BETWEEN DRAGONS AND BRIDGES: THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND 'EXPERTS' IN THE PRODUCTION OF RELATIONAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHINA

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Abstract

Studies of representation of countries and cultures have recently shifted to analysis of agents and their networks, participating in creating knowledge by consciously or unconsciously embedding the "product" in their vocabulary, interests and relations to other actors. This thesis examines the role of experts and the quality press in representing China in the high-level EU discourse. I have chosen China as a case study, since in recent years China has drawn much media coverage: it has been portrayed as the new rising superpower, a repressive regime and at the same time – a land of opportunities, an exotic and interesting country. Using Bourdieu's concept of the "field" and analysing multiple interactions between different participants in knowledge-production, this thesis focuses on the positionalities and language habits of both experts and writers in the media. It argues that the conflicting character of representation in the media results from (a) "methodological nationalism" and (b) the requirement of the popular media to produce an easily digestible story with recognisable patterns (a package of China-knowledge to be delivered to non-Chinese readers). In opposition policy experts see EU-China interaction in relational terms, shaping their vocabulary and positions in ways that facilitate "servicing" China's relations with the EU.

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Introduction

"What do you see? A cuddly panda or a menacing dragon?" – this opening of Peter Hays Gries' article captures the essence of typical representation of china (Gries 2005: 235). In a similar vein, Harold R. Isaacs powerfully suggests that "images of the Chinese tend to come in jostling pairs. The Chinese are seen as a superior people and an inferior people; devilishly exasperating heathens and wonderfully attractive humanists" (1980: 70). This thesis analyses representation production about the country which had always had complex historical relations with European powers. The main question it poses is how different actors, namely, policy experts and quality media, shape high-level EU public discourse and perceptions about China, i.e., how different kinds of knowledge on China depend on different positions of actors. I argue for a grounded and relational approach in studying knowledge-production about China, and claim that knowledge is produced through institutionalised and informal patterns of interaction between different actors, interests and vocabularies. Thus it is always an interaction between interests and frameworks of institutions and genres.

The media discourse often refers to easily "digestible" patterns of recognition: the dragon and the panda have become effortlessly recognisable images associated with China, as it is presented using dichotomies and portraying the world as a playground of conflict and chaos. I use discourse analysis to explain how and why even quality press participates in this process of digestible representation production.

Conversely, policy experts see themselves as responsible for bridging the gap of misunderstandings and presenting the complexity of China. As one of my informants claims, if he was to identify his "client", that would be the EU-China relations, not the EU or China

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themselves. The experts, as interviews suggest, do not present themselves as objective, but rather as alternative not only in position but also in their approach to issues. Furthermore, the experts are a group with interests in public debates. Their careers are built on EU-China relations, and they cooperate with the media to promote their cause, although criticising it, too. They are conscious of their position associated with relations and not states. This fact suggests that Relational Sociology approach is the most appropriate to conceptualise their role and capture their relational identity.

My research methodology included semi-structured interviews with experts and discourse analysis of the press that has, as I assumed and the experts confirmed, the monopoly for producing knowledge for the EU policy makers. The interviews were conducted during a two-week research trip to Brussels – a central locality of representation production, where knowledge-making is closely influenced by the presence of EU institutions, as well as academic centres. The fieldwork allowed me to see how the experts see their positionality vis-à-vis the media and politicians.

My choice of China was informed primarily by the fact that China is increasingly perceived by politicians as an economic threat, while it is also seen as the land of opportunities for European businesses. Recent political events, the riots in Tibet and their suppression in 2008, and in the most recent days – the flood that claimed thousands of lives, have brought the problem of representing China even to the media discourse. The fact that China is represented in simplistic generalisations has received attention from the media[1] and intellectuals[2]. However, China's perception in the "West" has been widely studied, but to a great extent

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[1] For example, the "Economist" acknowledges that the "[c]overage in the Western press of unrest in Tibet has been rather one-sided. It has stressed the harsh Chinese crackdown on peaceful protests and tended to overlook the violence by Tibetans." *Economist*, 2008. "Flame on").
[2] See Žižek 2008.

assuming that the West equals to the United States, whereas the public discourse about China is largely different in the EU, especially in the supranational, politically-correct high-level EU discourse. The literature that frames representations of China as Orientalist generally takes representation as a substance, and not as a product that reflects interaction of representation producers.

To give a wider context of the above-mentioned issues, the first part of the thesis presents Bourdieu's concept of field and the relational sociology approach to knowledge. In addition, it discusses the history of representing China in the West, highlighting the "groundedness" of knowledge production, following Ho-Fung Hung and Arif Dirlik. After providing some context for the mainstream clichés, I proceed to analysing distinct types of registers and "packages" about China in articles – this is the third part of the thesis. Further on, I introduce my fieldwork findings and compile a more detailed picture of the network of representation-making. Finally, I state more general conclusions about knowledge-production on China as a field, resulting from the study of opposing, but very interrelated sources (the media and the policy experts).

Chapter 1: China in the "Field" of Western Imagination

Framing the research findings of this thesis in existing theories requires taking into account the general discourse on Orientalism, theories of representation and communication studies. However, these theories often present representation as fixed, although it is a dynamic process which often reflects relations and positions of its producers and requires a relational, not a substantivist approach. I am using relational sociology and Bourdieu's notion of field to frame and explain relation- and interaction-based representation-making about China. Examining historical background as analysed by Dirlik and Hung, I see representation-making like a process of constructing a sculpture, where the unique vision and positionality of the agent is blended with the characteristics of the object, and not as a reflection in a mirror, which may be false because the mirror is ill-shaped.

1.1. Relational Representation

As Mustafa Emirbayer points out, mainstream sociology is used to dealing with 'substances" as its units of analysis. Relation in this view is dependent on them and shaped by "things, beings, essences" (1997: 282). Things are seen as capable of acting themselves (283). At the same time, however, things and substances are not actors in the true sense of the word: action happens "among entities rather than by them" (Emirbayer 286). The author suggests instead of interaction to focus on transaction and see things in their inseparable relational contexts (287). From this logically follows the conclusion that "[i]ndividual identities and interests are not preconstituted and unproblematic; parties to a transaction do not enter into mutual relations with their attributes already given" (Emirbayer 296). In this sense, participants of knowledge production enter relations with each other and with the object, and their interests,

capabilities and possibilities are shaped according to the relation. This in turn produces a particular kind of knowledge, as the product mirrors the transactions that created it.

A good illustration to this is the history of representation of China, studied by Dirlik and Hung. The picture of China by European political, intellectual and business elites tends to offer one of two extremes and oscillates between sharply contrasting portrayals of the same features, be it rational bureaucracy, ancient history or group orientation. What is important to stress is that the perceived characteristics of China are filtered through dominant values of the time as well as relations between conflicting agents involved in producing knowledge. David Martin Jones ironically states that the Europeans tend to represent China as a "clean sheet of paper upon which western commentators expressed their dread of the other" (2001: 145). According to Gries, "Westerners interpreting Chinese foreign policy, like subjects staring at inkblots during a Rorschach test, frequently reveal much more about themselves than they do about China itself (Gries, 2005: 235). This point is confirmed by Jamie Morgan, who suggests philosophical analysis of representation of China, as "judgments are constituent in the context against which public opinion is formed and in whose terms political debate concerning nations is conducted" (2004: 400). The history of representation shows how China was symbolically made and remade in European imagination.

Hung (2003) traces how people creating representations of China in Europe used them to speak about their own societies. He starts his analysis with showing how the Jesuits (17th century) initially had a monopoly of conversion of the Chinese to Christianity as well as of knowledge-production about China. Faced with China's long history, the monks argued that "the Chinese were superior to the Christians in practicing God's morality". Their positive impressions about China were challenged by Dominicans and others who were competing

with the Jesuits and wanted to discredit their conversion strategy (Hung 2003: 258). Institutional and ideological battles between different orders of monks were reflected in their writings. Hung shows how institutional environment created opportunities for different intellectuals to proselytise their ideas, and how representation of China became the battleground between different ideological establishments.

Further on, secular philosophers of the Enlightenment were influenced by their predecessors in interpretation of Chinese culture. According to Hung, "many of them saw China as a source of ultimate knowledge of the universe and used it as a weapon in their battle against the church and the aristocracy" (2003: 260). The image of China served as a tool to argue for enlightened monarchy, of which the ideal case it supposedly exemplified, and, similarly, against it, as the other camp employed representations of China to show the vices of despotism (261). Soon enough, however, the 18th century Europe emerged as a colonial and capitalist power. The "ideology of progress" accompanied these developments (Hung 2003: 263). Simultaneously, alliance of the bourgeoisie and intellectuals expressing its ideas with the monarchs "became redundant", and Sinophilic sentiments of the past began to wither (Hung, 264).

