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Perspectives of development cooperation/
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Introduction: China in Africa. What role can Churches and Civil Society play in multilateral development cooperation?

Anton Knuth

Africa-China relations are a polarizing topic amongst scholars, practitioners, civil society leaders. They are hotly debated on the media. The cultural, economic and political dimensions of this relationship are often historically and morally charged. Moreover, Euro-centric perspectives fail to recognize the full spectrum and prospects of African-Chinese engagements. Several African decision-makers see China as an alternative for the continent, which offers a more effective form of cooperation than that of Europe. Critics warn against exploitation by, dependency on and neo-colonialism of Chinese actors, from financing to infrastructure, from bilateral relations to the global governance level.

The conference documented here on the role of civil society and churches in development cooperation between China and Africa was facilitated by Mission Academy at the University of Hamburg, Foundation Asia House, China-National-Info-Desk and Bread for the World, Theological Desk in collaboration with the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) from 27-29th October 2021. Its aim was to illuminate the potential for increased, multilateral cooperation between churches and civil society in the contexts concerned. Even though development agencies have mostly withdrawn from direct project cooperation with China, the task of networking and mutual exchange of knowledge remains unchanged. Dietrich Werner, Senior Theological Advisor at Bread of the World, emphasized the understanding of development and diakonia based on ethical values and oriented towards human rights. He pleaded for still existing margins of conceptual dialogue to be used in favour of people despite system differences and brought the World Council of Churches (WCC) and ACT Alliance into the discussion for the development of guidelines for the inclusion of civil society and religious communities in development dialogues. WCC deputy general secretary Prof. Isabel Phiri stressed that the issue of China was controversial in Africa because there was a primary interest in seeking models of a life-centred economy rather than an economy of limitless growth and expansion.

Many African countries share a history of solidarity with China, Fidon Mwombeki, secretary general of the All African Christian Council from Nairobi, emphasized in his contribution. He recalled Julius Nyerere's friendship with Mao in the 1960s, for example, and China's support in the fight against apartheid, and criticized a blanket defensive reflex. Europe should not “protect” Africa from China, because it can help Africa to overcome unilateral dependencies, as long as the investments help build domestic production capacity. Economic relations based solely on the export of raw materials have dominated for too long. Christian Straube of Asia House had previously shown the extent to which China is investing in the expansion of railroads, roads, dams but manufacturing industries. China's economy is no longer isolated, but has become the main driver of infrastructure investment in through its own state-owned enterprises. At the end of his paper, he presents guidelines for an equitable form of cooperation that would have to centre on the people themselves.

Martin Lachmann, of Amity, Hong Kong, presented a paper showing the transformations in China's understanding of and contribution to development in South-South exchanges. Theresa Carino, also with Amity, Hong Kong, sounded out China's new White Paper strategy in a similar vein. Alongside

1 Pastor Dr. Anton Knuth is Director of Studies at the Missionsakademie an der Universität Hamburg.
2 http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202101/10/content_W55ffa6b6bc6d0f72576943922.html
the laudable potentials, however, there are also exploitative contracts or insufficient sustainability of projects. These are mainly due to the weak position of many African governments, which are incapable of securing justice and adequately representing the interests of their own people. Another problem is the high level of debt of many African countries, which are already more indebted than they were at the beginning of the debt relief campaign at the start of this century. But how can Africa's systems of governance be developed so that they are tailored to their own circumstances and become more effective and sustainable?

Churches need to give a voice to the people concerned themselves, because Africa needs to better define the criteria for its own development, urged Kenneth Mtata, General Secretary of Zimbabwe’s Council of Churches. The Christian-based development aid foundation Amity from China shared its vision of cooperation and how it is already present with projects in individual African countries and an office in Addis Ababa. Amity would like to benefit from experiences of intercultural learning with African partners and become even more involved. China must no longer close itself off locally, criticized Isabel Friemann of the China-Infostelle. It is regrettable, she said, that in many cases there are too few positive relationships between Chinese and local people. This could foster a culture of mistrust. But building trust, respect and understanding for each other is central. The churches could help by establishing encounters, for example between the African and Chinese Christian Councils. Christoph Stückelberger, founder of Globethics, Geneva, warned against a new cold war and called for the establishment of trusting relations. China is increasingly perceived as a competitor to the West on the world stage. "But with whom I am friends, I do not fight." He called for learning from each other and leaving behind old reflexes of superiority in favour of mutual respect and empathy. Cooperation, he said, is based on dialogue and understanding of each other. For example, Africa needs to discover its own resources more, produce solar cells locally instead of importing them. Joint scholarship programs could help deepen the diaconal capacities of young people from China, Africa and Europe in intercultural terms. Development agencies and churches could exchange best practice models and act as bridge builders to contribute to sustainable development. For this, protected spaces are needed to get closer. All participants agreed that it is important to strengthen the people on the ground and to put the African Agency at the centre of all development models so that the global UN development goals can be achieved. This requires models of transformative partnership involving civil society and churches on both sides, not against but with China.
Challenges and Chances for Development Cooperation between China and Africa – an independent role of CSOs in development cooperation?!

An impulse paper for discussion

Dietrich Werner

1 Background of this Discussion paper
This discussion paper was proposed within the process of the consultation on “China and Africa: perspectives of development cooperation – the role of civil society organizations and churches” which took place from 27 to 29 October 2021 in Hamburg. It was not meant as a policy paper, but as a discussion paper for mutual internal dialogue between actors in development cooperation from church background. The main intention of this consultation was to highlight the added value of civil society organizations (CSOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) in development cooperation between Africa, Europe, and China. One could well argue that this is a huge and complex thematic agenda and that this consultation was too inadequate in its composition, too short to absorb all major facets of this theme, and too little representative particularly from the African side in order to bring more perspectives to the table. While this is certainly true, we wanted to make this humble first step in a longer explorative process and the expertise brought together is at least a small beginning.

2 The complexities and diverse nature of players and actors on the ground
“China” and “Africa” – already this first thematic suggestion demanded for several clarifications and nuances to be made for a more differentiated perception. Are we speaking on a continental level or at the level of 54 African states and 22 Chinese provinces? Are we to speak in more detail of individual countries at the national level or on regional levels such as the SADEC community of Southern African countries? Are we to speak mainly of governmental levels or on the level of primary economic actors or the civil society level? There are so many different shades and levels of action and processes to be considered that it is not easy to avoid generalization and vagueness concerning the respective levels or argumentation. There are big differences in the level of economic and social development according to the human development index (HDI) between the three world regions China, Africa, and Europa. Almost 20% of the world’s population lives in China (1,4 billion), 6% in the EU (512 million), and 17% on the African continent (1,216 billion). In terms of Human Development Index Germany is ranking at place 6, China at place 85, and Ethiopia at place 173, Tanzania at place 163.

3 The unequal role concerning the shadow sides of world history and colonization: The global development conflict and the ongoing scars of colonization
There is no doubt that countries of the Global North carry a historical guilt for the colonization and exploitation of countries of the Global South. The one-sided enrichment that was structured and solidified over several hundred years of military and political hegemony is one key reason for the existing global inequality in the ranking systems of HDI and ongoing structural injustices in multiple sectors of life and society. China never colonized countries in Africa but was itself subject of
colonization through European powers. China at the same time underwent an unprecedented period of social transformation and economic development in the last forty years and therefore offers itself as a role model for many countries of the Global South about how to move out of economic backwardness. China now has become the second largest economy in the world, producing 15% of the world’s Gross Domestic Income (GDI) while the proportion of Europe is reducing to 23%.

4) **The search for an alternative paradigm of development and the SDG Agenda as the only binding international framework for redefining development**

While the majority of countries (193-member states of UN) has committed themselves to new parameters of “sustainable development” in the 2015 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG Agenda), there is an ongoing international discourse and learning process within the international community about questions like what development really means. What kind of concept of growth and consumption is sustainable for this planet? How are the mandates and roles of different actors in development (governments, economic actors, civil society actors) to be properly understood? What consequences are to be drawn out of historic injustices and the violation of natural habitats for the current world economic and financial order? Any talk about the involvement of CSOs in international development cooperation needs to be aware of the fact there is both the need to refer to the UN SDG goals which are the only agreed common framework, but still within this agreement there are many ongoing conceptual dialogues and many different opinions on what development actually means and how it should be conceptually prioritized. CSOs have the crucial role to bring in their expertise on the conceptual issues of development as they are speaking on behalf of local populations and bring in perspectives of the grassroots.

5) **Shifting roles and new power balances in the international development architecture: China’s new role in the African continent**

China’s rise to global power status in recent decades has been accompanied by deepening economic relationships with Africa, with the New Silk Road's extension to Sub-Saharan Africa as the latest stage of a major global economic outreach of China. It was in 2013 that China launched the world’s biggest infrastructure project, which is called the Belt and Road Initiative, aiming at the building of trade routes and networks in separate cooperation with over 60 nations, including African nations. Already since 2000 Chinas has become a major economic partner of Sub-Saharan African countries. The total merchandise trade between Africa and China increased from US$9 billion in 2000 to US$222 in 2014. Chinese Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) flows to Africa increased from just US$ 200 million to US$ 2, 9 billion in 2011, and increased to US$ 4 billion in 2014, turning China into the largest foreign development country investor in the African continent. In the year 2023 there will be the 10 years anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative which might be an opportunity also to look back and to review past development, expectations, and prospects for the future. It will be interesting to see whether there is something like an International and Intercultural Advisory Mechanism or Advisory Board to accompany that process in China.

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4 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26538718
6) Increased involvement of CSOs in Chinese African economic development partnerships as an added value for both sides

While there is an extensive debate on the reasons, the economic, geo-political, and strategic interests for the engagement of China on the African continent,\(^5\) it is also evident that the role of China as investor, economic partner, and humanitarian actor in Africa is viewed both with positive sentiments and approval by many African elites but also with some skepticism by others. With regard to the role of Chinese non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Africa it should be stated that they are still very few and more could possibly be done. The conviction emerged during our consultation that more involvement of CSOs can be viewed as an added value and strategic plus from both sides. It has been argued that there are more than 800,000 CSOs in China at present. We do not know how many CSOs are there on the African continent. For mitigating side effects of big infrastructure-oriented development projects as well as for orientating development efforts to the needs of local populations the collaboration between CSOs on both sides should be seen as a positive potential which can strengthen better communication, transparency, and also the reputation of both sides in the respective societies.

7) The diversity of different types of CSOs in Chinese – African development cooperation and the missing visibility of churches on both sides

As early as 2003, China’s former Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan said that China should seriously consider the role of NGOs in international affairs and increase China’s voice in the field of NGOs and international development. The Chinese Civil Organization’s (CCO) involvement in African development cooperation, however, has significant implications. While several official voices have emphasized a distinct role for the CCOs to take an active part in development cooperation in Africa by forming a strategic cooperative partnership with Chinese enterprises and to formulate a triple cooperative and coordinated government-enterprise-CSO system, it is a question to be discussed to what extent CCOs or CSOs can exercise an independent and critical role in a complex relationship of state driven development cooperation once they are directly controlled by the government. The diversity and different types of CSOs in the Chinese as well as in some African contexts needs therefore to be born in mind. More independent and critical NGOs like known in European societies might not be easily comparable or have the same function and space for free operation like government-organized NGOs (GONGOs)\(^6\) in countries like China where the one-party system and the dominant role played by the CCP provides a tighter framework for the work of NGOs. However, we need to learn more about the creative role and potential (as well as limitations) which also can be played by NGOs from China. Any space for dialogue and mutual learning should be utilized.

As Chinese investments on the African continent have grown, many African NGOs have expressed concern over the negative side effects of China’s expansion on the continent on labor rights, local production, the environment, and local governance. It should be an issue of mutual learning to explore whether and how there could be more space for the participation of African NGOs in Chinese African development cooperation. Another major issue is to look into the specific role of both African, Chinese (and European) churches for global Chinese-African (or European) development cooperation. Major church bodies like AACC and China Christian Council (CCC) currently do not

\(^5\) https://www.rienner.com/title/China_s_New_Role_in_Africa

\(^6\) GONGOs, i.e. government owned or funded NGOs are a global phenomenon, known in many states, not just in China: See: Moises Naim: What is a GONGO?, How government-sponsored groups masquerade as civil society. Foreign Policy October 13, 2009, in: https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/13/what-is-a-gongo/
have any advisory board on Chinese-African development cooperation or on social, environmental, and political issues which accompany the involvement of Chinese economic actors in Africa. Although many African church representative talk and know about different aspects of Chinese economic involvement in Africa, there seems to be little organized dialogue about issues of common interests between Chinese and African churches. The missing visibility of churches in this area might also have to do with weak infrastructure and lack of training in issues of social ethics, developmental policies, and environmental policies on both sides, certainly also with the lack of civil space and opportunities which allow for issues like this to be discussed in a meaningful manner. The common sense which was emerging during this consultation, however, was to explore whether more explicit encouragement for NGOs on both sides could be possible to participate in mutual business and development cooperation. This potentially would be for the benefit of all sides and would not undermine but enhance and qualify the international connectivity role and good communication both of Chinese and African actors and the visibility of civil society actors, including churches, on both sides.

