size of its population and territory and the incredible economic growth the last 30 years, China created tremendous environmental problems with a global impact. It is in our common interest that those problems are reduced and eventually solved. In 2013, China launched a wide-ranging set of ecological reforms in a bid to develop what the government calls an “ecological civilisation.” The leadership also believes that economic and social development cannot take place in the absence of the rule of law, and that the current problems arising in China's development are directly linked to the rule of law's incomplete development. This seems to indicate that we have only seen the beginning of the development of environmental law and that law as a tool will become ever more important. Cooperation in the field of environmental law with China is as a result expected to be cooperation in a fast developing area of law in the years to come.

9. <http://www.ecegp.com/files/2/SPC%20interpretations%20in%20application%20of%20law%20in%20civil%20environmental%20PIL%20cases%202015.pdf>

9. Chinese exchange students learn Dutch at Ghent University

Ms Catherine Verguts

Ghent University Language Centre

Every year, a host of Chinese students is welcomed by the Ghent University Language Centre (UCT). Commonly, they are PhD students who follow courses of academic English for their doctoral training, mostly from faculties such as engineering, law or educational sciences. What is rare, however, is that Chinese students follow courses of Dutch, for instance in a preparatory year to learn the language before becoming a degree student at a Flemish university.

However, in the academic year 2015–2016 a whole new programme for Chinese students was set up. The renowned Beijing Foreign Studies University looked for a Belgian or Dutch partner university for an exchange for their students of Dutch language and culture. Ghent University's programme was deemed the most sound and attractive.

To prepare for this exchange programme, a visit to Beijing was planned. I taught a few classes in which I quickly noticed how open-minded and motivated these students were; characteristics they would certainly need to succeed in a challenging year abroad. They were also willing to learn a lot about the addressed topics, such as Belgian film, comic books and food. Importantly, their level of Dutch appeared to be high enough for them to have a chance of succeeding in this exchange programme.

The academic programme consisted of Dutch proficiency classes in the first semester, focusing on developing the four key skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening in abstract contexts. It was a challenge for these students to get used to the Belgian way of teaching; they had to show initiative and interaction in class, to voice their opinions thoroughly and clearly and to take on the responsibility of learning outside of the classroom without strict instructions. But their effort was rewarded: the majority of the students succeeded in an interuniversity test of Dutch as a foreign language (see www.itna.be). This thorough knowledge and practice of the language armed them to embark on participating in more in-depth courses in the second semester, such as academic Dutch, linguistics, and Dutch history and culture.

One of the most enriching experiences of this exchange programme was the conversation class organised with Belgian students studying Chinese. The students discussed diverse topics in Dutch and in Chinese. This way, they of course developed their fluency and accuracy, but, perhaps even more importantly, they learned to appreciate each other's opinions and got to know each other. Certain professors of the Dutch department were also very keen to work with these students and interact with them. As professor Yves T'Sjoen wrote, 'who

knows what we'll learn about our Dutch literature from an oriental perspective?'

The Ghent University Language Centre looks forward to elaborating on this fruitful experience.

[In June 2016, some of these exchange students were interviewed for the Ghent University community magazine 'Dare to think' \(www.ugent.be/durfdenkenmagazine\). We publish this interview \(text by Piet Verbeest and photographs by Dries Luyten\) here.](http://www.ugent.be/durfdenkenmagazine)



Beijing (temporarily) on the Leie.

Eight students of Dutch from the Beijing Foreign Studies University are spending all of their third bachelor at Ghent University. How did they end up here and are they enjoying it? Gabriel, Annie and Dini are very happy to speak to us – in surprisingly fluent Dutch.

The Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) is a well-known Chinese educational institution. No fewer than sixty languages are taught here, including – since 2005 – Dutch. Last year Padma Bansie, a Dutch assistant professor with Surinam roots, contacted four Dutch and Flemish universities, to ask whether they could organise an exchange programme for her students. After a thorough selection process it was Ghent University that came up with the strongest programme proposal. And in September Sun Kaize (Dutch name Gabriel), You Huihui (Annie), Song Yue (Dini) and five fellow students boarded the plane for Belgium with a suitcase full of expectations.

Not to beat about the bush: we Flemish find it quite strange that Chinese students interested in languages want to learn Dutch of all things...

Gabriel: 'This is of course the big question. To be honest we didn't choose it explicitly. In China you can only indicate a preference for a university, the subject is determined for you. We could tick five languages that we were interested in. Dutch was third on my list. And I'm now really pleased I got Dutch. I find this language more exciting every day.'

Annie: 'A new cycle of Dutch starts every four years at the BFSU. There are moreover only thirteen of us. And we are now seeing

the advantage of this: every one of us can in principle opt to spend a year abroad with a government grant. Apart from three of us, we seized this opportunity with both hands. Two of our friends are in Leiden and for us it was Ghent.'

Did you feel at home quickly?

Annie: 'To a certain extent it was a culture shock. What still surprises me the most after all these months is that the shops aren't open on a Sunday here and that they close so early in the evening.'

Gabriel: 'For me Ghent in practice mainly means the university. In particular I like the student areas and the typical atmosphere there. I don't have much connection with the ordinary people in Ghent.'

Annie: 'And I don't go into town very often. I generally cook myself. The range of Chinese products is not so great here. Fortunately you don't need many ingredients in our cooking to put together something really tasty.'

Dini: 'When we arrived here, it was too late to find accommodation via the university services. The university halls were all full. The search for somewhere to stay was immediately a serious issue, but we all managed to find somewhere. Meanwhile we have learned how to survive. We can also always fall back on an extensive Chinese network. At Ghent University there are a large number of doctoral students from our country. In particular the faculties of Engineering and Architecture, Psychology and Educational Sciences and Law are very popular.'

What kind of curriculum are you following this year?

Annie: 'We follow a programme specially drawn up for us. We mainly spend our days at the UCT, although in the first semester we had one subject together with the normal Dutch linguistics students. There's also an active exchange with the Sinology students of Ghent University. Under the supervision of two assistant professors we speak Dutch and Chinese in turn. For both groups this is a very enriching experience.'

Gabriel: 'It also gives us the opportunity to have more contact with Flemish students. Interaction with the other students is generally limited to wishing them a good day. And people who don't know me at all often speak English to me. They clearly don't expect me to understand Dutch too.'

Annie: 'I find Flemish people friendly, even though it is all rather superficial. It's easy to make someone's acquaintance, but very difficult to really get to know someone.'

In July you'll return to Beijing for the final year of your Dutch course. What then?

Gabriel: 'Some will go on to study something different, most of us will look for a job. In principle this shouldn't be too difficult. China has strong economic links with the Netherlands and Belgium. There are enough companies that can use someone who speaks fluent Chinese and Dutch. I may even move to Europe. We'll see... I haven't got that far yet.'

Dini: 'Only Shanghai offers a Dutch programme. This means that every four years there are at most 25 Chinese with our profile entering the job market. Many of us will work as a translator

or end up in the banking sector. Embassies are also an option. But at the moment I haven't got a dream job in my head.'

Do you think differently now about Belgium compared with about a year ago?