However, knowledge-production entered a new stage of rivalry: this time between Romantics and evolutionists (Hung 2003: 265). On the extreme side of the evolutionists, de Gobineau explained "stagnation" in China by a racist theory, which maintained that China supposedly received "a dose of Aryan blood" in its initial stage of development. The initial impetus ignited the civilisation, but later its development had stopped. The Chinese race itself, as de Gobineau argued, was apathetic, mediocre and feeble (quoted in Jones 2001: 79-80).

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Non-European societies in the 19th century, as Dirlik argues, were increasingly "characterized in this reordering of the world not by what they had but what they lacked" (1996: 100). These ideas found their way into Max Weber's works as well, and became an important reference point in studies of China and capitalism to this day. In *The Religion of China* Weber "offers the strongest contrast to the 'Protestant Ethic' within his comparative schema" (Schroeder 1992: 43). Although labelling the Chinese "sober men" and rational utilitarians, Weber identified certain "shortages" which he considered crucial. In the Confucian worldview he noticed the "absence" of prophecy, salvation, personal deities and the orientation towards another world (Schroeder 1992: 43), which supposedly proved crucial to the development of capitalism. Andreas Buss claims that Weber's essay on Confucianism is not a monograph about China, and should not be read this way (1987: 274). The author suggests that it served as a control element for Weber's statement about the ongoing rationalisation (capitalism being one of its manifestations) in the modern world (Buss, 1987: 272). His reading of Weber shows how China again became a battleground for ideas, and the statement of Weber's own society, compared to China, was more important than representation of "reality" of China itself. Further representations of China in the "Age of Empire" (1878-1914) were tuned to serve "the period during which Europe witnessed the greatest colonial expansion in history" (Hung 2003: 270). The intellectual field saw even former Romantics "convert" to the ideology of developmental essentialism (Hung studies two cases in detail, p. 272).

Yet soon after the Second World War China emerged as an actor capable of making its own history. The communist revolution in China (1949), labelled "the loss of China" in American intellectual circles (Morgan 2004: 402), provided food for thought in wide intellectual circles (at this stage most studies of China moved out of Europe to the US, as the US became the main intellectual centre). Some analysts were trying to infer proneness to communism from its

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"traditionally" collectivist culture (Jones 2001: 164), others studied social structures that paved way for the radical revolution. Science "remained preoccupied both with the pattern of the Chinese past and evaluating the relative impact of internal and external tensions upon the revolutionary transformation of East Asia" (Jones 2001: 146). Modernist ideology that now ruled China was fitted into the pattern of theorising "Asiatic mode of production". Chinese bureaucracy, once portrayed as the safeguard of Chinese stability, was increasingly seen as rigid and not strong enough to counterbalance the mobilisation potential of the previously inert masses (Jones, 152).

These patterns of representation illustrate Hung's (2003) observation about how the history of "oriental" states is viewed as a repeating cultural pattern. Jones refers to Pye as claiming that the Chinese political culture is characterised by "longing 'for the decisive power of truly effective authority'", and Maoism "merely confirmed the view that 'cultural factors dominate public life in China'" (quoted in Jones 2001: 162). Maoist fostering of social dependency and de-individualisation sounded very "traditionally Chinese" for these analyst (Jones, 164). Jones traces how studies of "political culture" in the 1960s searched for "national character" and "demonstrated a propensity to psychological reductionism" (2001: 159). The idea of the "loss of China" justified ignorance and misrepresentation of the country (Morgan 2004: 403).

Studies of China during the Cold War and area studies that developed out of them had the aim to "explore China's past with a view to making the present more comprehensible" (Harris 1980: 16). According to Peter Harris, scientists were predominantly concerned with "predictability of the system" (1980: 19). This concern translated into portrayal of China as a balanced totalitarian state which after some initial turmoil returned to its ahistorical existence. The idea that China is in equilibrium was so prevalent that, as Harris argues, the change in leadership in 1976-77, which

came in contrast to expectations, was a surprise even for the most knowledgeable China-watchers, whom he calls 'Pekinologists' (1980: 25).

The last decades of the 20th century saw China emerge as an important player in world economics and created a need to conceptualise this change. Chinese exceptionalism, however, was still manifest in political and other theories. Eyal, Szelényi and Towsley point out that the "Chinese path out of socialism" excludes privatisation (1998: 104) and democratic reforms. Instead of radically restructuring existing systems and industries, China retains a "Byzantine repressive political system" (105). The stress on continuity of "the Chinese way" is accompanied by, paradoxically, rediscovery of Confucianism and its "pro-capitalist" features (Dirlik 1995: 231). The new China is seen as representing the extremes: it is both an economic opportunity and a threat, the embodiment of exploitive capitalism and its antonym (Communism), a fascinating ancient culture and a dreadful totalitarian state.

The rich history of China's interaction with the "West" and its representation was shaped according to political needs both inside and outside Europe (and later – the US). This interaction produced several "emblems" of the Chinese society that have stayed throughout history, but were attributed different characteristics depending on political and social circumstances. Hung showed how initial European encounters with the Confucianist elite in China conflated Confucianism with Chinese culture (2003: 255), and Dirlik (1995) studied how Confucius and Confucianism became the "emblem" of the Chinese society. Arthur Waldron (1993) examined the Great Wall of China as the emblem of the state, which started to serve as such in Europe during the Enlightenment, and was "reimported" to China by its nationalists afterwards (1993: 40-43). The wall was useful to symbolise strength and weakness, ancient civilisation and isolation. Similarly, the contemporary imagery of the dragon and the panda provide a vivid and recognisable, yet flexible emblem in

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terms of values and judgements. Knowledge, as Morgan argues, is conflated with belief, and only what is useful to believe is considered to be the truth about China (2004: 403).

1.2. Methodological Implications

As the previous part has shown, agents operate not only in relation to the object, but also in relation to each other. Their interrelations may be reflected "onto" the object – i.e. in the way they frame and represent it. Emirbayer claims that "[c]ontemporary social-network analysts define power in similarly relational terms, as an outgrowth of the positions that social actors occupy in one or more networks" (1997: 292). Representations of China indeed look like a network, especially on the side of the experts. They work for independent, yet EU-affiliated institutions, and most of them have academic careers in addition to consulting. Consequently, they establish ties with academics, Chinese scientists, the media, and politicians. The experts I interviewed have repeatedly stressed their personal ties to Chinese and European diplomats, local (Belgian) and international media (The "Economist") and scientists at various universities in Europe and Asia. The experts depend on their personal ties for their work: one of my informants said that he conducts around 40 interviews, often informal, for an average paper. In this sense the experts operate in a network, where information flows within a fixed circle of people before it is published as knowledge.

In my research on the experts I conducted interviews with them in Brussels between 8th and 22nd of April, 2008. Obviously, highly-regarded professionals, often affiliated with more than one institution, see their time as a precious and scarce resource. This makes it difficult for a researcher to get access and request sufficient time for interviewing. Therefore, I used their own social ties to convince them to cooperate in this research. After firstly contacting one of my informants through the Europe-China Academic Network (ECAN), I was introduced to

people in several think tanks. These people were considered representative of the field by the ECAN. Note the importance of the concept of network even in the title of the institution, which was the easiest to get access to. I used the snowballing method, asking each informant to introduce several more experts. I used this method because it provided me with access to the experts and, more importantly, helped me to map out the network the way they see it. Some of the experts tried to help me establish contact with persons at the European Commission and Chinese diplomats, but none of them responded. Despite that, it was easy to arrive at the conclusion that representation producers operate in a personal and professional network from which they obtain information and by which their opinions and positions are shaped. The same people were referred to by most of my informants, and two of them said I have approximately covered the network of Brussels-based experts after I mentioned the names of people I interviewed or was planning to interview.

Yet the relations themselves do not explain representation-making sufficiently. I find Bourdieu's notion of the field more useful in this respect, since field takes into account the environment, institutional and political settings, sets of rules and possible success strategies. The policy experts operate within the discourse of the supranational body and "service" EU-China relations. The experts I met and studied during my fieldwork in Brussels position themselves vis-à-vis the supranational institutions operating there as well as the media, which they see as conflicting and oversimplifying. Although they bring their personal and professional values into their work, their conceptual choices are framed by this environment.

Pierre Bourdieu proposes the concept of a field as "a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning" (Bourdieu 1993: 162). In addition to that, a field has "specific principles of evaluation of practices and works" (Bourdieu 1993: 162). In another text he defines a field

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as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.)" (in Wacquant 1989: 39).

The use of the term "objectivity" looks rather questionable, but should be understood as recognising the "objectiveness" of relations in the field in their effects. Bourdieu stresses that all actors in the field obey specific laws and "everyone depends on everyone else, at once his competitor and client, his opponent and judge, for the determination of his own truth and value" (Bourdieu 1990: 19). Outcomes define the objectivity of the field.