8) The need for a continued forum of exchange and a platform for best practice learning in Chinese-European-African development cooperation

It is encouraging that the Chinese government has organized a variety of official NGO fora to augment the triennial ministerial-level Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) between China and African states. While these fora allow invited African NGOs to discuss issues related to the Development Goals with Chinese GONGOs, the Chinese government seems more reluctant to engage in substantively meaningful dialogue with African NGOs about issues of concern related specifically to Chinese investments in Africa. Instead, the government utilizes GONGOs as a liaison with African NGOs with the aim to manage and restrict NGO involvement in Sino-African relations. Some GONGOs have, however, managed to distance themselves from the central government and have developed agendas of their own. The majority of Chinese GONGOs seem to remain primarily concerned with promoting China’s image in African countries rather than engaging with politically sensitive aspects of soaring Chinese overseas investments in Africa. It will be exciting to see to what extent the Chinese government becomes more courageous in materializing on its long-held promise to promote NGO involvement in Sino-African relations in future years and to what extent new forms of trilateral cooperation (Chinese actors, African actors, and civil society actors on both sides) could be accompanied also by mutual commitments to basic values of participation, inclusivity, transparency, and democratic and human rights values which are an integral dimension of the UN SDG Agenda.

9) The key interest in spelling out terms of reference for trilateral development partnerships between China, Europe and Africa

A key concept and new terminology, which is under debate featured in the discussions in Hamburg, is about trilateral development partnerships between China, Africa, and possibly European partners. The German state ministry of development cooperation as well as the foreign ministry division within the EU (EAS) also have put exploring forms of trilateral partnerships as part of their new strategic fields of interest. The ongoing GIZ Project aiming at providing a framework for such new forms of partnerships between China, Europe and Africa

trilateral partnerships with inclusion of CSO partners will remain of high interest for partners concerned. One key requirement certainly rests with the terms of reference with which many CSOs from Christian background are obliged to work with, i.e., the framework of operation agreed within their global umbrella organization ACT Alliance in Geneva, which presupposes a clear agreement on basic standards of transparency, democratic values, protection over against corruption, and human rights principles which are part of their self-identity and institutional requirements.

10) Operational Guidelines for inclusion of CSOs and FBOs in development partnerships between China, Europe and Africa – the added value of CSOs for Localizing the development Agenda

A core conviction, which was repeatedly shared during the Hamburg consultation, could be phrased with the words of ACT Alliance (EU): “In a changing development cooperation context where private sector is called to play a greater role through public-private partnerships and where large scale programs are prioritized, the role of civil society in the democratic governance and accountability of development processes and cooperation is more important than ever. It is essential to preserve the space for civil society organizations and churches to sustain their role as development actors in their own right, not only in solidarity with poor and marginalized populations but also as a main asset to make policies more effective and just, development more equitable and sustainable, governments and business more accountable and societies more peaceful and safe.”

We are living in a time where global interconnectedness and the impact of neoliberal and consumerist lifestyles – entailing massive social and ecological threats – have reached all-time historical peaks. The wellbeing of our planet, the equality of all humans, and the realization of the SDGs are common goals. The enormous changes required in the near future to reach these goals however can only be made with coordinated and joint efforts. The key reference point for the inclusion of CSOs within the SDG Agenda on Sustainable Development of the UN is SDG goal 17 the UN which formulated its main objective as to “[s]trengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”. This goal refers to the need for cross sector and cross-country collaboration in pursuit of all the goals by the year 2030. This is not possible without involving the independent voice of the CSOs on both sides. The concern for new partnerships in international development agenda SDG Goal 17 therefore implies an invitation to rethink the role of CSOs (see especially Goal 17.17: “Encourage effective partnership” and Goal 17.14: “Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development”). CSOs play a crucial role in localizing the SDG Agenda and thus its implementation cannot work without their inclusion: Localization according to the UN Agenda is defined as “the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national and subnational sustainable development targets. It involves various concrete mechanisms, tools, innovations, platforms and processes to effectively translate the development agenda into results at the local level.” In other words, localization is the local implementation of the new set of goals and the monitoring of progress at the sub-national level. Localization should be conceptualized in a holistic manner and include civil society, local


governments at the frontline of development, traditional leaders, religious organizations, the private sector, citizens, and other parties. CSOs can play a critical role by effectively articulating the needs and aspirations of the poor, fulfilling critical service-delivery gaps, and promoting “good” governance practices. Therefore, “it is essential to unravel the potential roles of CSOs in the effective implementation of the SDGs as well as to enhance their engagement, impact and effectiveness in global development processes.”

The added value of churches and church related CSOs has been articulated in many documents related to the UN processes:
- Churches often are close to the people and can help to provide a realistic assessment of their needs;
- Churches reach out to remote rural places and regions where often state authorities and private economic actors cannot offer any relevant access;
- Churches and their development actors usually focus on small scale projects, not on large scale infrastructure projects which often are very relevant to the needs of people at the grassroots;
- Churches are advocates for ecological stewardship and protection of environmental resources;
- Churches offer hope and spiritual resources which provider energy for participation on social transformation process;
- Churches provide ethical guidance and moral orientation, which are extremely important for balancing the various dimensions of development projects and making them more acceptable and adapted to real needs to people and inter-generational justice issues.

11) The concept of an ecological civilization as a common reference point between African, Chinese and European actors

Chinas has agreed to promote the common goal of an ecological civilization in order to lead its economy on a path which is securing both prosperity as well as ecological integrity. To achieve this goal, it is advisable to define common objectives and interests between African and Chinese countries. The notion and concept of an ecological civilization suggests itself as an important chance for common strategic interests between Chinese, African, and European development partners. While this does not mean that all details of a state policy in China are to be accepted by Western partners and NGO participation in any common project does not imply to uncritically accept all conditions and frameworks which might be implied in certain framework policies, the essential interest to protect the environment, to ask for and commit future development to a drastic transformation and reduction from fossil industries, and the need to continue outline essential goals for a global ecological civilization should be seen as a point for more strategic dialogue and joint collaboration between Chinese, African, and European partners. Transparent, open, and fair participation of the cooperating partners, including CSOs, in decision-making-processes as well as agreements on suitable measures and their implementation are sometimes difficult to negotiate and to be carried out, also due to misbalances and differences in power, economic weight, worldview, and self-interest. But it appears promising to try this more inclusive approach orientated to core values of an ecological civilization as the results will be better the more development cooperation takes into considerations also the interests of local populations which are affected by development projects.

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9 The Role of NGOs in localizing the SDG Agenda: https://www.gppi.net/2016/03/07/the-roles-of-civil-society-in-localizing-the-sustainable-development-goals
12) The trust deficit to be overcome from both sides at the same time

There is still a strong trust deficit that has to be overcome. There are existing assumptions in the West that China wants to make itself the superpower in the world and that its agenda is directed by this aim. However, recent new policies being enacted show that China is deeply concerned about domestic problems that it fears will derail its continued sustainable development – issues related to ideology, demographics, inequality. Mutual skepticism of hidden political and/or economical agendas must be put aside in favor of the urgent needs of our planet and all its human and non-human inhabitants. People of good will are required to find culturally sensitive ways of non-violent communication in participatory round table meetings and to establish mutual trust and reliability.

The key question with regard to ecological civilization is: Can climate change become a mutual point of convergence, common interests, and collaboration between partners from China, Africa, and Europe, rather than of competition and posturing by major powers? This will certainly set the atmosphere for developing trust and collaboration both between the continents of China and Africa as well as between governments and NGOs.

13) The special role of religious communities and churches in development cooperation and humanitarian aid

The rediscovery and re-emergence of local forms of diakonia as well as international forms of “ecumenical diakonia” in both Chinese as well as in African Christianity plays a significant role in strengthening the relevance of religion for society and for social as well as ecological transformation. The rise of involvement of churches in social services and diakonia also underlines the need for sufficient political, social, and legal space for FBOs in more restricted societies. One of the key factors drawing people into Christian churches both in China and in Africa is a sense of mutual belonging, a sense of care and love, which is cultivated and developed within Christianity, often filling a vacuum in a context of rapid social change and transformation. There is an immense longing for something beyond material values and for a deeper spiritual meaning of life which many discover in the virtues and attitudes of Christian love to the weak, the elderly, and the vulnerable. Thus Christian churches also contribute something meaningful for the sense of togetherness, social cohesion, a spirit of service, and harmony in societies. As larger urban churches have given birth to congregations with a membership ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 members, increasing financial resources are available which are often used for building up Christian initiatives and projects in social services. Both in China as well as in Africa more and more churches – also from evangelical and charismatic background - run health clinics, support HIV-AIDS work, run facilities for seniors, and engage in environmental issues. The development of social services and diakonia in Chinese Christianity as well as in African Christianity often goes hand in hand with the development of contextualized Chinese or African theology. As churches engage with the poor and vulnerable groups such as orphaned children, migrant workers, the disabled, and the elderly, they are beginning to understand and to interpret their theology in the larger context of society, a developmental literacy and competency for ethical issues emerge which can be used for international development dialogue and partnership dialogues. The challenge remains for both Chinese as well as African churches to develop contextual theologies and development ethics in a way which reflects the global mission of the church in a rapidly changing society and not to interpret Christian faith as relating only to the individual and private realm.

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Localizing of Diakonia and involvement in international or ecumenical Diakonia thus can serve as a bridge between Christian tradition as well as contemporary Chinese as well as African cultures. Churches in both continents are definitely part of the larger civil society which enjoys different spaces to operate in certain regional contexts. While churches are affected by all measures which strengthen or hinder active participation in CSOs, one also need to take seriously the interest and self-understanding of churches which in many cases do not want to be lumped together with NGOs in conceptualization as they represent more than just a particular civil society party’s interest but a religious understanding of the whole of life and are part of the global ecumenical fellowship of churches. At the same time, there are many different churches, some of them more inward-looking or even fundamentalist, others interested in social and diaconal issues, but still in need of developing more real and effective partnership with CSOs.

14) The need for more developmental literacy, training in development ethics and public theology and ethics in Chinese and in African churches
Forms of Christianity lived out in more restricted social and political contexts have more challenges for developing sufficient staffing resources as well as conceptual energies to get engaged in public discourses, public theological debates, and controversies about developmental paradigms in other continents. At the same time, it is obvious in many reports that spaces for civil society are shrinking in all continents and not just in China or in Asian countries. However, moving on the course towards internationalization of work implies necessarily also to become more articulate in issues of public development concepts and theological issues concerned. The role of facilitators and ecumenical partners should be - while not imposing their own criteria and standards on a situation where they do not live in - to strengthen partners in the Global South for enhancing their own competence in developmental literacy, in development ethics, and in public theology so as to become articulate in engaging in engaged dialogue with their own governments and societies on the priorities for sustainable development which are set before us in the SDG Agenda.
This is a Kairos in both African and Chinese societies to come up with some proposals on how trilateral cooperation will look like and could be given concrete shape in the particular areas of green development and poverty alleviation which are high on the agenda in both continents and in the SDG Agenda. Churches and development agencies could and should enter into conceptual dialogue on how to propose meaningful projects of development cooperation between the two sides while at the same time giving a high visibility and participation to CSOs on both sides. How can we encourage business to pay attention to climate mitigation activities? Can Christian entrepreneurial groups in China contribute to this? The same would go for business groups in the West who hold more sway and influence on this. Can we come up with some models on climate change mitigation and care for creation to be developed in Asia, Europe, and Africa? Which churches can be involved at the local, national, and international levels? It would be good to have an open advisory committee on NGO participation in African-Chinese relationships in business and development cooperation in which representatives of churches and religious groups could be coopted. At the same time, there is one critical dimension which needs to be further discussed and addressed also in western countries, i.e. the shrinking role of state related development cooperation in Western European governments, many of which have dismantled structured ministries of development cooperation (Netherlands, Denmark, Great Britain) in past years and the question of what comes beyond aid is on the agenda everywhere. There is a changing situation of CSOs and FBOs also in “developed societies”, namely in Europe and the USA, the traditional sources of ODA seem to be dwindling and reducing. Therefore, also the
centers for determining the agenda, direction, and flow of aid and development globally are changing and re-configuring. Aid was distinctly separated from trade and development, which is not any more the main trend in Western societies. In addition, China’s rise has called into question this approach. More Chinese money is being invested in infrastructure projects that will have long-term benefits for developing countries, as these are capital intensive and high-risk projects which the IMF/WB avoided. The emphasis is now on trade, rather than on aid, at least from the Asian perspective. What does this mean for effective work of both NGOs and state related development cooperation and the role of private companies?
1. Acknowledgement
On behalf of the World Council of Churches, I would like to express our profound gratitude for this invitation to participate in this highly strategic hybrid conference, “China and Africa: Perspectives of development cooperation/the role of civil society and churches.”

2. Introduction
As must have become clear already at this conference, Africa-China relations are complex and continue to generate a lot of interest, and controversy. These relations can be approached from diverse perspectives, including: historical, political, economic, diplomatic, cultural, ethical, religious, theological, ecumenical and others.