Gabriel: 'Yes, I've had to completely rethink my image. I knew that Belgium was a rich and beautiful country, but my knowledge didn't really extend much further than this. Society is noticeably better organised than in China, though this doesn't mean that I'm satisfied with everything. For example, the administration is not very efficient at all. I had to wait two months for my identity card – this would be inconceivable in our country. Recently I sent a letter to a friend in France. Yesterday I got it back, apparently the address wasn't completely correct. In our country the postman would just find the correct address himself.'

Dini: 'Our assistant professors regularly show us around historical cities like Antwerp, Bruges and Brussels. We've already seen a lot of the country.'

Gabriel: 'I recently visited Paris. We are aware that Belgium doesn't stand on its own, but forms part of a bigger European whole. It's exciting to have the opportunity to discover all this.'



10. Case Study: ICRH's activities in China from 2011 to 2016 (from the Year of the Rabbit to the Year of the Monkey)

Prof. Dr. Zhang Wei-Hong

Department of Uro-gynaecology, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ghent University

The International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH) was established in 1994 and has officially been designated as a Collaborating Centre of the World Health Organisation since 2004. The main objective of ICRH is to improve sexual and reproductive health in its broadest sense. ICRH is a centre of excellence for Reproductive Health in Belgium. Its research and collaborative links are worldwide and its work has influenced national and international policy.

ICRH has been and continues to be active in China for more than 15 years now. From 2011 to 2016 (year of Rabbit to year of the Monkey), the goals established in 2011 by ICRH have been fully achieved through the following of different activities, including joint research projects, establishment of sustainable partnerships, exchange of academic and scientific staff, students and research assistants.

1. Joint Research Project. An EU-funded FP7 project (2012–2017)/INPAC “Integrating Post-Abortion Family Planning services into China's existing abortion services in hospital setting” has been launched successfully in August 2012 in Beijing, China. As the project coordinator, ICRH has been working together with two European and four Chinese consortiums for conducting a research project in the field of

post-abortion family planning in 30 divisions (26 provinces and 4 municipalities) of Mainland China. The participants include 350 hospitals, 7 teams of national coordinators, 30 province coordinators, more than 3500 hospital collaborators as well as more than 100.000 women and their family. The INPAC project has strengthened the existing relationship and has enlarged ICRH's network in China from local/region levels to national level

2. Sustainable partnership between universities. The sustainable partnerships between Ghent University and universities in China have been developed by signing different collaboration agreements. An agreement of collaboration between Ghent University and the Hebei Medical universities was signed on 29 April 2015 in the presence of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Professor Guy Vanderstraeten. A Letter of Intent was concluded in May 2016 between Tsinghua University, Research Centre for Public Health and Ghent University-ICRH, the potential collaboration in the upcoming years has been agreed at the occasion of Professor Marleen Temmerman's visit to Tsinghua University in October 2015.

3. Exchange of academic and scientific staff. Professor Marleen Temmerman was appointed Honorary Professor by China's National

Research Institute for Family Planning (NRIFP) in October 2015. Dr. Wei-Hong Zhang, since 2011 to date has held the position of visiting professor at several universities in China and has been appointed adjunct professor by the School of Medicine of Tongji University, Shanghai (2012–2015); by NRIFP since 2015, and by the Tsinghua University, Research Center for Public Health since 2016, where she gives regular annual teaching in the field of Epidemiology. In addition, Dr. Wei-Hong Zhang has been appointed by the P.R. of China as the State Council Advisor since 2014 based on her significant accomplishments and the international recognition of her distinguished contributions.

4. Exchange of students and research

assistants. A co-tutorial PhD research project between Ghent University and Hebei Medical Universities (HMU) has been launched since September 2015. This is also the first co-tutorial PhD student come from HMU to Ghent University since the sister provinces' relationship between Hebei and East Flanders provinces has been established more than 20 years ago. Since 2011 until now, ICRH has received two PhD exchange students and six post-doctoral researchers from Chongqing Medical University, Peking University, Sichuan University, Shanghai Institute of Planned Parenthood Research and Xi'an Jiaotong University.

ICRH is convinced that the collaboration with China will continue and further strengthen and expand in the upcoming years, which will not only benefit the development of this important field of Reproductive Health at the University of Ghent and Chinese institutions, but also the women and their families in the two countries.



Learning in ICRH: Opportunity and Challenge

Mr Jintin Liu

Exchange PhD student in Ghent University (Aug 2016–Feb 2017)
from Xi'an Jiaotong University

As a Ph.D. candidate in Xi'an Jiaotong University of China, it is my great pleasure to learn and conduct research studies in ICRH under the supervision of Professor Wei-Hong Zhang as an exchange student for six months. During my stay in Ghent, I will mainly perform activities related to the project "Impact of the universal new two-child policy on the healthcare system in China – a case study in Xi'an". As I am studying abroad for the first time, my biggest challenge is how to cope with the new and totally different living and working environments. Luckily, everything goes well so far.

Although I have only been with ICRH for two months, I have already gained a lot of new experience which will definitely benefit my future study. First, ICRH provides me with a precious opportunity to learn more from other researchers from multidisciplinary fields such as reproductive health, family planning etc., other than health policy and health system, on which I mainly focus in my study. There is an interesting and meaningful Scientific Lunch Meeting (SLM) in ICRH every week. During the meetings, one or two ICRH researchers share with other staff and guests their recent research progresses or research ideas, followed by a feedback and discussion session. Through the SLM, I acquire knowledge on different stages of conducting research from study design, using appropriate data collection tools, analysing data to publishing their papers etc. This information is a very good reference for my future study even with different research fields.

Secondly, in Ghent University and at ICRH, the easier accessibility and larger number of academic resources have created a more convenient environment for me to conduct my research in. Moreover, I am very glad to have the opportunity to work with my motivating and inspiring mentor, Prof. Zhang Wei-Hong. I have learned a lot from every conversation we have, especially on how to conduct a professional research study and numerous interesting new research methods, such as systematic review, meta-analysis, scoping review etc. Besides the project focused on the universal two-child policy, I have also been given an opportunity to write short research reviews on other topics under her supervision, which train me in writing English papers. Hopefully, I can finish writing one to two papers co-authored with Prof. Zhang before leaving Ghent. I am sure these experiences are beneficial for my further research.

Meanwhile, I really feel that the time I am in ICRH has gone so fast, so I have promised myself that I must further enhance my efficiency to reach my learning objectives and seize every opportunity to learn during my last four months in Gent.

As a final point, I would love to repeat once again that this learning experience in ICRH will absolutely be a vital part of my life and has opened up a multitude of opportunities for my personal and professional development.

My Learning Experience in Ghent

Mrs Tang Long-Mei

Joint PhD Student (Sep 2015–2018) – from Hebei Medical University

Thanks to the unremitting effort of the China Platform of Ghent University and Professor Zhang Wei-Hong from ICRH, I am so lucky to become the first joint PhD student of Hebei Medical University and Ghent University. For me, this is a great opportunity and also a challenge. I benefit from being able to experience the Eastern and Western education system at the same time, but meanwhile, I ought to put an extra effort in my study to attain the requirements of both schools. In October 2015, after completing the compulsory courses in China, I have transferred to Belgium to continue my study and research. Over the past year, the Ghent University China Platform has provided me with tremendous help for my living and studying like they have helped the other Chinese students. I am sure their contributions

have been highly recognised by all overseas students like by myself, thus today I would like to focus on sharing my own feeling on studying and working here.