Bourdieu distinguishes between objective positions in the field and subjective position-takings. He defines position-takings as a "structured system of practices and expressions of agents" (Wacquant 1989: 40) and "manifestations" of social agents, "defined in relation to the *space of possibles*" (Bourdieu 1993: 30). Positions are defined in terms of possession of economic, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986: 128) and "position in structure of distribution of this capital" (Bourdieu 1993: 30), and can be labelled as dominant and dominated, orthodox and heretic, etc. (Wacquant 1989: 42). The major difference between position-takings and positions is that position-takings may change when the "universe of options" (which may be influenced by outside institutions and other processes) changes, whereas the position of the agent can remain the same (Bourdieu 1993: 30). For example, in the field of art for a short time very different agents may be brought under the position of avant-garde (Bourdieu 1993: 66). Thus, positionality of an agent in the field is not the same as social background and should not be interpreted this way, as by entering the "game", the actors "tacitly accept the constrains and the possibilities inherent in the game (which are presented not in the form of rules, but rather as possible winning strategies)" (Bourdieu 1993: 164, 184).

The relational perspective and the notion of field combined produce the view of the field of representation as a dynamic playground for struggles, in which actors take their positions according to their institutional status, requirements of the genre, and, most importantly, recognition, a form of symbolic capital which is vital in knowledge production. Niilo Kauppi suggests that Bourdieu's theory is useful explaining how the EU is made (although the author's interpretation of Bourdieu is by far more developed than the analysis of the EU), as a supranational body and a set of institutions, where reality is constructed by "agents, who, constrained by structures that are material and symbolic, struggle to accumulate social resources" (2003: 777). The experts are dependent on recognition and institutional power to influence decision-making as they are affiliated to institutions that aim to promote and deepen EU-China relations, and their career paths are dependent on these developments. Similarly, individual and collective actors in the field of the media respect the rules of the game in which they represent a high-reputation source of information. Unlike a typical network, a field by definition has a set of rules and institutions, and ties between actors are not seen as connections between separate "nodes". Instead, the field is like a prism that "refracts" external influences (economic or political events are "retranslated according to the specific logic of the field", Bourdieu 1993: 164), a space where actors may not be connected to each other individually, but still exert influence over each other's decisions.

Consequently, it is important to reflect critically on the limitations of my network-based methodological take. First of all, the experts would not have recommended me to interview analysts whom they consider biased or marginal. They would not mention journalists whom they do not interact with, nor refer to the media in which opinion they are not interested (marginal media, tabloids). This does not mean, however, that these sources of information and positions do not participate in representation-making. Furthermore, it is not clear to what

extent the media follows the work of the experts when it does not incorporate their exact words in its texts. Moreover, the experts are influenced if not by direct communication with the academia, then at least by the position of the institutions where they received their education. Some of the experts mentioned anthropologists who work in China. The books they read and all kinds of influences they receive cannot be framed in a network. In addition to that, during the fieldwork I had an opportunity to observe trends in the city, which were rather revealing. After recent demonstrations many public spaces in Brussels were marked with "Free Tibet" graffiti, and a large modern art exhibition had items explicit political support for Tibet independence. Although it is not the direct task of the policy experts to explain art or pubic events, their work is inevitably influenced by the general moods in the city they live in. In this sense Bourdieu's field has a higher explanatory value than network.

Therefore, actors whose positionality is defined in (institutional) relation to (EU-China) relations, as it is in the case of EU-China policy experts, can be best studied from the perspective of Relational Sociology. This paradigm can be usefully complemented with Bourdieu's notion of a field, which increases awareness of institutional framework, indirect sources of influence and certain choices influenced by dispositions (education, etc.) and allows integrating them into the analysis. The agents in knowledge production relate to their object, their environment, other actors and, what is also worth remembering, their audience. This is very important when discussing how representation, in its similarly relational ways, is produced by the media.

Chapter 2: Awakening Dragons and
Panda Diplomacy – the Media Lexicon

The field (or subfield of the wider field of knowledge production[3]) of the media operates in a very particular institutional setting: the product has to attract attention, be brief and convincing, but at the same time quality media is constrained by its reputation and expectations of its selective audience. Being heavily influenced by the requirement of "digestibility", the media often produces knowledge within the so-called realist paradigm of international relations and typically does not question its methodological nationalism. This chapter analyses how and why the media produces metaphors and methodologically nationalist representations, in contrast to the relational approach of policy experts. I argue that the requirements of each (sub)field frame and shape representation even when it comes from similar sources and presents similar issues. The points of comparison of the fields of the media and policy expertise are representations of the Chinese economy and the suppression of riots in Tibet.

Interviews with Brussels-based experts supported my initial assumption that various agents in the field of China representation obtain most of their news on world politics from the "Economist" and the "Financial Times". Due to limitations of this thesis I restricted my research to studying these two sources, which are trusted in Europe as objective. In order to obtain points of direct comparison with the material from the interviews, I study the sources that were referred to by my informants, and limit the time span of the articles. For the analysis

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[3] The media has its network of actors, interacting with each other, as well as institutional rules and requirements, or what Bourdieu would call 'the rules of the game'. Niilo Kauppi, based on Bourdieu, provides the definition of a field as "a space that is structured such that the value of each element of it is formed through the network of relationships that this element entertains with the other elements in the field" (2003: 778). In this sense the media and even each newspaper "qualifies" as a field. However, at the same time they are a part of the field of representation and is defined in relation to other actors. Some authors suggest seeing the media as an institution (see Cook 2006: 161).

of metaphors I selected articles published within one year before my fieldwork (from April 2007 to April 2008), using the search systems in the websites of the newspapers and paying special attention to the articles that mentioned these metaphors in their headlines (see appendix 1). In the case of the riots in Tibet, I start my analysis from the day it was first mentioned (March 14) and end with the last day of my fieldwork (April 22; all articles are listed in appendix 1), again, using the search systems provided in the websites. The discourse analysis of these articles reveals how knowledge, presented as objective and unbiased, is "packaged" (Ooi 2007) in fixed registers to create attractive and convenient representation, in contrast to what the policy experts produce.

2.1. The Rules of the Game: Simplify and Animate

The media typically presumes that nation-states are the main actors and have individual agency. This allows calling its approach methodological nationalism, which is defined as "[t]he equation between the concept of society and the nation-state in modernity" (Chernilo 2006: 5). It is characteristic of the authors in the International Relations discipline who follow the realist paradigm. This approach to international relations is characterised by "the primacy of the state, struggles for power between states, and a clear divide between domestic and international politics (that is, a focus on order versus anarchy)" (Walker and Morton 2005: 343). As this chapter shows, adherence to the state as the primary agent is especially evident in writing about China. This approach manifests itself in its most radical form by using metaphors of the state and presenting China as a living object.

The Chinese state easily lends itself to methodological nationalism: the communist regime tightly controls alternative political forces and limits the spread of information about domestic affairs. Although references to individual leaders and inner battles occur, in most cases the

media portrays individual politicians as mouthpieces of the grand regime, and writes "China" where, for instance, in the case of Germany it would write "Angela Merkel". It uses the general "emblem" of China, the dragon, even when describing a business takeover by a state-owned company – not even the government (*Financial Times* (henceforward FT), "Gatecrashing BHP/Rio", February 2, 2008). In his valuable anthropological study of the "assembly line" of the news[4] Allan Bell suggests that the media is generally conservative in its frameworks of analysis and demonstrates it by pointing at the "inability of Western media to escape from a cold-war framework in reporting the changes in Eastern Europe in 1989-90." (1991: 157). For Can-Seng Ooi the conflation of the nation-state with the Chinese society is illustrated by foreigners being surprised to hear that only about a half of the population of China speaks Putonghua. This is because "they have always been taught and informed that China has only one language" (2007: 115). Reductionism brings representations of China in the media closer to Orientalism, the fallacy of which, according to Hung, is "not in its presumptions about the ontological differences between East and West and the former's inferiority, as previous critics of Orientalism have supposed, but in its reductionism" (2003: 254).

In his analysis of representation of Chinese-Western business interactions Ooi (2003) suggests the term "packaged" culture. The author identifies four main characteristics of "packaging". First, it always presumes that cultural traits draw boundaries (religious, ethical, etc) between groups of people and define their behaviour (Ooi, 115). Second, packaging is always mediated, and there are certain agencies, including scientists, that interpret cultures for others (Ooi, 116). Third, cultures are presented in "preferred ways", that is, to please the audience of the presentation and to attract it to come, invest or develop an interest in a certain

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[4] I have chosen his book from the rich literature of media studies mainly because its evaluations follow from ethnographic, sometimes very descriptive accounts on everyday practices instead of starting with global trends or such statements as "the media controls the world".

culture – or the opposite. Fourth, packaging highlights the relevance of such knowledge to the recipient, for example, offers help to understand business developments (Ooi, 116).