Clearly, none of these perspectives will be neutral: China’s presence in Africa elicits highly contested positions. Defenders of these diverse positions are often very passionate and adamant that theirs is the only correct position there is regarding, “China in Africa.” And ‘Africans in China.’

Whereas some regard China as Africa’s (or at least some African countries’) “all weather friend,” others see China as only the latest exploiter of Africa’s vast resources. It is also intriguing to observe that among those who accuse China of abusing Africa are those who have exploited Africa for a very long time.

In a recent publication, China’s Power in Africa: A New Global Order (2020), Olayiwola Abegunrin and Charity Manyeruke make the following submission:

The rapid increase of China’s economic and political involvement in Africa is the most momentous development on the continent of Africa since the end of the Cold War. China is referred to as new imperialist, new actor, giant economy, and emerging power, but China is not very new to the African continent. However, in recent years, particularly since the end of the Cold War, China’s presence in Africa has grown immensely, and China’s renewed engagement with Africa has come at a time when the business climate has improved across Africa and interest in Africa as a market has grown tremendously (2020: 1).

In this presentation, I seek to restrict myself to reflecting on the role of churches in social development and sustainability/ecological transformation in the context of Chinese-African relationships as seen from the perspective of WCC. I will focus on the WCC’s role in facilitating interaction between the churches, as well as civil society and academia, in Africa and China in order to promote fair, equitable and sustainable development in engagements between Africa and China.

3. The World Council of Churches: An Overview

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11 Deputy General Secretary, World Council of Churches. I acknowledge the assistance of Prof. Ezra Chitando, staff of the WCC, in the writing of this paper.
In order to put the role of the WCC in facilitating effective interaction between the churches in Africa and China so as to promote fair, equitable and sustainable development in engagements between Africa and China, it is necessary to provide a brief background to, and description of, the WCC.

The World Council of Churches, formed in Amsterdam in 1948, is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is a community of churches on the way to visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ. It seeks to advance towards this unity, as Jesus prayed for his followers, "so that the world may believe." (John 17:21)

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement. The WCC brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 120 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 600 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Uniting churches and Independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific. There are now 350 member churches whose goal is Christian unity.12

At the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement and in the years of formation of the WCC, Africa was considered a "mission field" with little ecclesial identity of its own. The only exceptions were Egypt and Ethiopia with their ancient Orthodox churches and South Africa where the Dutch and British colonization had brought into existence several autonomous denominations. Africa came onto the "ecumenical map" in the early years of independence of its new nations and churches in the late 1950s and 1960s.13 The establishment of the Programme to Combat Racism in 1968 with a focus on the liberation of Southern African countries from apartheid, the WCC set a tone that racism was acknowledged as a powerful ideology maintained by economic and political structures which function at all levels of society. As a result, the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) was launched with the understanding that "racism is not an unalterable feature of human life" and that it is not confined to certain countries or continents but is a "world problem". The WCC has continued up to this day to condemn any relationships that are based on racial injustice. It is for this reason that the WCC on 14 April 2020 supported the All Africa statement condemning racist xenophobic discrimination of Africans in China

On the other hand, in 1948, four Chinese churches were among the founding members of the WCC. They withdrew at the time of the Korean war. Membership was resumed in 1991, by the China Christian Council. Estimates vary widely, from about 22 million Christians (Protestants and Catholics) to over 100 million (i.e. from 1.5 percent to 8.5 percent).14 Christianity in China must be understood within the context of the changing politics of religion in the country (Xinping 2015).

In June 2021, the WCC central committee recognized the Amity Foundation as a specialized ministry in a working relationship with the WCC according to Rule XVI; taking note that its objectives are consistent with the functions and purposes of the Council; and it’s expressed desire to relate to and continue cooperation with the WCC.

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The Amity Foundation was founded in 1985 at the initiative of Christians in China by the late Bishop K.H. Ting. It is active in disaster relief, diakonia, medical education, HIV prevention, rural and migrant education, disability advocacy, environmental protection, microfinance and publishing. It is the largest Bible producer in China. It is increasingly involved in international ecumenical diakonia, development and disaster assistance.

4. The WCC and the engagement of churches in social development and ecological transformation

The WCC has a distinguished history in seeking to ensure that faith is transformative. The WCC is actively involved in promoting Justice and Peace. For example, the former South African President, Nelson Mandela, addressing the WCC Eighth Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe on 13 December 1998, said:

“To us in South and Southern Africa, and indeed the entire continent, the WCC has always been known as a champion of the oppressed and the exploited.

On the other hand, the name of the WCC struck fear in the hearts of those who ruled our country and destabilized our region during the inhuman days of apartheid. To mention your name was to incur the wrath of the authorities. To indicate support for your views was to be labelled an enemy of the state.

Precisely for that reason, the vast majority of our people heard the name of the WCC with joy. It encouraged and inspired us.

When, thirty years ago, you initiated the Programme to Combat Racism and the Special Fund to support liberation movements, you showed that yours was not merely the charitable support of distant benefactors, but a joint struggle for shared aspirations.

Above all, you respected the judgment of the oppressed as to what were the most appropriate means for attaining their freedom. For that true solidarity, the people of South and Southern Africa will always remember the WCC with gratitude.”

This, however, has not been a one-way process. Africa continues to contribute immensely to the WCC. Writing close to four decades ago, Elizabeth M. Davies made the following submission:

The contribution of Africa to the WCC goes far beyond the role of its churches in making the human needs of the continent known to the wider church. The bias in favour of the poor and oppressed, implicit in Christian doctrine but easily ignored by the more affluent churches, is made concrete by the presence in the WCC of representatives of the churches in Africa and other parts of the Third World (Davies 1983: 88).

In pursuit of justice and peace globally, the WCC has been critical of the popular notion of development which justifies rampant exploitation of creation in pursuit of fulfilling human cravings. The WCC has been insistent that the global economy must reflect justice, not greed (Brubaker and Mshana 2010). With the global discourse on development being dominated by the United Nations’ 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the WCC has instead proposed the notion of a “sustainable community” and an “economy of life” (Kopiec 2016).

The notions of a “sustainable community” and “economy of life” are based on particular biblical, theological and ethical principles. Care for creation and justice are at the centre of WCC work on climate change. The Bible teaches the wholeness of creation and calls human beings to take care of the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). The God of the Bible is a God of justice who protects, loves and cares for the most vulnerable. The present world development model is threatening the lives and livelihoods of many, especially among the world's poorest people, and destroying biodiversity. The ecumenical vision is to overcome this model based on over-consumption and greed. This is also expressed in the African philosophy of Ubuntu (“I am because you are”, which places emphasis on “sustainable community” and strives to preserve creation (Shumba 2011).

Through ecumenical *diakonia*, the WCC seeks to contribute towards the movement of regarding churches as having the mission of “bandaging wounds,” to that of naming and confronting the roots of poverty, injustice and inequality. Through the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, the WCC is calling upon Christians to, “Experience God’s presence with the most vulnerable, the wounded, and the marginalized…” (WCC 2014: 284). Consequently, there is a growing emphasis on the holistic mission of the churches. Thus:

> The holistic perspective clearly contradicts the practice of separating *diakonia* from the mission of the church, which in many places has resulted in an unsound departmentalization of ministries. At the same time, the prophetic dimension of diaconal action is underlined. If *diakonia* in the past could assume forms of performance that would be perceived as benevolent action or charity work, ecumenical *diakonia* today requires a critical analysis of what causes poverty and human suffering, and bold action in defence of the excluded and their rights. Advocacy thus has become an integral part of diaconal action (Nordstokke 2014: 267).

The relationship between Specialised Ministries and the WCC brings together the diaconal work of the WCC with the ACT (Alliance of Churches Together). The WCC is a fellowship of churches and ACT an alliance of churches and church related organizations that are specialized in humanitarian assistance, sustainable development work and advocacy action. Many of the ACT members are member churches of WCC or their specialized departments and ministries. Areas of cooperation includes advocacy, development, and humanitarian aid. The joint work between the World Council of Churches and ACT Alliance is best captured in the production of a document entitled “Called to Transformative Action – Ecumenical Diakonia”. In the words of ACT Alliance, this document reaffirms ACT Alliance commitment to work closely with the WCC in the promotion of ecumenical and prophetic diakonia worldwide.

### 5. The World Council of Churches, the All Africa Conference of Churches and the China Christian Council

The WCC seeks to promote active interaction among the different regional ecumenical organizations. In the early 1980s, the regional ecumenical organizations began to develop inter-regional cooperation. This is consistent with the WCC’s vision of vibrant interaction across the regions. Thus, the WCC notes with great satisfaction when the AACC and the CCC are meeting to discuss mutual cooperation and engagement in social development relations. The WCC considers such interactions highly strategic as they facilitate deepening ecumenical collaboration and fellowship.

The WCC also recognizes the active engagement of the China Council of Churches. For the first time, the WCC Executive Committee met with the China Council of Churches and the Three-Self Patriotic

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17 [https://www.oikoumene.org/node/6240](https://www.oikoumene.org/node/6240), accessed 02 October 2021.
Movement in Shanghai and Nanjing, 17-23 November 2016. The WCC appreciated the rapid economic progress that China has made, as well as China’s example and leadership in ratifying the Paris Agreement on climate change and in scaling up its investment in developing renewable energy. The WCC envisages that the AACC and the CCC will be inspired by the biblical mandate to collaborate, as well as by the Indigenous philosophies of Africa and China. Like the biblical teachings that place emphasis on mutual respect, equality and friendship, the Indigenous philosophies of Africa and China prioritize acknowledging the fundamental dignity of every human person. Thus, the WCC looks forward to effective collaboration between the AACC and the CCC in the context of the Pilgrimage for Justice and Peace and ecumenical diakonia.

The WCC wishes to facilitate, promote and deepen this same spirit of collaboration between Chinese and African NGOs, churches and academia. This is inspired by the conviction that human flourishing can be made possible through various partners joining hands and working for social justice and transforming oppression into liberation. As an African proverb puts it, “two ants never fail to pull one grasshopper.” The Bossey Institute program has become a fertile ground for Chinese and African students to think ecumenically and share ideas as they mix with Bossey students from other parts of the world.

6. Conclusion: Some Principles

Going forward, the WCC anticipates working closely with the AACC and the CCC in facilitating the relationship between Chinese and African actors for social and economic development and ecological transformation. This is particularly critical, given the strategic place of China in the sustainable development and climate change contexts globally and in Africa in particular. In this regard, I shall propose some broad principles that can guide the ecumenical participation in the quest for sustainability and the economy of life.

i) All initiatives aimed at promoting human flourishing must uphold the inherent human rights and dignity of those at the centre of these initiatives. As Paolo Freire, who worked in the WCC Education Department in the 1970s, reminds us so eloquently, the dignity of the oppressed must never be compromised. Thus:

“The liberation of the oppressed is a liberation of women and men, not things. Accordingly, while no one liberates him/herself by his or her own efforts alone, neither is he or she liberated by others. Liberation, a human phenomenon, cannot be achieved by semihumans. Any attempt to treat people as semihumans only dehumanizes them.”

(Freire 2005 [1970])

ii) Development projects should not contribute towards the climate emergency. Africa is least responsible for contributing to climate change, but is already facing the consequences of climate change. Thus, initiatives by governments, NGOs and other development actors must be climate smart.

iii) As a women’s rights advocate, and being in the trenches through the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, I would also maintain that development initiatives should not contribute towards perpetuating or worsening gender and racial injustice. There can be no meaningful development if African women and girls on the continent and in the diaspora do not have life, and have life more abundantly (John 10: 10).

iv) As a scholar of African Religions and Spirituality, I put it to us that all development initiatives must uphold and take seriously the peoples’ cultural and spiritual heritage.

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In closing, let me reiterate that the WCC is encouraged that the AACC, the CCC, civil society groups, academia and other development actors have come together at this conference, “China and Africa: Perspectives of development cooperation/the role of civil society and churches.” Once again, I would like to express my profound gratitude for this opportunity and am looking forward to the practical implementation of the reflections and recommendations so that the people of God can flourish in the context of Justice and Peace.

References


China’s Development Aid and CSO’s going out:
What are the obstacles and what are the opportunities?
Theresa Carino

What I like to discuss would be:

1) What are the implications of the new emphasis in the latest White Paper
2) Why is it important for Chinese CSOs to be involved in China’s South-South Development Cooperation?
3) How can CSOs build competence, raise credentials, and scale up so as to tap into China’s South-South Development Fund
4) Importance of Trilateral cooperation for the Chinese government and for CSOs

I. Shifts in China’s Development Aid 2021 – promises and trajectories made in the White Paper on ODA

Unlike the previous white papers, the current paper offers a different vision for international development cooperation, where China aims to take on significant global responsibilities, not only as a provider, but also as a promoter of new trends and modalities.

- offers a vision and framework for Chinese development cooperation. Chinese foreign aid is recast as international development cooperation within the framework of south-south cooperation (SSC). China is casting its development cooperation as a duty as a responsible member of the global community.

- Helps align China with the broader international model of development cooperation while at the same time locates it firmly in the context of SSC.