First, I feel that Ghent University is brilliant in terms of flexibility and having a strong characteristic. The study schedule is very well-organised. Students could get the information of the name, time and venue of the courses online at least half a year in advance, then the students could choose the courses based on their own schedules and preference. Furthermore, the frequent use of information technology is also an advantage. When I arrived last year, as I was not familiar with the enrolment procedure, I had gone to the UFO department for completing the task. When I finished, the young lady smiled



at me and said “The enrolment for this year is completed. I hope that we will not see each other next year.” Then I realised that I could actually complete the enrolment procedure online myself. Thirdly, there is the emphasis of students’ participation in their education. During my time in Ghent, I have joined numerous activities and training programmes, most of which require students’ participation. I have once signed up a public speaking training course for PhD students. Before the courses began, the teacher had sent us an email and asked us to prepare a 3 to 5-minute personal speech with any topics for the course. I used two whole days to prepare for it. Though my speech was not picked for the class presentation, the teacher’s and the tutor’s advice and suggestions on my contents and presentation skills are still useful and valuable for my future.

Besides classes, my working experience in ICRH is also unforgettable. The professional and academic environment have impressed me the most. Every Tuesday, colleagues will share their working progress and experiences during the ‘scientific lunch meeting’. In 20–30 minutes, all participants are welcomed to give feedback and suggestions. These meetings serve not only the purpose of knowledge sharing but also help researchers to improve their research. I believe that this contributes to the excellent research performance of ICRH, such as we say in Chinese “The fire burns high when everybody adds wood to it”. The resource sharing system of ICRH is also something we could learn from. In the office, we all share one computer and the stationary stored in the common area with using based on the “take what you need” policy, which helps to maintain a high resource efficiency.

I have stayed in Gent only for a relatively short period, however, its people, environment and culture will definitely stay in my memory for a long time. I am sure in the future, if I look back on this treasured moment of my life, I will still be very proud that I was once part of the Ghent University.

My post-doctoral Research Experience at Ghent University

Dr. Li Jinke

former post-doctoral fellowship in the framework of the Lotus project
from Sichuan University

After having moved back to China for nearly five years now, I am still having dreams of going back to Ghent University in the nights. I miss the beautiful days in Ghent city a lot, my second homeland. I remember that the day I arrived Ghent, it was snowing hard. Since I came from southern China and had seldom seen snow, this gave me a first impression that Ghent was a cold city. However, the people in Ghent University and ICRH have given me a warm and kind welcome. At first Mrs Inge Mangelschots had given me a detailed introduction of Ghent University and the Lotus programme, then she told me I could come to her whenever I needed help. I was deeply touched by her kindness and wonderful personality. Later, I had to bother her not only with my visa extension, but also with my accommodation matters

in Ghent University. She has kept her promises and has helped me solving the problems very effectively.

After I had settled down in Ghent University, I started working in ICRH. Most of the time, I was the only Chinese-speaking person there, since Prof. Wei-Hong Zhang, my supervisor and my best friend in Ghent University, could only come to ICRH from Brussels every Monday due to her packed teaching schedule. She had already provided a lot of help before and after my arrival in Ghent University, however, I must still encounter the difficulties myself or look for others to help when she was not around. For example, the first problem I had was that my computer did not function properly. Luckily, Dirk, who was very kind to me and is always



ready to help, has assisted me to contact the IT department for resolving the critical situation. Besides Dirk, Oliver, the director of ICRH, and Sara De Meyer who shared the office with me, and many others of ICRH have helped me overcome loads of other problems such as how to use the coffee machine and printer, finding working materials, etc., as I could not understand a word from the Dutch writing instruction menus. I will never forget the kind smiles and warm assistance from everyone in ICRH.

The next thing I would love to share with you is the unforgettable experience with meeting Professor Marleen Temmerman. Although I never met her before arriving Ghent University, her name was already very familiar to me as I knew that she is an excellent gynaecologist and politician devoted to women's health, and of course, the founder of ICRH. During my stay in Gent, I was lucky enough to meet her around five times. Even if we did not talk much when we met, she still recognised me and greeted me with my name "Hi, Jinke" with a warm smile every time, even one year after my return to China when we saw each other again during a Beijing international conference.

Nowadays, I have become a professor in Sichuan University and supervisor for post-graduate students and what I have learned and experienced in Ghent University and ICRH five years ago is still very useful to me. I have published an international paper based on my research during my stay in ICRH 2013 in the European Journal of Contraception and Reproductive Health, and this research focusing on unmarried woman's contraceptive and reproductive health could go further this year as I have been awarded a programme funded by Sichuan Province government. I am also

very glad that with the assistance of Wei-Hong, whom I now cooperate with very well in many aspects, I have successfully recommended three colleagues to become research fellows in Ghent University and ICRH.

At last, in this 10 year anniversary of Ghent University China Platform, I would love to convey my best wishes to the Ghent University China Platform for bringing more fruitful cooperation between China and Belgium and a glorious future.



11. China and school autonomy.

An example of research set up in the Flanders-China collaboration

Prof. Dr. M. Valcke, Dou D., Prof. Dr. G. Devos

Department of Educational Studies, Ghent University

The Chinese educational system and school autonomy: is this a reality?

School autonomy is not the first thing people think about when they consider the Chinese educational system. So the question is whether this concept is applicable to the Chinese setting. Worldwide, we observe a growing trend towards educational decentralisation, devolution and greater autonomy for public schools. This is expected to improve educational quality, resulting in school effectiveness. The first actor affected by discussion about school autonomy is the school leader. Decentralisation does not only open opportunities for school development, but also invokes large organisational changes calling for highly motivated school leaders that can lead their staff and manage their school.

In contrast to what most people think, the educational system in China has experienced a strong decentralisation reform over the past three decades. Since the 1980s, local educational authorities and schools have gained increasing autonomy in key decision-making domains. But, on the other hand, and since the year 2000, researchers have also observed a new policy shift in education reforms in China, from decentralisation to “re-centralisation”, resulting in autonomy being retracted from

schools (Cheng, 1994; Hanson, 1995; Arnone et al. 1999; Hawkins, 2000; Ornelas, 2000; Bulkley, 2002; Tsang, 2003; Mok, 2008; Zhao, 2009). Though the literature often describes this trend in China's educational system, there is a lack of empirical studies about how school autonomy works (Wong, 2006), especially in the context of re-centralisation. In a series of studies, researchers affiliated to the department of Educational Studies at Ghent University explored school autonomy in numerous provinces and cities. Next to an exploration of the state of the art, the studies also focused on contextual variables explaining the relative school autonomy available to schools, despite the context of re-centralisation. This research was set up in close collaboration with Beijing Normal University.