These interrelated characteristics are enlighteningly suitable to analyse the media. Bell uses the term "news values" (defined as "criteria by which newsworkers make their professional judgements as they process stories"; 1991: 153) to suggest that individual choices on which news item is worth a story are made by evaluating what value it is supposed to have for the audience (1991: 152). The two international economic high-reputation sources present events in China in such a way as to provide usable knowledge for its informed audience. When a story appears in the "Economist" or the FT, it serves (at least partly) as a basis for policy makers to form their opinion on China, for businesspeople – to evaluate their opportunities in the country and for small-scale media which cannot send its correspondents to China – to form its own coverage of news from China. The story has to be marketable and usable by these important groups – it has to provide a "media answer" to political puzzles (Cook 2006: 163). Communication theories stress that the media in contemporary society is a source of power and the principal arena where public matters are discussed, as well as the major source of definitions (McQuail 1994: 1), and, having in mind these expectations, the media acts accordingly.

Consequently, an agent, operating in the field of the media, firstly, adjusts oneself to preferred ways of seeing the object, secondly, has a concrete interest in producing the message, and, thirdly, applies typical media routines. Representation is adjusted to preferred ways of seeing because, as Bell (1991) shows, there is a demand for stories that are compatible with prefabricated conceptions. For example, "[e]nvironmental issues, demonstrations, or superpower summits are all perceived to have a typical pattern which they follow", and editors

usually "have stereotypes about the manner in which Latin American governments or the British royal family behave" (1991: 157). A story is more likely to be considered newsworthy if it conforms to these frameworks. The interest may be education of the readership (every media establishment claims it, but education is never the sole purpose), promoting or discouraging investment or, broadly, delineating the field of business with China, giving warnings and predictions. The knowledge it produces has to be a "packaged", marketable product, and metaphors serve this purpose just right. Finally, the routines include "tight deadlines, high uncertainty about what is important and interesting enough to be called news, and the desire to limit outside interference by laying claim to professional norms" (Cook 2006: 162). These factors push individual journalists to seek easy digestibility and practical applicability, which is the requirement of their business-minded readership.

Moreover, the final product has to be not only easy to consume but also creative. The search for creative representation manifests itself in the use of metaphors, the most typical of which are, as mentioned before, the dragon and the panda. The supposedly monolithic communist state is portrayed as "breathing" (FT, February 2, 2008), "dancing" (FT, January 16, 2008) and acting on the international stage. These metaphors provide a graspable explanation and practical hints on how to deal with China.

2.2. The Economic Animal: Chinese Economy in Metaphors

> "The image is always of a monolithic China. Just like for an outsider the EU looks like a monolithic
> organisation" (from the interview with Paul Lim)

As it was argued before, the dragon and the panda are more creative, although increasingly banal, expressions of methodological nationalism. Likewise, they are an easy solution to the never-ending search for a deep and informative, yet simple and entertaining description of

political events. Eugene F. Miller suggests that metaphors add "emotive meaning to the essence of expression": it is easier for the audience to relate to a "father of the nation" than a "statesman". However, their practical convenience does not justify their simplifying tendencies.

As David N. Livingstone and Richard T. Harrison have observed, a metaphor is "psychological import" from one meaning to another, and it filters perceptions of characteristics: when we speak about the "concrete jungle", we emphasise some characteristics of the city and suppress others (1981: 97). Livingstone and Harrison distinguish between translation metaphors and interaction metaphors. According to them, translation metaphors provide a "substitute expression", for example, "lion" stands for "brave" (1981: 96). On the other hand, an interaction metaphor creates a new category and acts as a "filter" for characteristics. In their example, a metaphor claiming that a man is a machine generates a "machine-man", emphasising particular features and downplaying others (1981: 96). Although the dragon and the panda might have as well started off as translation metaphors, they have created a China-dragon and a China-panda, which acquired independent existence and "agency" to act and interact with other "animals". The "animation" of the state serves to introduce "a misleading sense of purpose and unity to the complex maneuverings of foreign policy and diplomacy, which are, after all, the resultants of many conflicting groups and interests" (Gozzi 1999: 63).

Typically where the metaphor of the dragon or the panda was used (they never came together), there were verbal and other metaphoric expressions constructing China as a living organism: China is "hungry" for natural resources (*Economist*, March 13, 2008), "at pains" with difficult purchases (FT, February 14, 2008), "has appetite for expansion into America" (headline, FT, October 17, 2007), "needs a cold bath" (FT, August 15, 2007), its economy is a "mighty beast"

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(*Economist*, November 29, 2007), and its military is its "muscle" (*Economist*, April 2, 2007). This living China becomes a "unified mental construct" (Livingstone and Harrison 1981: 100). The metaphor, resting on analogy, looks "coherent and systematic" (Gozzi 1999: 57), and balances between otherness of China, which inherently rests on unknowability, and the purpose to bring the object into the "light" of knowledge. This balance is stressed in Gabriel Bar-Haim's media analysis, where the author suggests that the media minimises differences between states, but leaves a part of these differences to provide a cultural flavour to news (1996: 143).

We should not forget Dirlik's observation that essentialised borderlands become "locations for actual production and exchange relations" (1995: 231), as "the media's construction of images of China entails the power both to select and promote certain events as more important than others" (Morgan 2004: 402). A metaphor can be powerful in creating its object in the imagination of the objectifyer along a particular grid, according to which certain action will be justified. Lucy Jarosz shows how the metaphor of Africa as the Dark Continent has become a filter for "Euroamerican discourses which have constructed and represented the land and the people of Africa" (1992: 105). The need for a metaphor arises from the aim to represent "land and life in writing" (106), but then it acquires its own existence and structures knowledge about the Other – it "confirms, legitimates, and perpetuates structures of domination and oppression" (1992: 106). Jarosz presents how proliferation of discourses centred on this metaphor led to justify reshaping the African landscape and resettling people and embodied itself in very concrete engineering projects (109-111). Thus the cliché itself may not call for direct action, but it filters knowledge and constructs expectations.

Miller claims that a dominant metaphor "tends to become self-perpetuating" (1979: 162). Once creative, the metaphors for China have become banal when everyone started using them. Bell

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calls the quality press "linguistically conservative" (1991: 26), and the data from both the "Economist" and the FT supports this statement: they do not aim to introduce new stylistic devices and other linguistic novelties, but instead develop and recycle the existing figures and try to produce sophisticated headlines out of them by using alliteration, richly culturally embedded references and, of course, irony. Most of the articles using the dragon metaphor only mention it in their headlines and not in the text. Some examples of these headlines in the "Economist" are: "A ravenous dragon" (March 13, 2008, on natural resources), "Clipping the dragon's wings" (December 19, 2007, on China's GDP re-estimation) and "Trojan dragons" (November 1, 2008, on foreign acquisitions by Chinese firms); in the FT - "Chinese economic dragon spews out CO2 amid surge in rampant growth" (on pollution, April 20, 2007), "Superhot dragon" (on inflation, August 16, 2007), "Dragon has appetite for expansion into America" (on a takeover, October 17, 2007), and "Chinese dragon roars over Indian industry" (on China-India summit and trade, January 18, 2008). In most cases, the authors did not come back to the image of the dragon in the text.

The fact that the dragon mostly appeared in headlines only is explained by Bell's analysis of headline requirements. The headline has to "stamp" the newspaper's "individuality" (1991: 186) in "telegraphic syntax" (185). The fact that an article is about China was only shown in its lead. The lead is another vitally important part of the article, but not so common in the FT. Bell indicates that the lead frames the story and is a "micro-story" in itself: "It compresses the values and expertise of journalism in one sentence" (1991: 176). Using a lead is typical for news media, and also very important for the "Economist". It applies the "lexicon of newsworthiness" (Bell 177). Since the FT does not typically use leads, the task of the lead is distributed between the headline and the opening sentence. That is why it is less often that the headline is a mere pun or a play with metaphors; it usually conveys a message about the actual event.

The use of the panda metaphor was rather different. Although the animal is well-associated with China, it is not used synonymously, especially as the image of China as constructed by the media better suits the dragon metaphor. There were five articles mentioning the panda in the "Economist", two of them used it as a synonym for China. The FT published four articles where the panda was mentioned as a peculiar diplomatic tool for Chinese foreign policy, just as it was the case with the remaining articles in the "Economist".