The White paper declares: “South-South cooperation is the focus.
It also declares that China is in the primary stage of socialism and will remain so for a long time to come, and China is still the world’s largest developing economy. China’s development cooperation is a form of mutual assistance between developing countries. It falls into the category of South-South cooperation and therefore is essentially different from North-South cooperation

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19 Senior Advisor of Amity, Hongkong
- **BRI is still the overarching framework** for China’s engagement with developing countries but it has been broadened to include other aspects of development beyond infrastructure. It emphasizes “humanware” over hardware, highlighting capacity building, livelihood initiatives, volunteerism, and people-to-people connectivity.

-it shows that China’s activities between 2013 and 2020 have been framed essentially by the **SDGs** and reaffirms China’s desire to align its efforts with mainstream development discourse. Eliminating poverty is presented as the “ultimate objective.”

-Significantly, **gender equality** is discussed for the first time. Also new is “**improving governance**,” which is characterized as supporting partner countries in public administration, policymaking, and capacity building.

- **partnerships with multilateral agencies are given priority**, especially UN agencies. There are now many UN agencies stationed in China and working closely with the Chinese government. By its commitment to multilateralism and pouring new money into multilateral institutions, China wants to emphasize its credibility as a cooperative global power.

-Besides joining multilateral mechanisms, it is also **creating new ones** such as the Multilateral Cooperation Center for Development Finance (MCCDF) to connect international financial institutions and attract more investments to the BRI.

- **Trilateral cooperation** is a newer feature of Chinese development cooperation in which China collaborates with another country to support a third country. The white paper cites examples of these partnerships and invites more.

- **improving its own governance**: China reaffirms its commitment to transparency and accountability measures, including feasibility studies, tendering rules, and performance appraisals.

– **Better management.** China has improved its evaluation mechanisms for foreign aid projects, so as to raise the quality and depth of feasibility studies. These should take into account the environmental impact, future management and other long-term factors.

**What are China’s priorities in its ODA**
The stress on responding to global humanitarian challenges together may signal the making of humanitarian issues a priority. It details China’s role in the Covid-19 response but also disaster relief and recovery, support to refugees and food security.

What is Lacking in the White Paper:
- It is silent on the roles of different government bodies or local governments, and makes no mention of how Chinese NGOs or the private sector have contributed to its global outreach, including the ongoing response to Covid-19. While the document “encourage[s] the private sector, NGOs and social groups, and charitable organizations to play a greater role,” it offers no details as to how. This probably means that the rules and regulations for engagement of CSOs are still in the making.

Nonetheless, the White paper signifies new opportunities for CSOs in going out.

a. Gives more political space for CSOs to participate in development aid
b. New themes (Humanitarian aid, refugees, food security and gender equality) are important for CSOs to be engaged in and to play important roles
  c. More Space for multilateral participation
d. More sources of funding, and more opportunities for CSO and government interaction

II What is the importance of having Chinese NGOs involved overseas?

In the current context of geopolitical tensions between China and the US, including its allies, and the flashpoints of conflict especially in Asia, it is important that Chinese CSOs play a role in peace building in the region and beyond. If a war breaks out between the two major powers, its impact and consequences will reverberate around the world. Competition involving trade, technology, and an arms race and pressures towards decoupling arising from domestic politics in the US have all added to creating an atmosphere of distrust, greater levels of racism and hate crimes and the undermining of much of the goodwill and cooperation accumulated between China and developed countries before 2016.

Within this larger context, Chinese CSOs can certainly be better equipped in building people-to-people relations.

In China-Africa relations, we are talking about the relationship between one country and a whole continent with 54 countries. So, it is something that, by its very nature, is fraught with complexity. China’s aid has been traditionally demand-driven and that means it has a wide-ranging list of types...
of aid and projects. The aid also tends to be bilateral and often project-based. It is only now that China is beginning to plan and to have a more focused strategy.

Given that BRI is the framework, the challenge for China is adjusting its aid to the high degree of diversity in culture, socio-economic conditions, history, governance capacity, etc. that is found in countries along the Belt and Road. Chinese NGOs and think tanks with deeper understanding of countries involved in the BRI and development aid can give valuable advice to the actors involved, not only to Chinese government officials but also companies and contractors who are often totally unaware of the local history, politics and culture that play an important role in the success of bilateral projects.

In this sense, civil society has an important role to play, both as watchdogs signaling negative side effects of South-South cooperation, and as facilitators in the implementation of SS Cooperation. The participation of Chinese CSOs can bring more transparency and inclusiveness in the operation of South-south Cooperation.

In countries like the Philippines, tensions in BRI projects have been related to:

1. Poor or little information on risk assessments in relation to local and community impact; and over-reliance on government agencies and local government partners. E.g. building of dams on sites considered as ancestral domains of ethnic minority groups
2. Differing approaches to efficiency and time management, resulting in labor conflicts
3. Influx of Chinese workers that cause social and labor disruptions. E.g. In the online gambling industry in the Philippines.

III Obstacles for CSOs like Amity to access the SS Cooperation fund

Announcement of S-S Development Fund had raised hopes among CSOs in China and those overseas that they could become recipients of aid. But this has been very slow in coming. Much of the SS FUND has been used in government-to-government projects or channeled through the private sector or government related NGOs, such as Think Tanks. (The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is one of them and Scientists on “combatting desertification” have worked on a project in Central Asia and one in Ethiopia.)

With the new setup of CIDCA, created in 2018 to coordinate China’s strategy on Overseas Development Cooperation, there are several Ministries involved including Foreign Affairs and MOFCOM which is China’s Ministry of Commerce. Although it is a stand-alone agency, CIDCA is
under the State Council and expected to be a channel for aid and diplomacy. I think this tends to complicate decision making in CIDCA.

**Chinese CSOs need capacity building in going out:**

For an NGO such as Amity, it has several handicaps: it is Christian initiated; it has its HQ in Nanjing and not in Beijing where all major and national NGOs are located. The Chinese government does not have enough confidence in CSOs capacity for working on large-scale overseas aid projects. In discussions about the need for capacity building as Chinese CSO’s go out, the following three areas have been identified as challenges among some Amity staff:

1. **Lack of information and understanding about the architecture and governance of international aid.**

   e.g. Most Chinese CSOs are unfamiliar with principles, standards and practices in Humanitarian Aid. They are unfamiliar with the language or jargon of international aid. Much of the aid structure, culture, values have been determined by the western powers. The Chinese government is currently focused on working extensively with the UN and other multilateral organizations in development aid. Cooperating with UN Agencies is obviously a good channel for Chinese government agencies to familiarize themselves with the international aid architecture and governance. For Chinese CSOs, learning about international standards and practices of INGOs represents a steep learning curve. In Amity’s case, having an office in Geneva and cooperating with ecumenical organizations such as the WCC, ACT Alliance and LWF has helped to expose Amity to some of these elements. Its task is not only to learn the rules but also to share this knowledge with other Chinese NGOs.

2. **Understanding the local context**

   Besides better understanding of the international aid architecture and practice, CSOs going out need to understand the geopolitics and the local political and economic contexts in Africa or Asia. In this respect, CSOs like Amity need a lot of information on the new contexts in which they will be operating such as the geopolitics of a particular country, its relations with China and an assessment of what the risk factors might be in project implementation.

   Such background information will be important for risk assessment and management especially in situations where there are ongoing domestic conflicts. Chinese CSOs also have to learn how to manage projects with respect, sensitivity and understanding of the local culture.

   To source much of this kind of information, Chinese CSOs have to strengthen their linkages with research organizations and universities in China and overseas. There has to be a stronger link
between Chinese CSOs and research centers on Asia and Africa, on the Belt and Road initiatives, on Climate Change, etc. There should be more platforms for sharing the expertise and knowledge of Think Tanks with the Chinese public, especially the philanthropy sector.

3) Need for stable funding sources in China

In the last decade, as foreign funding dried up for Chinese CSOs, they have quickly adapted and reinvented themselves to mobilize domestic sources of funding. Compared to other Asian NGOs, it has been discovered that CSOs in China, despite tighter political controls, were ahead of their Asian counterparts in terms of finding innovative ways to tap into local resources. But it also reflects how the funding ecosystem for CSOs in China has changed over the last decade.

Over the last 10 years, thousands of private foundations have been started by wealthy entrepreneurs and companies; central and local governments have opened up their deep pockets to contract CSO services; technology companies such as Tencent and Alibaba have created products and platforms to bring charitable online giving to millions of Chinese armed with a smartphone; and local governments have issued preferential measures to encourage social enterprises. (Shawn)

Importantly, in 2016, China passed a Charity Law to clarify the roles and responsibilities of charitable organizations and donors and strengthen public trust in charitable giving.

So, there has been a sea change in the way Chinese CSOs are resourced. Ten years ago, most rights-based CSOs had 80-90% of their funding coming from international sources. Now, some of them have 80-90% coming from Chinese sources. (CDB) An Example is the Friends of Nature, (a Chinese NGO) which set up a fundraising foundation. They then partnered with a company and set up a School for Environmental Education: It now has 1,500 regular donors and its funding tripled between 2015 and 2018. Amity Foundation has experienced the same shift in funding sources, and now about 90% of its funding is from domestic sources.

For Amity, the HK govt’s Disaster Relief Fund has been an additional source of funding for its humanitarian work in China and overseas. Through this fund, Amity has been able to work in Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia.

But tapping non-government funding sources for overseas work of Chinese CSOs is just starting and has its limitations. Amity has tried using online fundraising to raise funds for its overseas projects. Some of it has been successful but not always stable. Those liked by the public include
scholarships for needy students, children and education related projects, and sometimes, for humanitarian aid (such as the earthquake in Nepal in 2015).

**Trilateral Cooperation**

We noted earlier that China has a growing interest in Trilateral Cooperation: As a growing great power it is increasingly concentrating on building its global image as a responsible stakeholder—and the adoption and development of trilateral aid cooperation is understandable in this context, with its emphasis on cooperation between China, traditional donors and developing countries. This trend is significant because it shows that China can cooperate with traditional donors and is becoming more responsive to calls for cooperation from them.

China has had a dual experience as both aid recipient and aid donor over the last 3 decades. Its attitude towards UN agencies and traditional donor states has undergone a gradual shift away from outright distrust to cautious and qualified trust. In this process China’s development cooperation with UN agencies and traditional donor states has brought both substantial financial resources and access to advanced technologies and new areas of learning for China’s own domestic development. (Deng)

The learning process has made positive impact. Cooperation has contributed to changes in mindsets among Chinese aid officials. China continues to learn from UN agencies and traditional donor states on how to reform and improve its own aid policies and practices. At the same time traditional donors are interested in learning from China.

By cooperating in less politically sensitive areas such as in health and agriculture, trilateral aid cooperation can potentially reduce the tension between China and partner countries in sensitive areas. In this way, trilateral aid can playing a role in easing the anxiety in regard to China’s rise among traditional donors. Not many people are aware that China and the United States have provided joint training for Afghan diplomats since 2013. In 2014, the two countries and Timor-Leste completed a trilateral aid project on food security. (Started during the era of Hilary Clinton.) (Deng, US-China Development cooperation)

**The benefits of trilateral cooperation for Chinese CSOs**

Just as trilateral cooperation is beneficial at the state level, trilateral cooperation can also help Chinese CSOs to deepen their understanding of international aid and expand their overseas engagements.
From promoting the SDGs 2030 to attending climate conferences, the Chinese charity sector is not only familiarizing itself with local conditions of its global partners. CSOs from abroad are also seeking clear and qualitative dialogue with voices from Chinese civil society. The Ford Foundation in China has declared that its new strategy is built around “China goes global” and “China and the world.” There has to be more mutual, interactive sharing of information, values, approaches towards sustainable development among CSOs in China and those in Africa/Asia, Europe and North America. The globalization of Chinese philanthropy will have a tremendous impact on the global north and the global south, and on China itself.

In this sense, trilateral cooperation is one of the best ways for Chinese CSOs to deepen and to extend their outreach. They can share their best practices, contribute to more sustainable development and peace building globally. Chinese CSOs can partner with UN agencies to work in Africa or with INGOs connected with the ACT Alliance and WCC.
Africa and China: Introducing a Mosaic

Dr. Christian Straube

Zambia’s debt

A new report by the China Africa Research Initiative at the John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies published last month illustrates the dramatic debt situation of Zambia, a landlocked country in Southern Central Africa. In the report, it is estimated that Zambian debt to Chinese public and private lenders stands at US$ 6.6 billion. This is more than twice as much as the numbers disclosed by the voted-out government and approximately one third of the national gross domestic product. The report concludes that this particular debt situation has been caused, and I quote, ‘by Zambians and multiple uncoordinated Chinese actors. Beijing did not indebt Zambia for some strategic purpose.’

The Zambian population elected a new President in August this year, ousting the ruling Patriotic Front after ten years in office. We still do not know how Hakainde Hichilema of the United Party for National Development will face the ongoing challenge for Zambian governments to control foreign borrowing. Moreover, his government has to deal with a unique density of Chinese contractors and financiers in the country, which created, according to the authors of the report, ‘a tragedy of the commons’.