School autonomy reflects the power schools receive to make decisions about aspects of school management (Wohlstetter, Wenning, & Briggs, 1995; Eurydice, 2007; Wößmann, Lüdemann, Schütz, & West, 2007). Researchers stress different categories of school autonomy, related to funding, curricula and textbooks, student policies and personnel management (Welsh & McGinn, 1999; Winkler, 1993; Gunnar S. Eskeland & Deon Filmer, 2002; Gunnar S. Eskeland & Deon Filmer, 2002; Wößmann, L., Lüdemann, E., Schütz, G. & West, M.R., 2007; PISA,

2000; Gunnarsson, L., P. Orazem, M. Sanchez, & A. Verdisco, 2004). The trend to give autonomy to local schools in the domains specified, is strongly influenced by financial constraints. Because the state became less able to provide sufficient educational services to the whole educational system, the Communist Party of China (CPC) promulgated the "Decision on the Structural Reform of China's Education System" in 1985. Tsang (1996) explains characteristics of the reform: decentralisation in financing structure, and diversification in financing sources. In other words, local authorities (government at and below the provincial level) became empowered with the autonomy and responsibility for running schools, and were encouraged to raise funds from multiple sources apart from the governmental budget (Hawkins, 2000; Ngok & Chan, 2003). For example, in Guizhou, an underdeveloped province in China, 93.3% of the financial cost of general-secondary education was covered by local governments, 5.3% by the provincial government, and only 1.4% by the central government (Tsang, 1990).

The autonomy expanded and started affecting other school management aspects. For example, schools were permitted to increase student intakes, especially fee-paying students, to yield revenue (Painter & Mok, 2008). These fee-paying students became an important financial source for schools. This also strengthened the links between outside sectors and schools (Wong, 2006). These extra funds helped to hire extra teachers. As can be predicted, this new élan created new inequities. Especially schools in deprived areas and in lower social economical areas – receiving less central funding – suffered to deliver quality. This results in an increase in school drop-out, e.g. in rural areas (see Yang, 2005 and Rosen, 2004). The picture became disturbing and resulted

– in the late 1990s – in a new legal decision by the CPC to retract certain autonomy and responsibilities from the local governments and schools (Arnove et al. 1999; Hanson, 1995; Hawkins, 2000; Tsang, 2003). Especially important was the implementation of the Law of Education, in which the responsibility of the government at each level of compulsory education was restated. The Law of Education reinstated the main responsibility for financing and administering compulsory education at the level of the county (Law of Education, 2002, 2006). The CPC also initiated a new payment method called *yi fei zhi* in 2002 to curb the outrageous increase in tuition fees.

Despite the recent policy shift in China's educational reforms, such as "re-centralisation" (Bulkley, 2002; Hawkins, 2000; Ornelas, 2000), "decentralised centralism" (Karlsen, 2000) and "de-marketisation" (Painter and Mok, 2008), there seems to be an agreement that school autonomy has shrunk in key domains of school decision making. But, more recently, researchers (e.g. Painter, Mok, 2008; Zhao, 2008) point out that the re-centralisation has not fundamentally reversed the situation, but rather remediated flaws of the earlier autonomy reform.

The current situation in secondary schools

It is difficult to generalise policy decisions and their implications when studying an entire educational system. Therefore, we mainly focus on the secondary educational system in the next section. Remember that the compulsory education age is up to junior secondary education. Considering the situation anno 2015–2016, three main observations come forward. Firstly, senior secondary schools fall partly outside the focus of central and local governments. Senior high schools continued having a large level

of relative school autonomy. This has resulted in large – for instance regional – differences in educational provisions. For example, urban schools could benefit from their city location to get rent for unoccupied buildings and ask large school fees from rich parents. Secondly, Chinese education has experienced a “New Curriculum Reform” around the year 2000. In contrast to the dominant exam-oriented system, this curriculum reform aimed at developing creativity, problem-solving skills and life-long learning (Yuan, 2006; Liu & Máiréadm, 2009). But the prevailing strong exam orientation is in conflict with this reform. Especially elite schools refuse to adopt the curriculum reform and stick to the old exam orientation to guarantee graduate university enrolment success (Pang, 2004).

Thirdly, principals seem to get very specific responsibilities. A school leader responsibility system was proposed in 1985 as part of the decentralisation reform and was officially implemented in 1993. But, principals feel they hold an ambiguous position. They feel constrained by the government and/or market mechanisms outside of the school, but they seem to have a strong say inside the school (Feng, 2005).

It is in the context of these increasing tensions and dilemmas in the educational system that we set up our school autonomy study. Facing the “back-and-forth” policy shifts and the complexity of their working environment, principals use their autonomy to orchestrate the resources and keep a balance in meeting the demands of central and local governments, teachers, parents and students in a variety of contexts. In the present study, we reconsider the concrete effects of re-centralisation at the school level, as how principals adopt coping strategies. Considering the observations about growing inequity, we also focus on differences linked

to urban/rural and developed/underdeveloped differences characteristics of schools.

The outcomes of the study: the perceived autonomy gap

Based on surveys and interviews involving teachers and principals of 26 schools, from three different Chinese economical development regions, we collected a large set of data. In the context of this book, we cannot give all details of the data collection and the analysis results. But to cut things short, the research has resulted in the establishment of an innovative concept in the literature: the perceived autonomy gap. It is not the actual gap in experienced autonomy that plays a key role, it is rather the perception of this gap by the principals. For school leaders, their job is characterised by demanding responsibilities. In a school setting, we also frequently observed a combination of high work demands and low job autonomy. People are more motivated and perform most optimal when the requirements of the work environment are aligned with their own needs and abilities (Van Yperen et al., 2014). If autonomy policy arrangements do not fit local conditions and demands, a high level of autonomy can be a burden for schools rather than a blessing. Therefore, it is important to take school leaders’ perception of the autonomy gap into account. Researchers find that the perceived autonomy gap can be influenced by contextual characteristics. For instance, in the Chinese context, schools with a higher reputation or in well-developed areas tend to be more autonomous and also enjoy additional resources (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2012; OECD, 2010), resulting in lower perceived autonomy gaps. Therefore, two contextual characteristics have been taken into account: school socioeconomic status and school reputation.

We calculated the autonomy gap by subtracting school leaders' perceived and preferred autonomy. Student enrolment and teacher salary were the two domains that school leaders' presented as the largest autonomy gap (mean > 2). The autonomy gap in teacher evaluation was reported to be the lowest, indicating that school leaders seem to be satisfied with the autonomy in teacher evaluation (mean = 0.32). As to contextual characteristics, neither school SES nor reputation was significantly linked to school leaders' perceptions of the autonomy gap ($p=.067$, and $p=.897$, respectively). As stated above, next to surveys we also conducted interviews. These focused on analysing leadership practices. The related analysis of the results reveal how there seems to be a clear link between perceived autonomy gaps and leadership behaviour.

Conclusions

The findings of this study have clear policy implications. Governments should invest in supporting school leaders to use their autonomy by providing training programs and setting up an appropriate accountability system. For schools that are less capable to implement autonomy, the governments should help them to transit from a “command-and-control” to an “autonomy-in-return-for-accountability” system (Adamowski et al., 2007). In addition, the governments should also pay attention to school leader selection procedures. Selecting a school leader should not be a purely administrative procedure, but requires several considerations if the aim is school innovation.

Table 1 Mean and SD of school leaders' perceptions of autonomy in different domains.