In the cases where the panda was used as an emblem of China the image of the animal was rather paradoxical: the article under the title "Beware the Trojan panda" (September 6, 2007) was on cybersecurity risks from China. Invoking the image of a meek and peaceful animal helped to convey the message that a supposedly small-scale harmless activity of hackers can be a more serious security risk than a strong army. In the case of the economy, the panda signifies its passive

Picture 1. The panda as a metaphor for Chinese economy. Source: *Economist*, September 27, 2007.

nature – even the fastest-growing economy can be vulnerable to forces that no government can control. Note that if there is a problem, the panda is "unfit" (see picture 1), whereas the dragon is "overheated".

The metaphors serve as means to visualise China as an actor in the international arena (another metaphor) and conceptualise its agency. The metaphors do not present the world in

black-and-white terms, as analysts of Orientalism would assume. However, they present China as a weird, exotic and, most importantly, unified and self-acting entity. The agents behind this representation are journalists and editors, who want to present factual and, as they consider it, newsworthy information, at the same time making it a marketable and attractive product, which is a requirement in the field. This way metaphors act as colourful ribbons on the ready-made packages of what China is, as perceived by these authors, and, as Miller suggests, they introduces "observability and familiarity" to "political things" (1979: 163-164).

2.3. Tibet: the Dragon Spits Fire at the Snow Lion

"They write what they want, and it's much sexier to listen to these NGOs than to an expert using very complicated words" (from the interview with Jonathan Holslag)

I have discussed previously how journalists produce knowledge on China in relation to their professional requirements, audience expectations and working routines. The news coverage from Tibet during the riots and their subsequent suppression exemplifies these factors and adds another – proximity to the object. Both newspapers were privileged to have correspondents in Tibet, and the texts they produced differ from the whole array of texts written later. Thus, the "Tibet issue" as presented in the two newspapers throughout the time span (starting from March 14th and ending with April 22nd) could be analytically divided into two parts: (a) reporting from China, and (b) elite newsmaking: political statements, protests and reactions. Articles belonging to different categories differ in their vocabulary and the extent to which they are relational (as opposed to methodologically nationalist).

The reports from Lhasa were factual, they tried not to take sides and provide insights into the life of ordinary people who happened to be in Lhasa when the riots broke out. The correspondents presented what happened to both sides after observing and interviewing both

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Tibetans and Han Chinese. The correspondent of the "Economist", who, following the policy of the newspaper, does not reveal his identity, and presents himself as "your correspondent", when there is a need to mention any personal experience in the article that cannot be wrapped up in third-person grammatical constructions. The policy of anonymity is a part of the newspaper's identity, and it is not compromised even when there is only one person, a part of an extremely exclusive group of admitted there by the Chinese government, who is reporting from Tibet. It is different in the FT, when the identity of the journalist was disclosed and even his photo provided. This policy of the "Economist" makes it unclear who wrote other articles on Tibet and the Olympic Games, which soon replaced riots in Tibet as the centre of attention. However, a different tone and a comparison with the FT suggest that it should be not the same person who reported from Lhasa.

The correspondent of the "Economist" used rather strong vocabulary to depict what happened: in the first article the event was called an "orgy of anti-Chinese rioting" that followed "simmering resentment" and "convulsed the Tibetan capital" (*Economist*, March 14). Describing the behaviour of the rioters the journalist does not mention how it started from peaceful demonstrations, but labels the events as "eruption of ethnic hatred" (*Economist*, March 14). As it is typical for the newspaper, regionally or globally important events were often revealed through personal stories: an account of activity of a selected individual usually opens the story. The correspondent interviews shopkeepers, taxi-drivers (March 17) and other commoners who have been directly influenced by the events in Tibet. The correspondent acknowledges that "Lhasa feeds on rumour", meaning that no one can be certain about how the riots broke out. Uncertainty, reflexivity and concentration on individual experiences rather than political statements mark this stage of producing knowledge on the riots in Tibet.

However, soon enough the newspaper reports that the journalist had to leave Lhasa as "the authorities refused to extend his week-long permit" (*Economist*, March 21), and the tone of reporting becomes more radical. On the 19th of May an article appears, which already speaks about "ugly violence that has scarred Lhasa" (*Economist*, March 19, "Two countries, one system"). In the same issue a book review starts with the words that "China will not hear a word against its imperial claims to Tibet" (*Economist*, March 19, "Mountain forces"), and an article receives the headline "A colonial uprising" (March 19). Soon enough the newspaper compared Tibet to the independence movement (see how it is depicted in picture 2) of the three Baltic states, with which it unambiguously sympathises (*Economist*, March 27, "A sporting chance"). The reaction of China to the way the events were portrayed by the Western media and its insistence on the Olympic torch relay was called a "gruesome propaganda offensive" (March 27, "Welcome to the Olympics"). Further on, the controversy

Picture 2. A clear message: peaceful monks versus state violence. Source: *Economist*, March 13, 2008.

over the Olympics overshadowed the processes in Tibet. After the exclusive coverage from Lhasa, which went beyond the realist paradigm and concentrated on social relations and individual fears, the newspaper came back to the media events that are, as Bell calls it, marked by a "general mantle of authority" (1991: 191) – produced of speech acts of politicians and activists.

The FT had the same division, but it was not arranged chronologically like in the "Economist". News coverage started with reports by Richard McGregor and Jamil Anderlini in Beijing. They were factually oriented and avoided judgements. The "unrest" (a typical

media euphemism for riots and other kinds of fighting) was explained referring to failures of forced modernisation in Tibet and growing resentment (e.g. FT, March 17 leader). The FT discussed implications for business and reflected on the "gulf in perceptions" (headline, March 20). At the end of March FT's Shanghai correspondent Geoff Dyer was allowed into Lhasa, where he began reporting in a similar style as the unnamed journalist from the "Economist". He interviewed ethnic Han people who were affected or scared by the outbreak of violence and described the scene ("The smell of burning buildings still hangs in the air" – March 27, "Lhasa riots tell tale of two cities gripped by hate"). Simultaneously, the FT was publishing comments and other articles that were more concerned with international opinion, world leaders and the Olympics. Dyer and McGregor produced an analytical article together, claiming that the Olympics will come and go, but problems in Tibet will linger on (April 1).

When the riots in Tibet became a past event, the FT continued with analytical discussions on the recently fuelled Chinese nationalism (McGregor and Dyer, April 19), but was increasingly preoccupied with elite speech acts: who said what on Tibet and the Olympics. What is striking but unsurprising is that pieces of texts were copy-pasted from one text to another, and despite the abundance of articles on Tibet, they all conveyed the same message and inserted recycled messages from first-hand reports and other media sources. Being a daily, the FT well illustrated what Bell has observed about the news media: it prefers "packaged news texts", such as press releases (1991: 59) and reports "on what people say", not so much on what people do (53). This relates to Bell's observation that for most of the media, news is what has been said by the elite (193). When the reaction became a more current and more relevant event, the media came back to its elite-reporting, even if initially it provided refreshingly deep and sensitive insights into what happened to people in Tibet and what ordinary Chinese think of their government's involvement in the region.

Bell explains this tendency by pointing out several factors that the media uses to decide how newsworthy a story is. These factors include negativity, eliteness and consonance, and for a story to appear in the news it has to combine at least two of them (Bell 1991: 160). Stories on China's reaction to the presentation of riots in Tibet and the troubles surrounding the Games have all three: they are made of speech acts of top-level politicians, they manifest extreme negativity (catastrophe in Tibet, crackdown on the protests and China's unwillingness to negotiate) and conform to prefabricated images on how China as such operates. Thus, although reporting from China by the journalists who were actually there diverges from this general pattern, their contributions were drowned in the sea of speech acts by the elite. Needless to say, representation of these acts operated within the realist paradigm.

The media analysis shows how individual texts are integrated into the body of knowledge which is produced following the realist paradigm. China, represented by "mouthpiece" politicians, is portrayed as having its own agency and interacting with other similar actors, whereas disasters that are beyond the regime's control are metaphorically depicted using the images of fire and boiling. The differences in styles of presenting China in the media differ in relation to proximity to the object, as it is clear from news coverage from Tibet. However, the texts are produced in conformity with prefabricated registers, interests of the newspaper and perceived interests of its audience, as well as working routines. When the journalists were sent out of Tibet, the balance of representation shifted. Overall, the coverage of the events was dominated by elite speech acts, which in turn creates a certain bias and a black-and-white picture of events (the correspondents, on the other hand, revealed more nuances). Reacting to this type of representation, policy experts present themselves as alternative and more sensitive representation-makers.