The ‘tragedy of the commons’ in economics refers to the situation in which individuals exploit common resources based on their unregulated self-interest instead of using and protecting them cooperatively in the public interest of all. The large number of Chinese actors in the country and their entanglement in Zambian politics, as well as the incapacity of the Zambian state to control them, has led to a wasteful and unsustainable handling of the country’s resources.

As Zambian economist Trevor Simumbo had already concluded in his 2018 study: ‘Zambia’s debt position is unsustainable.’ He called on the Zambian government to renegotiate its debt and on both Zambian and Chinese officials to ensure more transparency around the finalisation of Chinese loans. From his point of view, this must also include strengthening debt oversight systems, a requirement that became awkwardly obvious to Simumbo. After he published his study, Zambian government officials asked him for his data. Should not a government possess this data and provide it for the public? Fortunately, the situation has changed since. The Zambian Ministry of Finance and National Planning just published a public debt summary including all creditors this month, with China Exim Bank in second place after Eurobonds.

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Kenya’s railway

Paying back debts to Chinese creditors is also a major challenge for the Kenyan government. In 2017, President Kenyatta inaugurated the Chinese-financed railway line between the port city of Mombasa on the Indian Ocean and the capital of Nairobi 500 kilometres inland. It was built by the China Road and Bridge Corporation and is operated by the China Communications Construction Company. In 2019, the single line standard gauge railway was extended another 100 kilometres to the northwest to Naivasha in the Rift Valley. According to reports, the railway so far failed to meet passenger and cargo volume targets. The Kenyan government, too, needs to engage Chinese creditors for debt renegotiation.

Railways have been at the backbone of China’s own economic success story since the Reform and Opening Policies starting in the late 1970s. They have been a symbol of infrastructure for development. In China, railways connected the coastal areas with their special economic zones like Shantou and Shenzhen to the interior. In 2018, China’s railway network had grown six fold since the foundation of the People’s Republic in 1949. Currently, its high speed network is the largest in the world. This massive infrastructure resulted in construction capacities unmatched internationally and state-owned contractors who were competitive enough to 走出去, ‘go out’, in order to ‘conquer’ global markets and meet the international demand for infrastructure, particularly in African countries.

Railways were and still are a symbol for state socialism and China’s engagement with Africa. They point to the fact that the People’s Republic interacted with African nations and independence
movements long before the surge in trade from the 2000s onward. During the second half of the Cultural Revolution, officially periodized from 1966 to 1976, Chinese construction workers, together with Tanzanians and Zambians, had built the Tanzania-Zambia railway in the early 1970s. It was the third largest development project behind the Aswan and Volta dam projects in Egypt and Ghana at the time.

Tanzania’s friendship

At the time of its completion in 1975, the Tanzania-Zambia Railway opened up a crucial logistical alternative to the established southern route in order to access international markets via the Indian Ocean for Zambia and its nationalised copper mines. Zambia was under pressure from its Southern neighbours, White minority ruled Rhodesia and Apartheid South Africa. The railway became not only a life line but also a Chinese discursive tool in what came to be known as ‘China-Africa friendship’, 中非友谊. This ‘friendship’ was rooted in a shared experience of European colonialism, joint action during the African independence struggles, common dedication to the non-alignment movement during the Cold War and multi- as well as multi-bilateral efforts for South-South cooperation.

During his first international trip as a head of state in 2013, Xi Jinping flew to Moscow before landing in Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania. Africa was his second stop. Welcomed by President Kikwete, Xi lauded the ‘traditional brotherly friendship between China and Tanzania’. This friendship was supposed to work differently than the established patterns of (post-)colonial exploitation and dependence in the relationships with European and North American countries. China and Africa would engage in a ‘win-win cooperation’, 双赢, to be exemplified by ‘old’ projects like

Photo: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2017-06/01/content_29570088.htm
the Urafiki Textile Mills, *urafiki* being the Kiswahili term for friendship, and ‘new’ projects under the label ‘BRI’, the *Belt and Road Initiative* announced by Xi Jinping in 2013.

However, time has shown that many encounters between Africans and Chinese do show the recurring characteristics of imperial practices. They reproduce post-colonial power hierarchies and dependencies: from raw material exploitation to residential segregation, from ecological destruction to the oppression of popular dissent, from racism to labour abuse. Africa and China are part of tenacious global power hierarchies with some actors from China crosscutting and others reinforcing disparities.

![Photo: https://chineseposters.net/themes/tazara-railway](https://chineseposters.net/themes/tazara-railway)

Angola’s oil

One example of China’s economic and financial engagement with Africa, which reinforces global power hierarchies, is the case of Angola. While talks between the Angolan government and the International Monetary Fund over the best way to ‘develop’ the country came to a standstill in the early 2000s, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited Angola in 2006 and topped up an already existing loan from 2004 by another US$ 2 billion. The rebuilding of Angola after the end of the civil war was aligned along infrastructure construction; financed, planned and implemented by Chinese companies and repaid with Angolan oil exports.

Such ‘resource-backed loans’ bring opportunities and risks at the same time, elaborate Mihalyi, Adam and Hwang in their 2020 study. Loans can offer cheaper financing for infrastructure and mitigate volatility. At the same time, weak resource governance, the lack of transparency of these loans and changes in commodity prices can undermine debt sustainability and exacerbate public financial distress.
When the price of oil fell after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Angola sought to renegotiate its debt and cut its oil shipments to China. ‘These oil-backed loans create stronger interdependence (between lender and borrower) than traditional financing.’ said Mihalyi to the news agency Reuters. The crucial question is what could ‘development’ look like when keeping raw materials in Africa, training and employing more Africans and starting to export manufactured products instead?

Photo: https://chinaafricaproject.com/analysis/chinas-oil-imports-from-angola-continue-recovery/

Ethiopia’s shoe factory

One case to answer this question can be found in Ethiopia at the Oriental Industrial Park some 40 kilometres south of Addis Ababa. It is part of the Eastern Industrial Zone, a special economic zone modelled after China’s own development trajectory via tax-privileged industrial hubs. Here in a city called Dukem, Huajian Group, a company from Guangdong Province and one of China’s largest footwear manufacturers, started a factory in 2012. The company had employed more than 4,000 people up to 2015. 90 percent of them were locals. Every year approximately 2.5 million pairs of shoes leave the factory for the United States labelled ‘Made in Ethiopia’.

In Huajian’s case, the label ‘Made in Ethiopia’ does not only mean Chinese capital and Ethiopian labour. It also means Chinese ideas of how to manage a company, how to build up a corporate identity and Ethiopian interpretations of these ideas. A work day includes assemblies of production teams, standing at attention, commands in Chinese and marching exercises; routines very well established in China, from factories to restaurants. Ethiopian workers at Huajian get to know skills but also a very particular disciplinary labour regime.

This labour regime includes long working hours, low pay and labour abuse, as some Ethiopian workers shared with international media in 2018. These are issues also pressing in China’s own manufacturing and service sector. In recent years 九九六工作制 or, in English, the 996 working hour system has been widely criticized on Chinese social media. 996 refers to working from 9 in the
morning to 9 in the evening for six days a week, which makes up 72 hours a week. These phenomena are the consequence of cost cutting measures to counter rising labour costs, the demands of global last-minute logistics and the political imperative to keep the workbench of the world going.

Photo: https://medium.com/@harriet436/china-is-integrating-africa-africa-as-the-next-manufacturing-hub-b9f540a8ec69

Congo’s mines

Labour regimes in mining, both industrial and artisanal, have been particularly harmful for humans and the environment. Zygmunt Bauman, author of the seminal book *Wasted Lives*, once described mining as, I quote, ‘the epitome of rupture and discontinuity’. Mining is irreversible and so are the marks in and on the bodies of miners. The abyss of the process of ore extraction, the economics and the politics thereof have produced the ‘resource curse’. The metaphor has been frequently applied to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, the image of the ‘curse’ involves a bias. It privileges fate and does not really help to explain the inhumane practices that give rise to mining as a transnational sector.

Chinese private and state-owned mining enterprises, and the latter include both national and provincial level state-owned companies, have heavily invested in mining projects in the DRC. Copper and cobalt play a crucial role in the turn away from China’s dependence on fossil fuels and its turn to a green economy with batteries at its heart. Chinese mining projects have repeatedly sparked criticism. In 2016, Amnesty International reported on the hazardous working conditions in artisanal cobalt mining in Haut-Katanga. A subsidiary of Huayou Cobalt from Zhejiang was at the centre of the trade which links up local child labour, Chinese independent traders and battery component manufacturers in China and South Korea.

Looking at gold mining, eight Members of Parliament of the Democratic Republic of the Congo probed allegations of illegal mining activities by six Chinese companies in South Kivu Province just
last month. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ African Affairs Director General Wu Peng took up the allegations. He proclaimed that China supports, I quote, ‘the DRC in cracking down on illegal economic activities in accordance with the law.’ This comes a month after videos from Kolwezi in Haut-Katanga circulated, showing how Chinese mining managers mistreated their workers. While Africa-China state-to-state relations are mostly considered good and are still the main focus of the government in Beijing, relations at the grass roots level tell a different story. In the mining sector, this story includes everything from promises and expectations, camaraderie and tensions to coercion and hardship.

Photo: https://africanminingmarket.com/pressure-african-mineworkers-and-chinese/10970/

Botswana’s tourists

The story of Africa and China also contains chapters, which are still to be written. For instance, Chinese tourism to Africa is considered a future economic opportunity for African economies, according to Hannah Ryder of Development Reimagined. We are going to hear more from her on Africa, China and ‘development’ tomorrow afternoon. In 2017, some 800,000 Chinese tourists visited Africa. They still represent a tiny portion of the total of 63 million visitors in that year.

The easing of visa regulations is a key component contributing to the growth of the sector. As of 2021, Chinese nationals can arrive in 27 African countries without previously applying for a visa. Another crucial factor are direct flights from China to Africa. Botswana has dealt with these issues and experienced a steady growth of Chinese tourist arrivals. Dominated by visits from countries within the Southern African Development Community and countries such as the US, Germany and the UK, Chinese tourist arrivals stood at 3,500 according to the Tourism Statistics for 2018 published in 2020.

The number one destination in Africa for Chinese tourists remains Egypt. Roughly 250,000 Chinese tourists visit the North African country every year. This fact has a historical dimension. Egypt was the first African country Zhou Enlai visited during his ‘safari’ between December 1963 and February 1964. He led a delegation of more than 50 people to ten countries on the continent. It was his aim to raise the People’s Republic’s profile and foster support for the PRC’s international recognition. Moreover, Zhou wanted to mark the People’s Republic’s ideological independence from the Soviet Union and gather support for a second Asian-African conference in 1965, a decade after the pioneering Bandung conference in 1955. Egypt under President Gamal Abdel Nasser had been the first African country to recognise the People’s Republic in 1956.
Egypt’s new capital

In September 2015, the Egyptian government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with China State Construction Engineering Corporation, a large state-owned company under the Chinese State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission. The resulting development contract with CSCEC has a volume of US$ 3 billion. It comprises the ‘delivery’ of 20 skyscrapers in the central business district of Egypt’s New Administrative Capital about 50 kilometres east of Cairo and the banks of the Nile. 85 percent of this 3 billion are financed by Chinese banks. The 20 towers are to be finished in 2022.

CSCEC’s participation in the construction of Egypt’s New Administrative Capital illustrates the enormous infrastructural capacities of Chinese state-owned enterprises. They do not build single houses from scratch, but entire quarters and cities, including related transportation hubs like container terminals or airports; in Egypt, Angola, Kenya, Ivory Coast and Zambia, to name a few among many other African countries.

All these projects are rooted in China’s domestic development strategy with an emphasis on infrastructure for development like I mentioned earlier. They are the consequence of a ‘spatial fix’, to use David Harvey’s term, that is the state-led extension and internationalisation of China’s economic realm. Therefore, in order to understand what and how Chinese construction companies build in Africa, we should look at Beijing Daxing International Airport, Ordos’s Kangbashi, Tianjin’s Binhai, Zhengzhou’s Zhengdong, Chengdu’s Tianfu and Changzhou's Wujin. You have not heard of these places? This is an education gap, we should all address.

While large-scale infrastructure projects might serve a country of the size, population density and middle class development of China, these resource-intensive and land-extensive building endeavours might not be feasible, suitable and sustainable for African countries. Large scale infrastructure
projects can invite corruption, foster elitist grandeur, widen development disparities and pollute the environment. Moreover, they can create an increased demand of locally scarce resources.


Mozambique’s timber

China’s demand for timber and the importance of the timber industry for Mozambique have created several challenges for the South-eastern African country. A 2013 study found that over 80 percent of Mozambique’s timber exports are destined for China. China’s demand is based on its own economic trajectory as well as a logging ban to preserve domestic forests. Consequently, Chinese demand turned overseas. Officially, timber from Mozambique is overwhelmingly exported as sawn timber, because of a log-export ban put in place by the government.