	Perceived autonomy		Preferred autonomy		Autonomy gap	
	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.
Curriculum	3.8	1.31	4.64	0.69	0.84	1.35
Vision	4.08	1.08	4.74	0.6	0.66	1.1
Raising Funds	2.57	1.27	3.5	1.47	0.84	2.03
Using funds	2.81	1.12	4.61	0.77	1.3	1.33
Student Enrolment	2.37	1.33	4.49	0.77	2.08	1.55
Hiring Teachers	2.67	1.49	4.61	0.73	1.9	1.58
Firing Teachers	2.54	1.51	4.22	1.11	1.68	1.63
Teacher evaluation	4.52	0.68	4.84	0.42	0.32	0.59
Teacher salary	1.96	1.29	4.24	1.17	2.32	1.52



12. Cooperation with Chinese partner institutions: some research and practice-based reflections

Prof. Dr. ir. Guy Smagghe

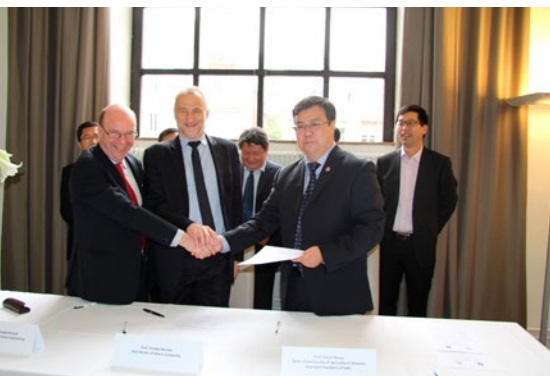
Department of Crop Protection, Faculty of Bioscience Engineering, Ghent University

- **Chongqing**, College of Plant Protection, Southwest University
- **Beijing**, Institute for Plant Protection, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences
- **Guangzhou**, School of Life Sciences, South China Normal University
- **Nanjing**, Nanjing Agricultural University
- **Hangzhou**, Institute of Insect Science, Zhejiang University
- **Shanghai**, Institute of Plant Physiology and Ecology, Chinese Academy of Sciences

Cooperation with Chinese partner institutions: some research and practice-based reflections

The development of China's agriculture with more sustainable and bio safe strategies to protect crops against damage by insects and mites with less pesticide usage

China is modernising its agriculture system and keeps trying to cope with the changes the times require, especially with its growing population. Traditionally China has struggled to feed its large population. Even in the twentieth century, famines periodically ravaged China's population. Therefore great emphasis has always been put on agricultural production. Although China is a geographical pivot of history and power based on MacKinder in Robert D. Kaplan's book "The Revenge of Geography", most of the land of China is agriculturally unproductive, and the arable land is concentrated in a band of river valleys and along the southern and eastern



coasts. China feeds 22 percent of the world population with only seven percent of the planet's arable land. Indeed, the land is heavily utilised for agriculture. Wheat, corn, soybeans, barley, kaoliang (sorghum), millet are grown in the north and central China, and rice is the dominant crop in the south. Some places even produce double crops of rice, and most crops for export are grown in the coastal areas where there are relatively good roads and access to ports used for exporting produce. About 35 percent of China's labour force is in agriculture, and there are 425 million agricultural workers (i.e. 200 million farming households) and they make up about 60 percent of the population (info from <http://factsanddetails.com/china>). China aims to produce safe and high quality food and products with less pesticide usage. This results in remarkably direct implications for the Chinese agriculture system, sometimes automatically replacing their own procedural rules. Integrated pest management (IPM) and biological control strategies are implemented together with modern biotechnology tactics.

There have been many encouraging and important developments in the field of agriculture and plant protection for a safe food supply. Stefan Blommaert too agrees that China reacts diligently to criticism, but they make necessary changes and implement them. In the field of pesticide usage we are now down to polishing

up the rules on pesticide residues and resolving problems with usage of high amounts of toxic pesticides, generally beneficial for human health and with environmental risks. There is public awareness. In recent years the Chinese growing upper and middle class has begun to embrace organic farming as a source of safe food which is a phenomenon also present in western society. In March 2009, China announced it would increase spending on agricultural production by 20 percent amid warnings of harmful effects of climate change, food shortages and food crises. As a central part of his annual budget speech at the Great Hall of the People, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao said an extra 121 billion yuan would be spent on boosting farm yields and raising rural incomes. With the recent \$43 billion buy of [the Anglo-Swiss pharmaceutical, agriculture products and seed giant Syngenta](#) by the China National Chemical Corporation ([ChemChina](#)) in May 2016, [President Xi Jinping and his Prime Minister Li Keqiang confirmed the need to produce enough corn, wheat and rice to feed its people and so not to become dependent on foreign food sources.](#) [China is also open for the use of GMO crops.](#) In addition, there exists a [changing diet in China](#) and extra investments in rural infrastructure are welcome. The Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology (*MOST*) made investments and implemented research projects and bilateral agreements with FWO-Flanders in



Belgium support innovative proposals. Indeed China has very advanced agricultural research centres and laboratories that do research on and generate information on the latest fertilisers, pollution risks and genetically-engineered crops. Now these new data and insights have to find their way to the farmers. As reported in Gilbert Van Kerckhove's book "Toxic capitalism – A view from China", pollution and waste are an issue in the world and in China too, but recent evolution in this matter has been positive. The results sheet for a country in rapid economic and social development is impressive, with a boost by the government for a safer food production.

"What we are trying is like a dream for us," said a young citrus farmer in Chongqing province when I visited with my students during a field visit. Under heavy sunshine – luckily we had a solar parasol, we collected pest insects and mites to monitor for pesticide resistance development. In his citrus orchard runs a system of biological control with natural enemies, so he can reduce pesticide use significantly. Less pesticides is better for human health and safer for the environment, and it also gives a better sales price and lower production costs.

From the above, it can easily be appreciated that agriculture over the different regions in China differs in many ways. The travel novel by Marc Buelens and co. from the west province of Xinjiang to the East coast in Chengdu confirms the enormous diversity of this country. Indeed, when it comes to the adoption of technology, biological control and/or biotechnology, much depends on the developmental level of the province, city, county/district.

What can I do there? Where can we make a difference together? In 2012, in collaboration

with the Institute for Plant Protection of CAAS in Beijing, different Chinese strains of the entomopathogenic fungus *Beauveria bassiana* were screened in the lab and now they are tested for efficacy in the greenhouse to control trips damage in vegetables. We believe this will contribute to a safer food production. Over the years, I could start collaborations with different partners. Our joint mission was the interest in innovations in science and technology with insects important in agriculture. At the East coast this was in the labs at the Institute of Plant Physiology and Ecology of CAS in Shanghai, at Nanjing Agricultural University in Nanjing and at the Institute of Insect Science, Zhejiang University, and in the South at the School of Life Sciences, South China Normal University. We investigate original biological questions, for instance to better understand the unique developmental process of metamorphosis in insects. Hormones and environmental factors play a crucial role so that insects can develop after birth with a conspicuous and abrupt change in the animal's body structure through cell growth and differentiation. Also linked with this are global aspects as climate change and the risks for new invasive pest insects and diseases. Sometimes people say that there is plenty of money in China. Yes, thanks to its growing economy. Advanced equipment for proteomics and genomics is indeed available. My collaborative efforts also direct to the use of biotechnology for a better and safer pest control, especially in the control of the brown planthopper (*Nilaparvata lugens*), which is the most devastating pest insect in rice. I remember the first edition of the International Conference on the Insect Midgut we organised in 2008 in Guangzhou. Then the labs were primitively equipped and students' English language skills poor, but in a short period of only few years, this country has grown into a high-standard scientific community. I

witnessed for instance that at the practical courses the modern tools and equipment are present now. The many different key state labs and CAS/CAAS institutes now perform excellent pieces of research. The investments of CSC grants for mobility and training changed the scientific landscape; many of the current young leaders and PIs had a training in North America and Europe. In my lab in Ghent University, three students already obtained their PhD with great success and all three are now young lecturers/professors in China. Seven other young talents are still in the preparation of their dissertation with nice pieces of research and they have similar ambitions to contribute to the progress of their country. To date, high impact papers and Science Citation indexes have increasingly become common standards in the hiring process for new academic staff in China. The art of competition, which starts even at very young age, is enforcing for quality. This confirms the high catching-up progress this country is making towards North America and Europe.