Chapter 3: Knowledge and Prejudice: Experts in Action

Policy experts are always in between academic and political professions, and this leads them to present themselves in more relational terms than policy makers or academics would. They always use the voice of rationality, but, as Steven Brint puts it, their rationality is always "unfinished" (1994: 129). The experts interviewed for this research synthesise knowledge from a web of academic, political, professional, institutional and personal influences, and their profession is in constant interplay with their identity. Although I could not get access to more experts, as the research was heavily dependent on their willingness to cooperate, the five experts I interviewed (in temporal order: Paul Lim, Stanley Crossick, Fraser Cameron, Xiaohong Tong, Jonathan Holslag) represent at least a part of the variety of individual professional identities. For example, two of them identify themselves as ethnically Chinese, while others are originally from EU countries; one works primarily with businesspeople and others are mostly involved with the political circles; one is a "China-critic", who, when asked about the obstacles for the EU-China dialogue, firstly mentions what China has to learn; finally, they exemplify varying degrees of institutional autonomy, some being primarily affiliated with one institution and others migrating among several. Despite the differences, the experts interviewed reveal similar patterns of position-taking in the field and presenting their professional goals in relational terms.

3.1. The Rules of the Game: Thickly Describe[5] and Double-Check

Policy experts operate in intersecting social spaces and fields of knowledge production. This interconnection between them explains how their personal professional identity is coupled

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[5] The term "thick description" was popularised by Clifford Geertz and has become synonymous with the ideals of anthropology – rich, culturally sensitive and contextual account on other cultures. Sensitive and relational description is exactly what the experts promote.

with the type of knowledge they work to produce. Firstly, their identity is defined individually: they are agents moving across their field between institutions and spheres of knowledge production, and their individual identity is defined with reference to Europe, knowledge and their relation to the object. Secondly, their subjectivity is delineated in the social space of Brussels, a field of influences to which they react. Thirdly, their positionality is defined in relation to the broader institutional settings and what they are not: their reaction to the media, academics, politicians or "China-lovers". According to Niilo Kauppi's interpretation of Bourdieu, the most important "modus operandi" in the political field is its organisation around binaries (2003: 778). The polarisation of the media and expert knowledge can be conceptualised using this characteristic of the field.

The role of experts has been widely studied (often based on the Weberian tradition), but not all of these findings can be applied to political consultants in the EU. Timothy Mitchell studied the role of experts in colonising Egypt and suggested that the 19th century witnessed how experts were promoted to spokespersons "for forces of development, rule of law, progress, modernity" (Mitchell 2002: 15). However, although presenting itself as impartial and rational, this new class of experts never realised its own limitations. First of all, there are several ideas that are never criticised in the "territory of social sciences", as Mitchell shows. For example, the idea of economy, universalised, in Mitchell's view, by Malinowski, is never questioned and is presented as a universal sphere of self-regulation (Mitchell 2002: 3). Moreover, social sciences "ignored empire" (Mitchell, 7) and the fundamental need that gave birth to their field of science (for example, the need to control resources). Karin Bäckstrand writes that "legitimacy, credibility and authority of scientific expert knowledge are maintained by establishing borders between the scientific and political spheres" (Bäckstrand 2003: 28). This results in depoliticising issues, as if they were a matter of purely rational

calculations (2003: 24). Indeed, most of criticism towards the experts as a class is about "narrowness and purely instrumental interests", as well as inability to appreciate "the broader social and historical context in which they work" (Brint 1994: 145).

Furthermore, most of the literature on expert knowledge equalises experts with government bureaucrats or, at best, other kinds of technocrats, true servants of Weberian distopia of rationalisation. Stephen Turner emphasises that for most critics "expert power is the source of the oppressive, inegalitarian effects of present regimes" and "expertise is treated as a kind of possession which privileges its possessors with powers that the people cannot successfully control, and cannot acquire or share" (2001: 123). Similar studies on expert knowledge have criticised their detachment from the public and narrow rationality.

This criticism, however, is not fully applicable in this case, when the experts concerned neither work with issues of direct concern to an average citizen, nor make claims over absolute objectivity, nor are involved with governments in the usual sense of the term (the EU is a supranational body), nor are they bureaucrats. They are not experts of a limited scope, interested in one particular issue – quite the contrary, in this case they are the ones who argue for a broader perspective, cultural sensitivity and "the contextual rationality and the contextual pragmatics" (Brint 1994: 147). This can be seen in the self-presentations of the individual experts and institutions they are affiliated to (see appendix 2).

In some of the narratives, personal life is coupled with belonging to the EU institutions and producing knowledge about China. Individual professional identity of the experts is defined in relation to the EU and the object – China. For example, in his blog Stanley Crossick presents himself as a "European of British nationality [sic!], for nearly 30 years Bruxellois. Deep

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believer in the principle of 'mutuality' and Monnet's[6] axiom "Thought cannot be divorced from action"." He says he aims to "improve mutual understanding and remove misconceptions" in EU-China relations, and for him China is more like a case study in EU external affairs, which is his broader area of interest. In relation to the object, Fraser Cameron mentions that "some analysts are more pro-Chinese, some are more critical. Some have a Chinese wife or girlfriend, some are probably paid by the Chinese, some have suffered at the hands of the Chinese – it depends". He stresses that he has not been influenced by these factors. Paul Lim suggests that it is not useful for an expert to "become too close to the Chinese", instead he argues for a situation where the expert knows the European interests, the Chinese interests and tries to bridge them together. Personal life (personal ideals, identity, family) is viewed and evaluated in relation to professional life, and their mutual influences on each other should be taken into account.

Picture 3. Attempts to show there is no problem with the Olympics. Author's photograph.

Two of the experts interviewed were ethnically of Chinese origin (Xiaohong Tong is from China, whereas Paul Lim is from Singapore), and although they did not relate this fact to their positionality in the field, the interviews showed that they are more comfortable with using such generalisations as "Chinese political culture" or "collectivism", which have proved to be scientifically dangerous in the hands of Europeans. Apart from this, no differences by origin were noticeable.

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[6] Jean Monnet is considered one of the major "architects" of European unity in the EU's predecessors' initial stages.

All the experts constantly move not only within the social space, but also physically: they go to China for conferences, lecturing and research. This movement is reflected by their consciousness on what vocabulary they should use: for example, Paul Lim points at the discourse habit of the Chinese to say important things between the lines, Jonathan Holslag stresses that it is important to start from the interests of the Chinese, and Xiaohong Tong illustrates this point by saying that in China one should talk about "human nature" instead of "human rights" to argue for the things that are usually promoted within the human rights framework. Jonathan Holslag states his adherence to such principles as human rights, but he believes it to be equally important to promote them in such a way as not to cause alienation on the Chinese side. Thus, individual values are wrapped up in institutional requirements and cultural sensitivity.

Picture 4. Free Tibet protesters did not avoid even monuments. Author's photograph.

The social space of Brussels is marked by the presence of EU institutions, large multicultural communities and cultural life that is not kept separate from political issues. During my fieldwork in Brussels I witnessed an anti-boycott demonstration in a park (see picture 3), while the Tibet supporters found ways to express themselves through graffiti (see picture 4) and a big modern art exhibition ArtBrussels. The experts react to social tensions and the demand for their knowledge: Jonathan Holslag says that he was repeatedly interviewed by the local media, although he generally does not trust it.

Similarly, in broader terms, Xiaohong Tong stresses that the institution she currently works for was established in Brussels because it is a "strategic location". Awareness about the social space of the "European capital" frames the way the experts move about in their professional space and in the field of representation.

It is clear that the experts position themselves in the field using very relationist terms, and this reflects their career and situation in the field. Turner stresses that semi-academic policy experts and numerous foreign policy think tanks are always conscious of their audience, that is, "professional public administrators" (2001: 137). In many cases, however, with this particular group of experts their affiliation is more fluid: many of them lecture in China as well. Impartiality (they do not claim objectivity) is attempted to maintain not only by affiliating with both sides, but by simultaneously detaching themselves from any of the sides.

This situation shows why the experts should be studied through the framework of what Ann Swidler and Jorge Arditi call the "new Sociology of knowledge". According to the authors, the old Sociology of knowledge was looking for "social interests that bias even supposedly neutral, disinterested, objective understanding of the world", whereas the new Sociology of knowledge is looking for broader patterns (1994: 306) and institutional structures that shape the production of knowledge. "Thus the manufacture of scientific certainty may well be a product of such central activities as departments deciding whom to hire, fellowship committees assessing research proposals, and young scientists seeking grounds for selecting problems" (1994: 312). In addition, the "authoritativeness of knowledge" is shaped by social authority of the knowledge producer (1994: 322). According to Brint, "expert influence is associated with opportunities in the political environment, the successful framing of issues as purely technical or involving consensus values, and with issues that fall into the province of professions that are central…" (1994: 138). The

experts can become influential actors in the field when issues of their interest are framed in such a way as to require their expertise and not, for example, a free political discussion.