As Mozambican-based companies do not meet the standards to e.g. export to Europe, they receive lower prices. The margins for them are so low that companies need to increase quantities to survive, further straining the environment. Alternatively, they turn to the illegal export of logs. As a case from July this year shows, the lack of enforcement and corruption have created a largely uncontrolled market for Mozambican logs destined to China. Charges against nine individuals because of 76 containers full of timber involved Mozambican tax authority officials, an employee of a Chinese trading company and a Chinese middleman.

In contrast, there are also Chinese companies who have invested in the local processing of timber. These scarce but important investments add local value, create employment opportunities and bring
the global timber value chain closer to its origins. Huang Wenbin from the WWF China emphasises that the complete depletion of Mozambican forests will only be stopped with Chinese cooperation. The demand for furniture made of African wood in China will not diminish in the years to come. However, rather than looking at only Chinese demand the trade in African woods should be seen in the context of a larger global history. This history goes back to the recurring surge of capitalist consumption of elite commodities, another being ivory, by the upper middle class in different countries. The larger historical view helps us understand that timber trade today rests on cultural values, capitalist demand and historical trajectories, which are multiregional and multicultural.

Photo: https://wwf.medium.com/chinese-cooperation-is-good-news-for-mozambiques-forests-f21e3d2c2224

South Africa’s history

The final piece of this mosaic will come from South Africa. Like timber and ivory trade from Africa to China, Chinese migration to Africa has a long history. The first Chinese in South Africa were exiles transported to the Cape Colony by the Dutch East India Company in the 17th century. More Chinese migrants arrived looking for their fortune in the gold and diamond mines of Kimberly and Witwatersrand in the second half of the 19th century. However, in the anti-Chinese and racist environment of the time most of these individuals were not permitted to acquire mining licences and
became business owners. Many Chinese who worked as indentured miners returned to China in the early 20th century.

Early on, the Chinese of South Africa joined other Asians in their fight against racist legislation. During the Apartheid era Chinese South Africans suffered from discrimination and were together with Black and Indian South Africans removed from ‘Whites Only’ areas. However, Chinese South Africans’ position in the racist hierarchies of the country were not clear and they were originally excluded from the post-Apartheid Black Economic Empowerment programmes. This changed in 2008. In a case brought before the High Court of South Africa by the Chinese Association of South Africa it was ruled that Chinese South Africans with citizenship before 1994 qualify as disadvantaged individuals of the category ‘coloreds’ under Apartheid.

The migration stream between China and South Africa was shut from the 1950s until the late 1970s, when Apartheid South Africa established ties with the Republic of China / Taiwan. The incoming Taiwanese investors started textile factories in rural areas of South Africa. A more recent wave of Chinese from the People’s Republic of China has arrived since the early 2000s. Yoon Park, one of the initiators of the Chinese in Africa / Africans in China Research Network, noted in 2012 that there are close to half a million Chinese South Africans today, half of the estimated one million Chinese living in Africa today.

Photo: https://mg.co.za/article/2019-03-22-00-chinese-south-africans-still-fight-racism/
Ten hypotheses on Africa-China relations and development

Certainly, these cases do not present a complete picture of Africa-China relations. I did not talk about ivory and animal welfare. I did not present the multitude of African people travelling to China as students or traders. I did not address the fact that the People’s Republic of China contributes the largest contingent to UN peacekeeping forces in Africa. I did not say a word about the presence of Chinese state media on the continent nor the presence of Confucius Institutes on African university campuses.

The mosaic’s pieces cannot represent the full diversity and depth of Africa-China interactions but rather equal spot lights that might give us an idea of the relationship’s complexity. Still, I am convinced that the mosaic, each tiny little piece of it, has been able to point to the larger issues at hand in Africa-China relations and development. I will now present ten hypotheses on Africa-China relations and development derived from my cases. They shall open up the floor for reflection, criticism and innovation on development cooperation between Africa and China during our conference. I sincerely hope that these hypotheses give all of you enough food for thought over the coming one and half days.

1) Development is about mitigating environmental costs.

Development always brings along environmental costs. However, there is no planet B. Consequently, alternative programmes to the Belt and Road Initiative should take into account the availability of resources and environmental sustainability. At the core of initiatives like the EU-proposed Connectivity Strategy or the US-initiated B3W should not be a process of replicating ‘a better BRI’ but of enabling sustainable livelihood improvement in Africa.

Future development cooperation should take advantage of and contribute to whatever concrete projects are already in place on the ground. The necessity for development and criticism of its costs by African societies should be an indicator. It will be inevitable for African, Chinese and EU development actors to interact and cooperate with each other.

Takeaway question: How can development be sustainable in a planetary sense?

Development is about interests.

‘Africa and China’ should be really about Africa and China. It is evident that the BRI carries geopolitical implications und dependencies not only for African countries but also the EU and the US. However, the assessment of Africa-China relations and Chinese investments in Africa should be based on African interests and their alignment with Chinese interests.

Development cooperation must be decolonised from the agendas of the Global North. This also means that the EU engages with African countries not because of China but because of Africa. Pathways of development and opportunities of cooperation should be questioned through African voices on eye level.

Takeaway question: Who profits from development?
Development is relative to economic experience.

Chinese private and state-owned companies, particularly in infrastructure, have undeniably contributed to China’s own economic development since the Reform and Opening Era. Their capacities to scale up and build with speed fortify the competitiveness of Chinese development actors overseas. The close linkage between overseas investment, domestic economy and state legitimacy have produced a high degree of macroeconomic strategizing, planning and foresight by the Chinese government.

The Chinese economic experience has produced a particular set of development actors. It has inspired African decision-makers, revealed the strengths of China’s development cooperation with Europe and uncovered the weaknesses in African-European development cooperation of the past.

Takeaway question: What can we learn from China in development?

Development is about ownership.

China as a ‘developmental state’ has the state, and through it the party, at the centre of its economic strategizing. Going out has been a top-down call by the Chinese government for companies in order to internationalise. Just this year, we have repeatedly witnessed the forceful realignment of economic innovators and actors with state and party priorities in China.

Overseas, Chinese economic actors have encountered challenges previously peripheral to their agenda, that is bottom-up calls for transparency and inclusiveness as well as outright opposition by civil society. African ownership, from transparent bidding and multi-stakeholder planning to the implementing workforce, should be improved based on the rights-based foundations of participatory economic and political systems.

Takeaway question: What constitutes the strengths of participatory bottom-up processes in development?

Not everything about development in Africa is about China.

Chinese economic actors participate in a globalised economy, marked by inequalities and disparities. Local challenges interact with global capitalist structures and vice versa. Sometimes local grievances are geopoliticised and equipped with a China framing, whereas these conflicts are in fact a ramification of the hierarchies of the globalised economy.

For instance, all economic actors in the current global system seek cost cutting measures, from rearranging production value chains to subcontracting and identifying legal loopholes in environmental regulations. Rules and regulations for development, these include proper environmental and social impact assessments, have to be applied to all economic actors irrespective of their nationality.

Takeaway question: What is China and what is system specific in development?
Development needs to be regulated.

‘We need to build back the capacity of the African state!’ These are the words of Zambian economist Grieve Chelwa. The consequences of the neoliberal reform agenda have been severe in many African countries. In order to let ‘the invisible hand of the market’ do its business, state capacities to regulate and enforce, for example environmental protection and labour conditions, have been diminished.

However, the sheer quantity and variety of Chinese, as well as other countries’, economic actors make regulatory regimes from the local to the global necessary. Development actors can only be met on eye level by African governments when they are able to enforce the regulations meant to protect people and public goods.

Takeaway question: Is the state able to represent public interests vis-à-vis development?

Development requires an independent civil society.

Just as Chinese companies have been invited to internationalise by the Chinese government, Chinese civil society organisations have also been invited to ‘go out’ from the top-down. Civil society, as recent documents by the Chinese Ministries of Commerce and the Environment have illustrated, is allocated a secondary role in order to ensure the ‘green’ implementation of, for instance, BRI projects and help protect the reputation of Chinese economic actors overseas.

This official understanding of civil society participation makes alternative dialogue forums for civil society, including organisations from China, necessary. Obviously, the proximity to the party-state might help and even protect companies and civil society organisations in China. Overseas, on the contrary, this proximity rather disrupts their work and can be detrimental to building trustful transnational civil society relations.

Takeaway question: How can civil society be strengthened with regard to development?

Development is relative to power.

Africa-China relations are not only about diplomacy, governments and large scale state-owned companies. They are not only about dominating Chinese actors and accommodating African individuals. The relations are also made up of people with different power differentials: for example, Chinese businessmen, African subcontractors, Chinese migrant labourers and African businesswomen.

The analysis of Africa-China relations and development projects needs to be diversified and differentiated. It needs to follow up on Africans in China, ‘black boxes’ like the inner workings of Chinese state-owned companies and ‘the invisible’ at the margin of large scale development projects.

Takeaway question: What constitutes power and agency in development?
There is no ‘one story’ of development.

Promoting one’s own concepts has been a widely used measure of international soft power. In Africa-China relations ‘friendship’, 友谊, and ‘win-win’, 双赢, are very prominent. These concepts open up narrative pathways for the Chinese government to ‘tell China’s story well’, 讲好中国故事.

However, we need to get to a point of 真讲非洲故事, ‘really telling Africa’s story’. This includes talking about the durabilities of European colonialism, the hierarchies of capitalist exploitation by the Global North and also the negative impacts of Chinese investment. Therefore, African local knowledge should be strengthened and its voices amplified. Moreover, partners in ‘development’ should be clear about what they mean by the concept, aligning their understandings of development to reach a common goal.

Takeaway question: Who tells the story of development?

Development is about people.

The imperial practice of raw material extraction and immediate export has to end. African countries have to shoulder the social and environmental damage of, for example, industrial mining disproportionately. Value chains should be moved closer to their origins, enabling more people in African countries to generate a livelihood from the resources in the continent’s soil.

African businesses should be supported in order to diversify their economies. Development should not be aligned with consumers’ demands in China or the Global North but the position of African suppliers in the globalised economy. Development needs to be re-centred on local populations, in the words of Zambian civil society advocate Laura Miti, and I quote, ‘deliver to the people!’

Takeaway question: Does development improve local livelihoods?
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INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to have been given an opportunity to respond to Dr. Christian Straube’s presentation, which has given us the motif of a “mosaic.” Dr. Straube is a focused, experienced analyst and expert in Africa-China relations. And his presentation does prove that.

I am African. I am committed to African patriotism. Anything which diminishes the dignity of Africa and Africans is something which annoys and must be fought with all we have got. So I am here to try my best to present the African experiential perspective on the question of Chinese in Africa. Indeed, the motif of a mosaic is apt. The perceptions, the relations, the complications, the benefits, the perspectives of the relations between China and Africa, between Chinese and Africans, is multi-coloured, multi-shaped, multi-sized, just like a mosaic.

In my response, I will first of all give my opinion on the presentation of Dr. Straube, not on every individual aspect but in general. Then I will give my opinion on the ten-hypotheses he puts forward. Afterwards, I will try to give a perspective on why I think Africa has a mainly positive attitude and approach towards China, focusing more on examples, some of which have been mentioned by Dr. Straube. I will then mention what I think are key concerns to watch as we continue with the discussions about Africa and China, including the complexity of civil society relations between Africa and China.

The Mosaic

Dr. Straube highlights the multi-faceted nature of mainly economic cooperation initiatives in ten countries: Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Angola, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Botswana, Egypt, Mozambique and South Africa. I think he wanted to limit himself to the number ten. Unfortunately, the selection is limited to Eastern and Southern Africa (with DRC and Egypt as exceptions). This leaves out a focus on Western and Central Africa, which may be very interesting indeed since the situation, though not as intensive historically, is not very different.

The mosaic shows clearly different aspects of relations between China and Africa. One observes trajectories or modes of cooperation which are cross-cutting. First which is overall, is financing. As we were campaigning for debt cancellation in the Jubilee2000, our target was clear. The culprits who were suffocating African economies by unbearable debt servicing, many of the debts being found to have been contracted without transparency and fallen to corruption which involved both the lenders and borrowers, China was not a factor at all. China’s financing of Africa’s development was almost as negligible as of other G20 countries such as Brazil, India, or Russia. Now just twenty years later, China is probably providing the fastest growing portion of financing to African countries. As we start trying to raise the awareness of African churches and countries on the great danger Africa is
facing from unsustainable debt, China is the most overarching player. They have financed many projects in the last two decades and opened up their coffers to Africa.

The second trajectory is that most of the financing and implementation has been on **infrastructure development**. Apparently, African countries are competing with each other with most of them setting for themselves an arbitrary target of becoming middle-income countries by 2025. Honestly, it is only a psychological target which I sometimes wonder why. The growth of cities is at a cut-throat speed, as well as an enormous pressure to connect countries internally and between countries by road and rail networks. Let us face the fact, what Dr. Straube calls “the enormous infrastructural capacities of Chinese state-owned enterprises” are the highest, even on “value-for-money” threshold. These enterprises tend to outprice and outperform tenderers from other countries. It is not that African countries give preferential treatment to Chinese firms, only that they just win in open competitions—based on speed, quality, efficiency, creativity in processes, etc. For example, STRABAG from Germany was contracted to build a Rapid Transit bus route in Dar es Salaam. It did what I normally saw in Germany. It took so long, blocking long blocks of road under construction for months until people were fed up as they had no alternative routes. They said the Chinese know how to navigate the construction in crowded places without long time closures of long chunks. I see that in Nairobi now where a more than 20 km expressway, most of it overhead flyovers is being constructed on the busiest “Mombasa road,” but without closing the road and they say it will be finished in just two years.