On the 29th of May 2014, I signed a project for five years in the thousand talents programme with the rector of Southwest University in Chongqing. It allows to help further in the development of this large country with an excellent team of professors and lecturers, a large group of students, PhD students in their young career development and Master students in their training in insect physiology, molecular biology and crop protection. In June 2015, the leadership of Ghent University and Southwest University signed a MOU and Collaborative Agreement, which should enforce more partnership with interactions and exchange of staff and students in both directions. Early July 2016, a delegation of Chongqing city headed by the vice-mayor Mr H.E. Wu Gang and the Southwest University already visited Ghent University, its

International Training Centre and Ghent city. For myself, I hope to continue my activities in China, allowing me to meet new cultures, new people, new ideas, and obtain inspiration for my research team at Ghent University and more colleagues, staff and students in Ghent and Flanders. In a changing world, the philosophy of Confucius, still a foundation in common Chinese tradition and belief, may emphasise personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice and sincerity. What is my motivation? *Passion for scientific research to serve our society.*

13. Exchanges in the field of production and logistics management

Prof. Dr. Veronique Limère

Department of Business Informatics and Operations Management, Ghent University

Economic globalisation inevitably causes some manufacturing activities to move to countries with lower manufacturing costs, China being one of them. As a matter of fact, China belongs to the countries that are named as candidates for *high-tech* manufacturing migration.¹⁰ Moreover, China is the largest country in the world with regard to inhabitants. With a whopping 18% of the world population, it is to be expected that sometime during their professional careers in operations management, one will come into contact with Chinese people.

As it is our task, as an educational institute, to prepare our students for their future career, not only hard skills should be taught, but amongst others also attention to cultural diversity and its impact on business is important. For Asia specifically, it seems that its culture sometimes instils fear or is not overly attractive. To my opinion, however, this lack of appreciation has much to do with the unknown. Therefore, getting to know and learning to appreciate the Chinese culture adds value, and allows us to eliminate the anxiety for what is different.

The best and probably only thorough way to learn about a culture is to immerse oneself in it. Yet, in order to enable our students to do

so, we need solid partnerships with Chinese universities and industry. This way, we can offer opportunities for internationalisation through exchange programs and internationalisation at home. Unfortunately, the distance between us, both literally and figuratively, does not facilitate building trust and setting up strong partnerships. It takes effort and time, but is definitely worthwhile.

My own experience in building these partnerships dates from when I was still a postdoctoral researcher at the Faculty of Engineering. In 2012, I was first asked to give a two-week course on work measurement in Daqing. This question came when the first Volvo automotive plant was starting up, in a city that previously was mainly economically active in petroleum mining. As agreed, early 2013 I left for a three-week journey, first visiting some universities throughout the country, and next giving the lectures in the North of China where it gets freezing cold in the winter. This was my first encounter with China, both personally and professionally, and even though there are more agreeable climates, my interest in the country was aroused.

Since then, I have been making further contacts, visiting universities all over the country, from Daqing in the North, to Chengdu in the West, and Shanghai in the East. Meanwhile, I switched to the Faculty of Economics and Business

10. Making the move to low-cost countries. By TILL Vestring, Ted Rouse, Uwe Reinert and Suvir Varma, 2005.

Administration and together with former Dean Marc De Clercq, a trip was organised to visit some departments in related research fields, under the guidance of Prof. Luc Taerwe. Moreover, the connection with Volvo, that today has already opened three manufacturing facilities in China,¹¹ remained.

This network of academic and industrial partners allows to introduce China to students in the form of inbound and outbound internationalisation. Experiences can be shared, international guest lectures can be organised, and students, on undergraduate, graduate and PhD level, can be invited, in both directions, for exchange programs and internships. With regard to this latter activity, two students were sent out last summer for an internship in the automotive industry. Master's students in Business Engineering, Evelyn Naessens and Tijs Engelst, travelled to Luqiao, 350 km south

of Shanghai, to help with the start-up of a new production plant in which Volvo cars will be manufactured. This project took place within the framework of their Master's dissertations. Their experiences were very positive. Not only did they have the chance to experience the hospitality of Chinese people, they also had the opportunity to get acquainted with their way of working and professional relationships.

Next steps

In the years to come, further efforts will have to take place in order to enhance and extend the cooperation. A first action is to send another Master's student to work on his Master's dissertation in cooperation with Volvo. This time, the internship will happen at the manufacturing plant in Chengdu. Moreover, the internship will be followed with an academic exchange with Sichuan University, allowing the student to stay in China for a longer time.

11. <https://www.media.volvocars.com/global/en-gb/media/pressreleases/199915/volvo-cars-expands-production-in-china-and-unveils-new-china-strategy> Accessed at 8 November 2016





Combining academic and industrial exchange will allow for developing stronger relationships with specific cities and regions. This might also be of importance for Belgian industry. Although cost migration activities are unavoidable, the way of dealing with them will make a difference in establishing mutual trust and creating mutual benefits. Within this regard, our government periodically organises academic and trade missions to China. In September 2013, during the mission by former Minister Kris Peeters, a summer school about “Advanced trends in manufacturing organisation” was organised by Prof. Hendrik Van Landeghem and myself. Contributing to and participating in future missions should also be pursued.

Furthermore, new actions will involve setting up cooperation with other companies and universities.

Finally, aside from the efforts professors at Ghent University can do in their respective subject domains, the China platform should continue supporting them with all kinds of organisational problems. One of the important tasks they have within that regard is following up on diplomatic issues. At the moment there are major problems in the procurement of visa documents for internships, both inbound and outbound. We were confronted with this problem when Tijs and Evelyn were not able to obtain a travel visa for their stay in China on their own. Fortunately, the China platform and the International Relations Office were of great help and assisted in the procedures. Furthermore, at the moment they are following up the government instances of both countries on how to systematically organise these visa requests, for internships linked to studies at a university, in the future.

Testimonials

Evelyn Naessens

A ten-week internship in China was bound to be a memorable experience. It was our challenge to make it the good kind of memorable. From the first moment, it was clear that we would live in a completely different world. Although there are technologies, such as mobile payment, that are considerably better developed, this period made us youngsters more aware of how lucky we are to live in a country like Belgium. We pay high taxes, but – even though I generalise – we can enjoy top-of-the-world education regardless our origin or wealth, never have to worry about quality issues (e.g. food and hygiene) and have a good health care system.