Agents in the field navigate through the patterns of recognition in order to be heard – they are not academics, neither are they the staff of the EU analytical units directly under the supervision of the EP or the EC. As Brint observes, the influence of policy experts depends heavily on the centrality of their occupation and position in the field stratified "by resources, political connections, and reputation" (1994: 132, 142). They synthesise knowledge from different fields and direct it to policy makers. From the interview with Paul Lim I could map his view on representation-making of China (figure 1).
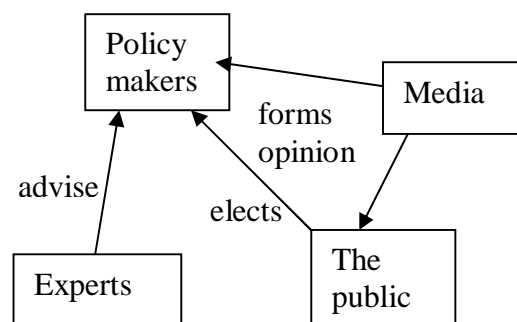
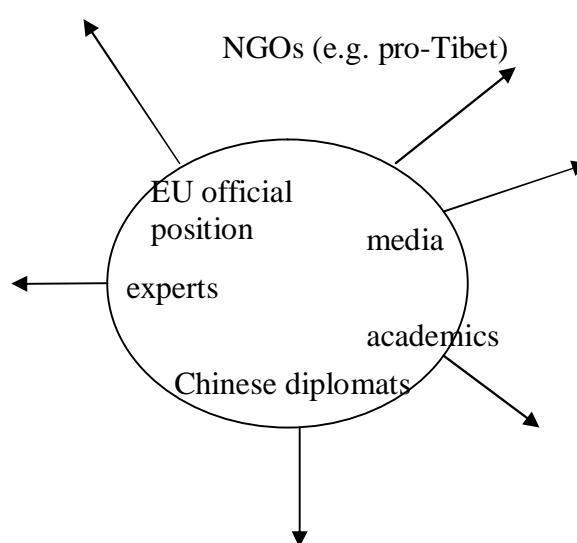

Figure 1. The field of representation 1.

Figure 2. The field of representation

Jonathan Holslag provided very interesting insights into how representation is made through a web of information-sharing, but when it enters the public domain, it diverges in several distinct and conflicting vectors, depending on the genre (figure 2). Many of the participants come together and consult with each other, but hold on to their more radical views in the public space. My informant says on the media, "I had many interviews, but nevertheless they write what they want. I'm just one voice in the debate, and it's much sexier to listen to these NGOs than to an expert using very complicated words". Further on, he says that many journalists are his friends. "I try to explain what it's about and get comments, but all in all they need easy stories," he says, adding that the media "have

to sell newspapers and not to tell the truth". On the other hand, he acknowledges that the "Economist" and the FT are the two major sources of news for policy makers: "the "Economist" is like a weekly bible for an average EU official. So they have a huge influence, too much if you ask me. You get it on Friday, so it's good for a weekly overview of news, but I wouldn't trust it as the main source."

It is clear that the experts are very conscious of the idea that, as Swidler and Arditi put it, a different medium produces different "organization of knowledge" (1994: 322). Still, seeing themselves as bridges between these different modes of knowledge-making, they feel the need to consult all kinds of sources. All of them mentioned multiple sources of different fields. Paul Lim trusts a French anthropologist, Fraser Cameron mentions think tanks in Berlin and Washington, South-East Asian and Australian specialists of China, the East Asia Institute in Singapore and the FT bureau in Beijing and Shanghai. Stanley Crossick says he extensively consults Chinese sources – discusses issues with Chinese scholars, attends conferences, is in contact with embassies and reads the English versions of Chinese newspapers. He trusts the "Economist" and calls it "the only real newspaper". Yet his trust is invested in individual journalists in the "Economist", the FT and Reuters whom he knows personally. Jonathan Holslag says he does not see the media as a source at all. Instead, he sticks "to policy of double-check" and relies heavily on interviews with Chinese experts and officials, EU policy makers and other people in the field. He also trusts one particular journalist at the "Economist" and factual information from the FT, although he claims that the FT is "ambivalent: sometimes very pro-China, sometimes extremely anti-China, there is nothing in between." Within this field of often conflicting and contrasting opinions the experts navigate with their knowledge and values to select useful facts and opinions and direct this material for their bridging purpose.

Another point of reference on what the experts are not is the difference from policy makers. "What strikes me in Brussels is the lack of time and expertise. Officials have no time to focus on contexts, being occupied full-time with dealing with formal stuff – projects, delegations, meetings…" Jonathan Holslag explains. He confirms the general idea that the influence of experts becomes manifest precisely because "policy issues become more complex, the public (including the politicians who represent the public) become less and less able to make informed decisions" (Brint 1994: 130). The policy consultant says he has to "start from zero" when he has to explain some "thick" context to the politicians, who are aware of China's official position but not of what China is actually doing. Finally, it can also be important to distinguish themselves from other professions in knowledge-making: Paul Lim criticises what he calls "instant experts":

> You know, there are instant noodles in China, and someone said that similarly there are instant experts. A European who goes to China on trips several times does not become an expert of China – a sinologist. A sinologist is someone who has lived in China, who spent a lot of time there, who got into the culture and understands it.

The experts map the field by identifying other actors: some of them are "originators" of knowledge (diplomats, researchers), some are "authors" (terms borrowed from Bell 1991: 37) of texts that influence other actors and the general public. By identifying the main actors in the field the experts structure their positionality and present themselves as alternative to other kinds of knowledge production. The way they manifest these differences can be seen from their position in regard to the issues widely discussed by the media.

3.2. Against Reductionist Metaphors: Chinese Economy as Pluralism

The discourse around trade with China is identified as one of the main misconceptions which impede dialogue and mutual understanding. Contrary to what can be concluded from the the

chapter on the media, the experts aim to dismantle the image of a unitary powerful Chinese dragon with all its attributes.

When asked about their reaction to the threat discourse, some of the experts assured that this is typical for the US, and not so much for the EU. However, the fact that the threat is one of the key issues can be demonstrated by a FT poll which shows that "China has overtaken the US as the biggest threat to global stability in the eyes of Europeans" (Hall and Dyer, FT, April 15). Of course, this trend was mostly influenced by the events in Tibet, but the authors suggest that it is complemented with "competition from cheap Chinese exports". Their interview with Mark Leonard, the author of *What Does China Think?*[7] suggests that the image of China changed from the land of economic opportunities to a threat.

Paul Lim is certain that the public, having formed such an opinion, pressures policy-makers. As Leonard claims in his interview, the opinion about China is formed almost exclusively from media coverage, which is often unfavourable (Hall and Dyer, FT, April 15). Xiaohong Tong, who currently teaches intercultural communication, suggests that the media only provides some specific angle about China: they visualise it using the images of its countryside or factories. She often hears from Europeans who have spent some time in China that it was not what they had expected. Interestingly, these people often infer their expectations about China from general orientalist images and compare China to Thailand, only to find the Chinese people cooler and "not smiling all the time".

This means that the experts have something to counterbalance. Paul Lim says that EU citizens are afraid that "the Chinese take away their jobs" and refers to studies proving that "there has

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[7] During the fieldwork, the book was already displayed in bookshop windows.

been no job loss". Fraser Cameron adds that "it's not about cheap goods anymore, first of all".

Paul Lim and Stanley Crossick stress that the majority of exports from China come from European-owned companies. The former adds that "you cannot just blame China for the fact that European companies go there because of cheap labour or other reasons". From what has been mentioned in the interviews it is clear that China-EU economic relations are viewed in global relational terms, and the Chinese economy is seen as a pluralist system composed of the state, different localities, domestic and foreign-owned companies. Xiaohong Tong stresses, "China inside is very diverse: South-east parts are more developed, their mentality is more commercialised, whereas from the North (my region) people are still very culture-oriented."

Constant references to diversity within China exemplify attempts to counterbalance the image of China as a "mighty beast" which has a life and agency of its own. Differences in China, as well as the difference between economic practices from media stereotypes are perceived as something that has to be proved, and the experts extensively attempt to do so referring to their personal experience in the interviews and to multiple sources in their professional practice.

3.3. Tibet: It Depends

The representation of Tibet and Dalai Lama, as well as China's involvement in the region, were pointed out as major misconceptions without me asking about them. Although the experts share a concern over the events in Tibet, they position themselves as alternative to the media and, in hope that a middle way can be reached, focusing on the other, the Chinese side.