Another very significant aspect is **commodities trade**. African manufacturing and processing capacity is still embarrassingly low. We all scramble to sell to China our crops. China has indeed opened up its market to African commodities. I hear politicians encouraging their farmers to cultivate more and diversify more because there is a ready market in China for goods from cassava to cashewnuts, from tobacco to coffee and maize, from medicinal plants to minerals. And African countries do not seem to have capacity to fill those orders. However, Chinese companies seem to be not focused only on import of raw materials as the European and American companies have been for more than a century with almost zero manufacturing capacity development in the continent. As the shoe-factory in Ethiopia demonstrates, there is an increasing number of Chinese investments in manufacturing and processing in Africa, mainly in the “Export processing zones”. I think, as Chinese people are becoming wealthier, labour there becomes more expensive, the Chinese companies are establishing manufacturing, processing and assembling factories in Africa, to take advantage of the cheapest labour for their exports around the world. This is exactly how China itself was treated by the West when China opened up. There are several factories making shoes, apparel, construction materials like floor tiles and roofing materials in different countries, mostly by Chinese private investors. I saw this also in many Asian countries where Chinese companies have been doing this for a long time.

Another trajectory is that China is **exporting all imaginable consumer products** to all of Africa, to the extent that shops in every city in Africa look the same. Unfortunately, the perception is that the label “Chinese” or “Made in China” carries ambivalent connotations, but mainly to mean “not durable”, “cheap”, etc. I am appalled by tremendous development in real estate in Nairobi, where Chinese private investors have bought land in the city and constructed high-rise buildings for commercial and residential purposes. As I was looking for an apartment in Nairobi, I realized there two categories of contractors: Chinese and Indian. Indian, in this sense means native Kenyans of
Indian descent. I was cautioned to look for Indian, which tends to be a bit more expensive but definitely better quality. I did my survey and found this perception to be true. You pay less for a Chinese-made apartment, but soon you will be spending more on repairs even before you move in. They are built fast, shiny but mainly using cheap Chinese imports of everything from doors to tiles to sanitary wares. But since demand is so elastic, with most people trying to own a home for the first time or buying for investment, and with apparent African lack of interest to think beyond tomorrow, these cheap, poor-quality apartments are in demand—people knowing they will not last long. For a person like me, with some part of me having a Germanized sense of preference for durability and quality, a Chinese made apartment was a no-go zone.

**TEN HYPOTHESES**

In general, I do agree with the ten hypotheses almost entirely as highlighting serious issues which we need to put forward in our conversation on the relationship between Africa and China.

“There is no planet B,” and we are in this planet all together. Africa needs a respected place on this planet, and not again to see a new “scramble for Africa” as we saw different powers slicing Africa into pieces for exploitation as in the 19th century.

“Africa and China” should indeed be finally only “about” Africa and China. As Africans, we are sometimes surprised by the apparent interest of others to “protect” Africa against China. We ask ourselves, since when have the former colonizers of Africa, who have deprived Africa of its resources, oppressed it, colonized it, enslaved it, have now become now our “protectors?” Is there anything which China is doing wrong which they have not done, and even continue doing to Africa as well? While that does not legitimize the wrong, but sometimes we ask about the audacity they have to kind of “warn” Africa to be careful about China, which they do not do to their countries. Why is nobody warning Europe and USA to be careful about China with the same intensity? Is it because they love us more, or they simply want to protect their historical influence on Africa which seems to be slipping away? Africa must identify and define its own course, including the choice of partnerships and partners. And if indeed the West is interested in protecting Africa from colonial dangers, why is nobody raising the issue of continued France’s colonization and exploitation of Francophone Africa?

“Acknowledge the strength of China’s state economy.” Is it not true that all Western countries are so much dependent on China’s economy? Is it not before our eyes that not even Trump could in fact impose total sanctions on China, despite all the rhetoric? Is it not true that countries want to sell to China? Don’t we hear the lament of Australian farmers when China stopped buying wine, and the jubilation of US soya beans producers when China decided to increase its purchase? Who saved Volvo? Does it not belong to China? Where are most electronic products made, including Apple high-end products? And it proves that the one-model of private enterprise and “trickle-down economics” is not the only one which may be successful. State-led economics is a viable alternative!

“Offer alternatives to the weaknesses of China’s political system.” On this one, I am struggling to know who should offer these alternatives and to whom. I am all ears.

“Not everything is about China.” This is obvious. China is part of the complex global system. China has its share of evils of exploitation and corruption like all other actors in Africa. Until today, China is not actually yet the largest investor in many countries of Africa. And indeed it has not yet surpassed Europe as the largest development partner for Africa. But Africa suffers exploitation from Western
countries in similar ways. We cannot focus only on China even though it also needs to be scrutinized seriously as we do the others.

“Build back the capacity of the African state.” This is where Africa has the biggest weakness. It is not only in relation to cooperation with foreign actors. African states are simply weak. They have not mastered the systems and skills of control and governance. Corruption abounds. Institutions are created but they do not function, including by the African Union. It is true that, in my own evaluation, the “copy-paste” of Western models of governance and management of state has failed us. The Structural Adjustment Programs and all prescriptions by the Bretton Woods Institutions, which provide for different institutions of government, forced legal frameworks, “stereotyped” political ideas like presidential term limits have not done us any good. The understanding of democracy based on Western models does not seem to be practical at all. So the question we are asking is whether Africa needs its own systems of government which are unique in our own contexts and realities, which will be more effective and sustainable.

“Strengthen civil society from the bottom-up.” It has always been my conviction that the only control measure, that every government cares about, even in Africa, is a knowledgeable, active and strong civil society. I have never thought that Africans are naturally or culturally more susceptible to corruption and other ills than Europeans. It is all about the likelihood of one getting away with a crime. Wherever civil society (here not meaning quite NGOs, but general population which is politically aware and active) is strong, government works better.

“Read the power!” Indeed, players are multi-faceted. Chinese state does not have control over every single Chinese person who comes to, invests in, or moves to settle in Africa. There are many centres of power in different institutions, governmental agencies, etc. For example, when a mayor of Lusaka closed down two racist Chinese businesses in Lusaka, a restaurant and a barber shop which allowed only Chinese clients in, he was embarrassingly forced by the Zambian government and ordered to return the licences, with apology. Disgusting! These businesses were re-introducing a de-facto apartheid system. But he had no power, because the Chinese community in Zambia has in all respects enormous power over the government. He did not know where power was. These were not even state sponsored actors, but private business owners with a lot of clout in a corrupt government bureaucracy. On the other hand, when a video of a Chinese business owner beating a Kenyan worker for coming late to work emerged in social media, the people of Nairobi simply rose against whoever even looked like Chinese in the city and wanted to lynch them. The Kenyan government had to act quickly and deport that person to quell the situation. The power was not basically in Kenyan government institutions, but in the Kenyan civil society, or the public. They sent a message very clear, you treat anyone of us like that, you do not stay here.

“Counter discursive power.” Let Africa tell the story of its development, rather than reactively defend itself. So should it be.

“Support livelihoods in Africa.” I believe this is where the conversation should actually be. Do we engage in development for profit or for supporting livelihoods? If we indeed like development for all, we need to plan and implement programs which are close to the people. And on this one, all investors need a strong regulatory function of government. Supporting livelihoods may not be the most profitable option. But it makes sense in the long run, and it concerns not only foreign investors
but all. And this is not going to happen through an “invisible hand of the market” but proper governmental regulation and enforcement.

**AFRICA DOES NOT JOIN THE “CHINA BASHING” TREND**

In the West, it is trendy to say all kinds of negative stuff about China. There are many incidents of others trying to convince Africa that China is not actually a good partner and that we should beware and take precautions. But in international spheres, Africa normally supports China and does not follow the Western trend. The question is why? I will try to reflect on this as an African from Tanzania.

**China as a developing country**

No question that Julius Nyerere, our “Father of the Nation” had special bond with chairman Mao, and saw socialism as a more equitable and humane model of economy. We were exposed to books and stories of successes of China in farming, riding bicycles, etc. Even dress code of the nation resembled Chinese color-less suites of Mao. As we grew up and I went to school in the 70s, that is when the 1,860.5 km Tanzania-Zambia standard gauge railway was being built, to transport people in Tanzania and Zambia and facilitate the export of Zambian copper via Dar es Salaam, to avoid apartheid South Africa. It was not just an economic enterprise, but also a politically significant decision. It was financed by a Chinese loan built by Chinese workers. During this time, many Chinese consumer products were also introduced in Tanzania as well.

Due to the friendship of the two countries, many basic industries were built in Tanzania with Chinese expertise and technology: Urafiki (friendship) textile mills and Ubungo Farm Implements (tools) and a bicycle assembling plant. These employed Tanzanians only after construction and commissioning.

As I got involved in international advocacy arena in the 90s, I was surprised to hear at the UN meetings when they talked of caucuses, one was “Group of 77 and China.” China was distinct, but part of the Group of 77, mainly developing countries who struggled to find a voice in the Western and Eastern dominated UN conversations. That is when I learnt how Africa and China find themselves on the same page in international spheres. Although China has veto power and permanent membership in the security council, it was clear to me that China was not regarded as developed or a strong economy. The feeling of solidarity between Africa and China was clear.

I know that China was one of the staunchest supporters of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa, including selling arms to liberation movements and providing cover in the UN security council. It never treated liberation movements as terrorist organizations like the US did. It sided with governments after independence, rather than work to destabilize them like US did for ideological reasons (US support for losing sides in Angola, Mozambique actually led to civil wars which are up to now not quite finished). At the time of freedom struggles like in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa, China was the staunchest supporter of the “Frontline States for Liberation of Southern Africa” under Julius Nyerere and later Kenneth Kaunda. It is noteworthy that Mandela saw China’s revolutionary success, and Mao as a visionary leader, as the spiritual pillars of his time in Roben Island. For that reason, he visited China soon after his release to thank the people of China for standing behind him all the time since he was first sent to prison in 1964. ANC was supported by China and Cuba. I remember when Mandela visited USA for the first time, he had to get a special exemption from Secretary of State since ANC until that time was listed as a terrorist
organization by the US government. And Mandela reminded them of that when they were asking him why he was going to visit Cuba. He said, Cuba was with him in the prison, and USA was against him. He would never accept to be told who is a real friend, as action speaks louder than words. Until 2008 Mandela was listed as a terrorist by USA, and Reagan vetoed an Anti-Apartheid Act in 1986 when the world was campaigning for the release of Mandela.

These and other many historical facts make it very difficult that someone from some other colonialist continent will convince Africans that China is their enemy. Since when?

**China’s New Status as Second Largest Economy in the World**

When China has become a real global player in economics and politics, it has found a receptive ear in Africa. It has always been seen as a friend, a pro-Africa country. Then in a few decades, it has become so advanced technologically and financially. I am sure Africa is happy to see China as a rich friend, and would certainly like to emulate it, and most important be a viable alternative when Africa is humiliated by the West.

We realize that the amount of money lent to Africa, though scarcely huge in proportion to our small economies, all combined it is far less than how much China has lent to the USA alone (more than a trillion US dollars!) It has bought businesses not only in Africa, but across the globe. It is not an important market only to Africa, but to Europe, Americas and the rest of the world. It is a producer of so many things to the world, including high-end technologically advanced materials in different spheres. We realize all major European businesses have some connection with Chinese supply chains, and most producers want a piece of Chinese market. So when Africa hears others warning it against China, it is difficult to take them seriously, since, as it were, all are linked up with China and they do not quit. Even in the Huawei battles, many Africans believe the claims of technological espionage is made up in order to kill a powerful company beating the West in competition. Many African countries use the Covid19 vaccines which are not yet approved by WHO since they think WHO is being used by the West to protect Western pharmaceutical companies which are up for super profits.

**China’s Mode of Engagement with Africa**

There are a few remarkable things which make Africa feel good about China and are comfortable working with China. First, China does not interfere in the local politics of the countries it trades with. After so many decades of magisterial “lecturing” from western nations on democracy, rule of law, human rights, environmental protections, and the like, African leaders are more comfortable to work with a strong economic power which does not lay all these demands and treat them as poor beggars who can simply be slammed with sanctions and have promised funds withheld, sometimes on flimsy pretences. China as a country is seen as respectful of African states and leaders.

Second, as already said earlier, they perform their work with utmost speed and efficiency and at more reasonable prices. Chinese companies simply outbid their western and African competitors.