What I liked the most is that we got to know China's beauty in all its forms. The people are enormously hospital. From day one, our colleagues have done everything to help us, professionally as well as personally. They have showed us that colleagues, sometimes living hundreds of kilometres from their relatives, are a new family. We did many activities together such as the very popular karaoke, our weekly badminton session, visiting an amusement park, having dinner together... The latter, we have done a lot. We have eaten in numerous small restaurants and enjoyed several local specialties. Thanks to them, we could eat delicious food from menu cards that did not contain pictures. In the weekends, we took the time to explore China. We discovered more traditional cities like Suzhou as well as the metropolitan cities Shanghai and Beijing. Such a big country also has numerous beautiful sceneries. Discovering all those places, combined with the daily life, made us have an all-round impression of China.

Of course, the core purpose of the trip was the internship. It was a great opportunity to get to know the ins and outs of a manufacturing plant in start-up. Not having to focus on a sole subject, but being able to create a complete overview of the processes by making a value stream map, was a big plus. Not all information was presented on a silver plate, since there are a lot of uncertainties in this phase for the employees as well. But we were very fortunate that we could rely on a great team that always stood by us if we needed help or information.

Tijs Engelrelst

During this summer and over a period of ten weeks, I had the chance to discover China as part of my master thesis project. This master thesis is linked to my master in Business Engineering studies at Ghent University. The aim of the project was to implement management

tools in a new Chinese Volvo and Geely car manufacturing plant in their efforts to continuously improve their processes. The car plant was located in Taizhou, a small city of almost six million people, 300 km south of Shanghai in the Zhejiang province. The city still has a really pure Chinese culture and there aren't living many expats there, which made the experience really interesting in every single way.

The amount of help we received from the Chinese people working at the car plant was enormous. Almost every single evening or day during the weekend, they proposed to go out eating, play badminton, go visit a city, etc., or they just helped with some issues we had. It was also great to learn many things from these people about the Chinese culture and they were really happy as well that they could learn about our culture and train their English language skills.



Besides the great experiences in Taizhou, we visited Shanghai, Beijing, Suzhou, the Yandang Mountains, among other places and cities. Every visit was totally different than the other ones, which always made it extremely interesting. Over a period of ten weeks, we really discovered that China is a country which never gets boring and has a very unique and interesting culture. I can say that these ten weeks in China have been an incredible experience and have developed me in a personal way of which I never thought it would be possible. An experience I will never forget!





14. China: a fascinating experience

Prof. Dr. ir. Luc Taerwe

Director China Platform / Head Department of Structural Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, Ghent University

In this essay, I share some personal impressions which I have collected during my more than 25 visits to China since 2004, as an engineer, an academician and tourist. Most of the visits started and ended in Shanghai, my Chinese “home town”, a fascinating city for a structural engineer, but above all, a metropolis where European and Asian cultures meet. During each visit I still remain impressed by the rapid evolutions that take place and the economic drive of this society and especially the younger generations. And honestly, it takes some time to feel comfortable under the impressive wings of the Chinese dragon.

My main confusion is that I will never be able to understand this continuously evolving country and to grasp the driving forces behind it, but for me it is satisfying enough to be fascinated by the tremendous achievements that took place in just a couple of decades. Perhaps I should not try to understand everything, like also the Chinese themselves do not do. They don't bother about it as long as everything is planned conveniently:

*Let the ruler behave like the ruler
The subject like the subject
Let father behave like father
Son like son
(Confucius)*

I am very grateful to my Chinese colleagues and their master students who made sure that I could travel in the most efficient and comfortable way. I crossed the country from Daqing to Sanya and from Chengdu to Shanghai, by plane and high-speed train. I like to travel in the comfortable high-speed train coaches at 300km/h. I like the impressive railway stations while drinking a Starbucks coffee and reading the China Daily in the waiting halls until the train leaves exactly on time. I like to look at the typical faces of people coming from different regions in the country and I like to guess which local food they carry in their improvised luggage bags. I am wondering who is living in the thousands of monotonous apartment blocks that arise like mushrooms at the city outskirts, gradually exerting a strangling grip on it.

“Study the past if you would define the future”: indeed, to understand China's international policy it is necessary to learn about its history. It is very instructive to visit the Presidential palace and the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen memorial in Nanjing. Especially the “century of humiliation” and the Japanese invasion during the 1930's and 40's, allows one to understand Chinese political decisions which sometimes seem strange from a Western democratic point of view. Another quote of Confucius: *‘The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home.’*

Actually, China just regained its prominent position of centuries ago. Even in ancient China, a lot of achievements in science and technology took place. Quoting President Xi Jinping during his visit to the UK in 2015: *"There is both appreciation, understanding and confidence, as worries, doubts or misunderstanding about China. To understand and appreciate a country with over 5000 years of civilisation, 56 ethnic groups and more than 1.3 billion people is no easy job."* Anyhow, I would like to urge Belgian politicians to visit China in order to experience the economic developments, the size of the country and its cities and especially the efficient way of making decisions and the speed of realising big projects. The Chinese economic and scientific train is running at ever increasing speed. It would be a pity if Western countries remained discussing on the platform and missed the leaving train. Let's try to actively participate in the *"One Belt, One Road"* project, which is a development strategy and framework, proposed by President Xi Jinping, that focuses on connectivity and cooperation among countries, primarily between the People's Republic of China and the rest of Eurasia, which contains two main components, the land-based *"Silk Road Economic Belt"* and the oceangoing *"Maritime Silk Road"*.

I am very much in favour of the triple helix concept i.e. university-industry-government relationships which can formally be defined as *"the thesis that the potential for innovation and economic development in a Knowledge Society lies in a more prominent role for the university and in the hybridisation of elements from university, industry and government to generate new institutional and social formats for the production, transfer and application of knowledge"*. In this way I initiated cooperation with plants or offices of Belgian companies in China

(ArcelorMittal, Beaulieu, Bekaert, CPM, Picanol, Soudal, Umicore, ...), the Volvo Car Company and the Geely Company. The Volvo plants in Chengdu and Daqing resulted in cooperation agreements with Sichuan University, Southwest Jiaotong University and Northeast Petroleum University. Participation in the State Visit of Their Majesties the King and the Queen of the Belgians in 2015, the mission of Prime Minister Kris Peeters in 2013 and several missions of the Province of East Flanders allowed us to establish cooperation in a more formal way.

The higher education system, encompassing various selection levels for the students in combination with a selective financial support based on a ranking system, has resulted in several highly qualified universities which are at the top international level. In Civil Engineering and Architecture and Urban Planning, Tongji University is ranked first. Tongji has extensive test facilities in the State Key Laboratory for Disaster Reduction in Civil Engineering. I enjoyed a three-year appointment as High-End Foreign Expert which allowed me to cooperate in unique research projects and finally resulted in an agreement for a joint lab. For three years already several master students in Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Architectural Engineering have studied for a full academic year or one semester at Tongji, and several of them obtained a scholarship of the Chinese Scholarship (CSC). I am very grateful towards CSC for providing these scholarships, also to the many Chinese PhD students who perform(ed) research at Ghent University. I think that it is very important to facilitate student exchange in both directions which indeed means also in the direction of Chinese universities. This also holds for staff exchange. Students of Ghent University actively participated in Summer Schools at Sichuan University and

Tsinghua University and in the Snow Sculpture Contest at Harbin Engineering University. I also cooperate with colleagues of Dalian University of Technology, Harbin Institute of Technology, Southeast University (Nanjing) and Zhejiang University (Hangzhou).