Stanley Crossick points out that the issues in Tibet are presented as if "the Chinese invaded this lovely peace-loving nation following Shangri-La, and not the feudalist oppressive state without education [as it was]". He also says that "we only get news from the Dalai Lama

group. We don't see what the Chinese have done in Tibet, neither do we see who has been financing Dalai Lama in luxury for many years." He allows himself a comparison: "If I'm living in UK, I can't accept absence of education and a feudal system in Yorkshire. How far do I go with [the notion of] culture?" Whenever he mentions this, he is labelled as "apologist of China". To avoid being identified as such when presenting an alternative opinion, Xiaohong Tong refers to a famous Taiwanese philosopher and historian Li Ao: "he is Taiwanese – he is very objective, I always refer to him, because if you suggest someone from China, no one would believe them".

Xiahong Tong also believes that there is confusion between human rights and political issues. The Chinese government does not regard the suppression of riots, which started from ethnic violence, in Tibet in spring 2008 as a human rights issue: "what happened is regarded as a criminal act", and no one can prove whether Tibetan people in general or certain organisations started killing people. Jonathan Holslag shows how careful governments should be over this confusion, as he was providing expertise on how to handle the issue to the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Belgian government. "I have no problem that the EP debates on Tibet, it's their responsibility," – he says. "But the Commission should remain very pragmatic." He suggests that instead of issuing political statements on human rights, the EU should start an "informal low-profile dialogue on Tibet". "Their [Chinese] main concern is not that these Buddhists can celebrate with Dalai Lama in a temple or whatever," he states ironically. "It is all about stability in this part [of China], which is highly endowed with resources". In his opinion, if the pressure on China mounts, it will only encourage nationalists. "China is fed up with the EU and growing more assertive," – the policy expert suggests.

The experts also mention value judgements as impediments to dialogue and understanding. Xiaohong Tong nicely expresses this trend saying that "if your scales are not adjusted to start from zero, how can you measure exact weight?" As it can be seen, the experts do not claim the position of the voice of reason and rationality. What they argue is "thick description" (Jonathan Holslag, the term not his), cultural sensitivity (Xiaohong Tong, Paul Lim) and pluralism of opinions (Stanley Crossick). In this sense they feel obliged to present an alternative opinion when China is publicly attacked by all other actors in the field.

The experts' careful position results in their knowledge of the complexity of China as well as from the fact that they "service" EU-China relations. Having these positions, the experts are shaped by institutional factors and inputs by other actors in the field of representation simultaneously as they produce their own representation. Faced with what they see as fanatical and biased representation on the media side, they provide alternative knowledge, as Xiaohong Tong calls it, showing that the glass is half full before starting to criticise. Even when they express concern over suppression of demonstrations and other human rights issues, they do this with awareness of their position and identity in the field.

Conclusion

This thesis has inquired into the relation between positions in the field of representation and the type of knowledge that is produced. It has showed that this relation should not be defined as causal: there is a constant interplay, firstly, between the positions the actors assume and their vocabulary, as well as their choices of topic and angle, and, secondly, between the knowledge they are expected to produce and their subjectivity. The analysis of two high-reputation newspapers and the self-presentation of Brussels-based policy experts have proved that expectations about their respective audience and relations to other agents in the field lead most of the media to opt for an easy solution of "animated" methodological nationalism, whereas the experts define their position taking into account the fact that other actors take extremes in the field and position themselves as alternative, more sensitive and more relational. However, as the analysis shows, all the actors' position-taking can be explained through the framework of relational sociology, coupling it with Bourdieu's notion of field.

The notion of field proved to have a high explanatory value for this research. It encompasses the concept of a network, where all actors are interrelated and processes are more important than substances, and adds institutional framework, multiple indirect influences and expectations to it. Yet it is also clear that if representation is to be regarded a field, it has multiple subfields, which exist on different layers. The media and expert knowledge have different rules of the game. Each of the individual agents reacts to, firstly, working routines (such as the requirement for the journalists to react rapidly and the movement between different social and physical spaces for the experts) and personal interactions, secondly, the social space of the locality (experts are very aware of the Brussels space, whereas journalists' take on the subject depends on their proximity to the object), and, thirdly, the general debate

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in representation. These subfields and layers interact and reflect each other, thus, the boundaries of the field become a secondary issue.

I believe relational sociology is a useful tool explaining new developments of global and globally-minded media, as well as the development of the supranational and expert knowledge, which is part of it. The supranational takes shape not only institutionally, it also shapes individual identities and introduces more relational awareness into individual choices, careers and the knowledge that is produced. This thesis has not mapped out the entire field of representation of China: the lack of access to policy makers and the impossibility of tracking how the values of the experts are reflected in policy papers (both of these – due to work overload of the institutions and confidentiality) did not allow the inclusion of the point where the two representations analysed meet to form a supranational opinion. Further research could take into account the official opinion of EU institutions.

Moreover, the field is incomplete without extensive networks of scholars in Europe, Asia, the US, Australia and elsewhere. Due to the limitations of this thesis it was impossible to analyse their ways of producing knowledge, but it could be a direction for further studies in Sociology of expertise. The old but still dominant Weberian paradigm, equalising experts with narrow-minded bureaucrats, does not explain the complex positionality of policy consultants and professional observers, neither is it useful in analysing the work of area specialists. Relational Sociology provides tools for tracing the process during which supranational institutions and supranational knowledge are made bottom-up. The complexity of the EU institutions and the scope of the issues they cover require "outsourcing" of knowledge – policy makers cannot be specialist in each area. Yet not the narrow technical rationality, but rather a complex interdisciplinary approach is what they demand from semi-independent or completely

autonomous policy experts. The experts are aware that this "outsourcing" frames their position in the field, even when they criticise policy makers for superficial knowledge and bias.

The response from the "object" is also a part of the field: one cannot say that the simplistic images of China are only constructs of Western imagination. They "produce" reality, as Chinese leaders and the society responds to them (for example, the biased presentation of the riots in Tibet pushed even some of the opponents of the regime to the "pro-China camp" and in turn strengthened the image of oneness of "Chinese opinion"). Knowledge production in the relation to the supranational, as well as to the discourse surrounding China, the emerging superpower, is an interesting aspect to study for Sociology of knowledge, especially because there is an obvious lack of studying representation in the "West" outside the US. This thesis has shown how scholars in different areas arrive to the same conclusions without using each other's terms: Gries in International Relations, Morgan in Philosophy, Dirlik in studies of Orientalism, Ooi in analysis of business representations arrive at a principally similar conclusion without reference to Bourdieu or Relational Sociology: not Orientalism is a mirror of China, but China is made to serve as a mirror for the complex network of relations and networks of agents producing representation.

Appendix 1. Newspaper Articles Analysed

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Appendix 2. Profiles of the Experts

Paul Lim works for the European Institute for Asian Studies and was one of the co-founders of the institute in 1989. Originally from Singapore, he is now a Belgian citizen. He specialises in South-East Asia and teaches International Relations and Political Science in Malaysia. The institute presents itself as "a Brussels based policy and research think tank supported by the European Union which aims to promote understanding and cooperation between the EU and Asia" (from the official website http://www.eias.org). The think tank aims to "provide information and expertise to the EU institutions, the academic world and business by disseminating concise, thoroughly researched and up to date material on EU-Asia relations and important developments in Asia." (ibid)

Stanley Crossick works at the European Policy Centre and numerous other institutions. In his blog he presents himself in the following way: "European of British nationality [sic!], for nearly 30 years Bruxellois. Deep believer in the principle of 'mutuality' and Monnet's axiom "Thought cannot be divorced from action"." (http://crossick.blogactiv.eu). The institution presents itself as "an independent, not-for-profit think tank, committed to making European integration work" (http://www.epc.eu). Furthermore, it "aims to promote a balanced dialogue between the different constituencies of its membership, spanning all aspects of economic and social life." (ibid)

Fraser Cameron is primarily affiliated with the EU-Russia centre, the EU-China Academic Network and the European Institute for Asian Studies and works more or less on a freelance basis. He is interested in EU external relations in general and lectures on Europe-China relations and Eurasia in different countries: Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore… The Europe-

China Academic Network was initiated by the European Commission and presents itself as "a mechanism for promoting EU-China knowledge and research within Europe" (http://ec-an.eu) and has a very interesting logo with a red-blue gradient decorated with yellow stars on both sides – the starred Chinese flag blends with the starred EU flag.

Xiaohong Tong is the only expert of Chinese origin that I have interviewed. She works for the Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies and teaches intercultural communication for European businesspeople interested in China. The Institute is a cooperation project between the Renmin University of China and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, it justifies its existence by the fact that Europeans have problems in dealing with China" and "offers answers to those who are looking for in-depth analyses and a deeper understanding of China's internal and external developments" (http://www.vub.ac.be/biccs.htm).

Jonathan Holslag works for the BICCS, but he is also a policy consultant for the European Parliament and the Commission. He said he has written reports on energy security, China-Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, EU's domestic position for the EP, on Asia policy for the EC, and did some counselling on regional security for the Council. However, I contacted him through the ECAN.

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