The high-rise buildings in the Pudong district are really fascinating and I had the occasion to visit most of them, even during the construction stage. Recently I had the occasion to visit the 1000 metric tons weighing Tuned Mass Damper on top of the Shanghai Tower, with a height of 632m, the second largest building in the world.

China is vigorously promoting an innovation-driven development strategy. I recently visited the High-Tech Zone (400 km²), the Alibaba Headquarters, a robot manufacturer and a cluster of start-ups in Hangzhou city. Everywhere I met very enthusiastic and motivated people who are creating China's future at an incredible speed. So many things happen simultaneously in China, that it is simply not possible to follow up on even a small part of it. In a recent issue of the Newsletter of the Mission of China to the EU, I found the following headings: *The sixth China-EU High-level Economic and Trade Dia-*

logue reaches progress in EU-China economic cooperation / China expected to reach 2016 steel reduction targets ahead of schedule / China is committed to constructive participation in global governance, assures President Xi / G20 success reflects China's enormous progress / China and EU to step up education cooperation / China and Europe celebrate friendship and Chinese Culture at Open House Day.

I also had the occasion to travel to several smaller cities and to various scenic regions, enjoying the beautiful nature and the millennia old culture. In this way I could also experience everyday life of ordinary people in China.

I acknowledge the help I received from Domien Proost, Chi Zhang, Isabelle De Coen and Inge Mangelschots from the China Platform during my various trips and the financial support from the Province of East Flanders. I very much enjoyed to attend activities organised by the Chinese Embassy in Brussels, the Belgian Embassy in Beijing, the Belgian Consulate in Shanghai, the Flemish Chinese Chamber of Commerce (FCCC), the Belgian Chinese Chamber of Commerce (BCCC), VLIS (*Vlamingen in Shanghai*), FIT and many more organisations.





Delegation at Harbin University – Snow Sculpture Contest

ir. Tim Van Mullem

PhD student, Department of Structural Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture

Harbin University, which is located in the north of China, has organised the “Harbin University Snow Sculpture Contest” for many years. In 2016, Ghent University was invited to participate in this international event. The goal was to create an original sculpture out of a snow cube with dimensions of 3×3×3m.

The honour fell to Poutrix, the civil engineering student organisation of Ghent University, to constitute a team for the contest. The team comprised four students: Sebastian Ablorh, Sander Franco, Thomas Linthout, and Tim Van Mullem. These four students were assisted by the post-doctoral researchers Dr. ir. Philip Van den Heede and Dr. ir. Didier Snoeck.

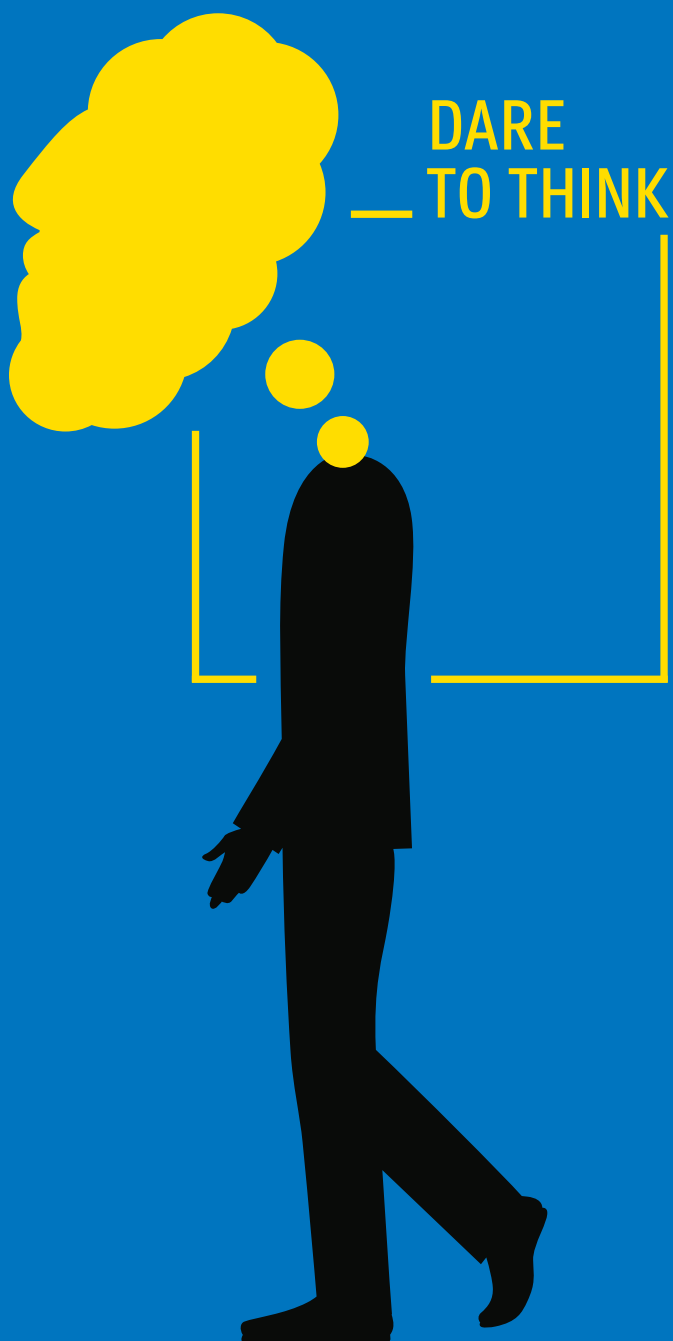
The beginning of the adventure started already in the last months of 2015 when they came up with a design for the contest, which honoured the friendship between Harbin University and Ghent University. The design consisted of a world globe flanked on the one side by the well-known Book Tower of Ghent University and on the other side by the Long La tower, which is an eye catcher in Harbin's skyline. As a finishing touch the logo of Ghent University was added in front of the globe. The design received the name “Two sides of one world”.

A few weeks before the start of the contest the team made a scale model in order to test the most efficient sequence of execution. The real adventure could then begin on the 2nd of January 2016 when the team boarded their flight to China. Upon arrival they were directly struck

by reality: a freezing temperature of -25°C, but these cold temperatures were quickly forgotten on the kick-off event organised by Harbin University. Here, the 65 competing teams were introduced to one another.

During the next four days the team worked 10 hours a day on their sculpture, aided by their Chinese translators. In between the work on the sculpture, Harbin University organised different activities, which made a welcome change to the hard work. The delegation of Ghent participated for example in a workshop about marine concrete structure technology. The highlight was, nonetheless, the visit to the world-famous Ice Sculpture Festival, which is held each year on the banks of the Songhua river just outside of Harbin.

After four days of fighting the cold, the contest ended with a grand closing ceremony. Here the organisers bestowed a “Recognition Award” on the Ghent team. This was a memorable end to a cordial participation.



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