Third, they seem to be more committed to African industrial development. I can bet, we are probably going to see a Chinese owned and operated chocolate factory in Ghana before Nestle does. Western companies have always refused to establish manufacturing industries in Africa from the time of colonialism until now. I hear no investment from the West, except in South Africa. Tanzanians are so bitter about Continental (tyre maker from German), for it bought a poorly functioning tyre plant
and simply killed it completely in order to export Continental brands made somewhere else. In the 1990s the Tanzania network in Germany studied German investments in Africa, and found that they were mainly either targeting tourists from Germany (like snake firms) or selling outlets of German products. No manufacturing or processing of anything.

Fourth, despite the talks and conventions like “Everything but arms” deals with EU and ACP Lome agreements, it remains almost impossible for Africa to export to the West, except for raw materials and non-processed materials like fish, flowers and some fruits. But even there, there are so many barriers. And there seems to be a different openness in China for African products. Many Africans, despite severe constraints as well, see it as relatively easier.

Fifth, China plays its economic diplomacy very cleverly. They finance highly visible items and structures which are seen and used by masses. These include stadiums, parliament buildings, presidential palaces, and are given mainly as gifts. The headquarters of the Africa Union is another remarkable gift to Africa. They build and donate. At many airports now, we have started to see security screening machines with very clearly marked “China Aid” labels. It reminds me of our school times when the cooking oil and flour bags had labels “From the people of the United States.” Or a small stretch of a tarmac road I saw in Monrovia Liberia in 2019 with a huge signboard: “This road has been constructed and is maintained by the European Union.”

SERIOUS CONCERNS TO WATCH

Despite the fact that China has been a friend and partner of Africa, there are issues to be raised which are real concerns. While Africa does not join the bandwagon of anti-China propaganda and criticism, we are not blind to unacceptable behaviour we see in China’s engagement with Africa. We should recognize always, that China is a foreign country and it acts first and foremost in its own interests, with ambitions of being a super power and conquering others. It does not deal with Africa gently simply because it is nice to us. It has calculated benefits for sure. And we know it can be as bad a bully as any other, since with power and wealth, people and nations change.

We are increasingly raising alarm of lopsided contracts China has entered with many African countries, which give it a superior hand and leads to actual grabbing of African land and other resources and institutions. We do not believe that at the time of design, China did not know that failing projects are not feasible and will lead to confiscation of securities. Africa must, and some countries have started to, call for review and renegotiation of lopsided contracts, like Tanzania is doing with a major harbour project at Bagamoyo, which our late President Magufuli cancelled and said could be “signed only by a mad man.” It gave monopoly to China of controlling everything for decades, without paying any taxes on products it produced for export in that special economic area. Now I know that DR Congo is calling for renegotiation of several contracts as well as Angola. This will be a true test of the genuineness of friendship and what China toots as its commitment to win-win conditions.

Second, we must call out, expose racist tendencies and behaviour we have recently been seeing practiced by some Chinese business people in Africa, and how they treat Africans in China. Some of the incidents are appalling. We were enraged by seeing Chinese security personnel mistreating and stigmatizing Africans in China because of Covid 19, even though the virus was actually first diagnosed in China. How they segregated and mistreated Africans reminded us of the same mistreatment black people in the Americas are subjected to, or as it was in the southern African of
apartheid time. Disgusting. Deplorable. And AACC issued a stern condemnation of this behaviour. On that, we should have no mercy. Any person who treats another human being, be one Chinese, American, Jew or Arab, commits a terrible sin. We must keep on the lookout.

Third, we need to investigate the issue of cheap, sub-standard products imported from China. Is it because our business people go for the cheapest items in China? For we know that even Mercedes Benz and Audi and Volkswagen, with their envied reputation of quality are made (at least some parts) in China. We know computers, washing machines, phones, sold in the West, are made in China. We ask ourselves, why is it that some phones sent to EU countries cannot be used if their first SIM card is not European? Why? Is Africa treated as destination of cheap stuff? And Africa must revive demand for high quality, even reverting to import from other countries than China.

Fourth, we need to find a way to link up with China’s civil society. Until now, even relations between churches in China and Africa are difficult to establish, leave alone other civil society organizations apart from Amity Foundation.

Fifth, we must watch how China treats other countries and plays its role globally. I am increasingly worried that the bickering between the West and China may soon escalate into actual war, since China also now does start to flex its power to show its competence in war. As we are looking at unfolding situations in that area, with Japan in addition to the new AUKUS agreement and strategy, with disagreements on South China Sea and China refusing to recognize the ruling of International Court, and North Korea wants to show it is also in the game, I am worried that war may break out. And if it does, our economies, as so much connected to Chinese economy and logistical nightmares which may accompany such conflicts, Africa must be on alert, not to put all its eggs in one basket.

As I conclude, let me reiterate what was first presented by Dr. Straube, the need for competent governments in Africa. What we have seen as some concerns can be easily addressed if we in Africa have governments which are responsible and competent. I will end with an example from Tanzania again, my home.

Before John Pombe Magufuli came into power, Tanzania was becoming like we see in other African countries. There were plenty of Chinese people living and working in Tanzania, and had started to systematically take over some sections of the city trading centres and turn them into small Chinatowns. There was a clear impression that every infrastructure contract would go to one of several Chinese construction companies. We expected they would be building our Standard Gauge electric railway from Dar es Salaam to Burundi, Rwanda and Mwanza on Lake Victoria. We were thinking they will certainly build the Nyerere Hydroelectric Dam. At that time there were Chinese vendors in almost all parts of Dar es Salaam, even selling tomatoes and second hand clothes and many Chinese imports. Magufuli made it clear, what Tanzanians are not allowed to do in China, Chinese people shall not be allowed to do in Tanzania. I think the Chinese companies were surprised that the railway construction was won by a reputable Turkish company, and the Nyerere Dam by an Egyptian company with consultants from Portugal, etc. He made sure the foreign workers laws were followed properly by regulatory government agencies. And the abuses stopped. It is the same way he stopped export of non-processed gold and Tanzanite, and pressed Canadian miners to play fairly. Now Tanzania has a gold purifying plant, Tanzanite is sold through auction on the site of production. A joint venture mining company with Canadian Barrick Gold has been established. And Chinese and other foreign street vendors are no longer seen on the streets or small shop-owners. People are happy.
It can be done. The Bagamoyo harbour project is being renegotiated. Chinese companies are still winning construction tenders of many roads in the country, and are very strictly supervised to deliver quality work. But other companies like BAM from Netherlands and some from Japan are also winning some of the contracts. It should be so.
Modernization of China's development cooperation – new opportunities for civil society

Martin Lachmann

Background

Over the last decade, China's overseas development cooperation became a hot topic of debate in international development discourses. The debate takes place between two poles. Either China is accused of creating debts and dependencies for developing countries or as a provider of much-needed development finance and infrastructure, particularly in Africa. These narratives are a phenomenon of present polarization and increasing international competition between the USA and China. While the Chinese state became the biggest single contributor of global development finance, up to today, only a few Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from China engage in overseas development work. Over the last decade, the Chinese foreign aid system is experiencing a period of reform. Compared to the traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA) system, China's development cooperation remains outdated. But China's modernization of development cooperation over the last decade can support the internationalization of Chinese CSOs, which in turn can provide new opportunities for cooperation in international development.

The History of Chinese Foreign Aid

After the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Chinese Foreign Aid was under the personal oversight of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. During his Africa tour in 1964, Zhou Enlai articulated the Eight Principles of Chinese Foreign Aid. Those eight principles were based on China's experience of aid as a recipient from the Soviet Union, which China received since the Sino-Soviet friendship treaty. Foreign aid to China was given predominantly through technical support. After the Second World War, requests by Chinese leaders for technical support from the United States were declined by the US Truman administration. Consequently, being a relatively poor and developing country, China's initial focus on foreign aid was mainly providing technical assistance to developing countries.

The eight principles of China's foreign aid are: Equality and Mutual Benefit, Respect for Sovereignty, Free or Low-interest Loans, Self-Reliance, Less Investments with quick returns, Best quality Equipment, Technology Transfer, and Chinese experts had to be treated and live under the same circumstances as locals. Those principles remain the foundations of China's present foreign aid practice and correspond with nowadays common global development standards. An exception is the point of non-interference with domestic politics of the recipient country, which remains an ongoing
controversy between the Chinese government and traditional donor countries, as well as within the public development discourse. During the Cold War, Chinese foreign aid was given both for ideological reasons to support socialist developing countries and strengthen their resilience against imperialism, and also for practical reasons. Foreign aid offered the PRC a tool to evade international isolation, in which China found itself after the US recognized Taiwan as the only legitimate representative of China. The PRC tried to establish itself, based on its own colonial and developmental experience, as the voice and as a leader of developing countries, seeking political and economic independence. This trend amplified in the 1960s, after the Soviet-China split, corroborating China's ideological and geopolitical reasons for foreign aid.25 China became even more determined to support developing countries in their thrive for independence. The government assumed that self-determined countries would not act in favor of the great powers against the PRC. Beginning of the 1960s, China's Foreign Aid increased significantly and peaked in 1973 with 6 billion RMB, which was more than 2% of China's total GNP and almost 7% of its total financial expenditure. With the so-called Ping-Pong diplomacy in the 1970s, China's relation with the United States started to normalize and China's foreign aid decreased again. Besides the diminishing danger of an imperialistic United States towards China, additional reasons for China's declining interest in providing foreign aid during these days might also be the inner-political turmoil after Mao passed away in 1976.26
The amount of foreign aid provided remained after Deng Xiaoping acceded to power. With China's Reform and Opening Up, at the beginning of the 1980s, the country focused on its domestic modernization, and foreign aid was managed by the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade and by its successor the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) since 2003. This mirrors the priority the government gave to its economic development and modernization in this period. In 1999 the Chinese government articulated its “Going out strategy” (走出去战略) and encouraged Chinese companies to invest overseas. This accelerated China's GDP growth. Beginning of the new millennium, China's economy increased exponentially and its foreign aid rose accordingly, and the borders between development aid and finance increasingly diffused.27

The relation of Foreign Aid with Foreign Policy

Since the founding of the PRC, China's foreign aid relates, among others, to its foreign policy and international relations.28 This is common practice not only in the case of China but also among traditional donor countries and recently an intensifying trend.29 For example in 2020, the Department

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28 Rudyak, Marina. "We help them, and they help us": Reciprocity and Relationality in China’s Foreign Aid Discourse." Conference session presented at ISA 2021 Annual Convention, 2021.
for International Development of the United Kingdom was merged with the Foreign Office, followed by overall budget cuts of foreign aid.\(^{30}\) In the course of the national elections in Germany in 2021, there have been media reports speculating that the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) might be incorporated into the German Federal Foreign Office.\(^{31}\) Research has also shown that military interventions by traditional donor countries led to rising aid flows since the 1960s, which demonstrates that traditional foreign aid has usually been related to foreign policy.\(^{32}\) The United States Agency for International Development states on its website that the purpose of US foreign aid is, among others, to further American interests overseas.\(^{33}\) A predominantly altruistic purpose of aid provision can be, if anything, attributed to non-state, civil society actors or international organizations e.g. within the United Nations framework.

**Who manages Chinese Foreign Aid?**

In 1982 the Ministry for Foreign Relations and Trade was in charge of managing Chinese foreign aid, followed in 2003 by MOFCOM, which remains an important actor until now. From 2018 on the Chinese International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) obtains an increasingly important role. CIDCA is an independent organization with quasi ministerial status and is responsible for setting up an overall strategy, publishing guidelines, and establishing a system for applications, evaluation, and statistics. The agency is also responsible for choosing overseas development partners and signing MOUs. MOFCOM is still responsible for implementation and for choosing the implementing partners, which are often state companies or government departments.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in charge of communication with the governments of the recipient countries and a focus point for them. Additionally, it has oversight functions. These three institutions are at least formally hierarchically even in China's foreign aid structure and only accountable to the State Council. They manage China's development cooperation through an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism. Responsibilities have been shifting and clarified over the last decade and it can be assumed that this practice will continue. Another conclusion that can be drawn from this development is that China wants to have more comparability with the international donor structure. CIDCA is commissioned to develop China's aid effectiveness, transparency, and multilateralism. The latest communique indicates that also CSOs will be eligible to receive government funds in the future.\(^{34}\) However, China's foreign-aid system remains in a process of modernization and reform. Continuous adaptations can be expected as fragmentation, and complexity remains high.\(^{35}\)

**Traditional Foreign-Aid and China's Development Finance in Comparison**


Fragmentation becomes obvious when China's foreign aid is compared with the traditional international aid system. This exists within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development and Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) framework, whose members are predominantly “western” countries. Within this system, the indicator for foreign aid is ODA (Official Development Assistance). This is an agreed standard and consensus of foreign aid reporting and evaluation. It includes grants, interest-free loans, or concessional loans, which are loans provided with better conditions. In 2019, the OECD reformed its reporting system and specified grant elements within ODA, and distinguished it from a flow basis. This change of assessment can be also seen as an answer to the increasing competition with development finance of new actors, in particular China. Previously, the traditional donor countries set common standards of foreign aid reporting within DAC. China is not an OECD member and does not report within the ODA-OECD framework, but still defines itself as a developing country. As a matter of fact, China has a much lower GDP per capita compared to OECD member countries. To emphasize these differences and distance itself from the traditional framework used by the traditional donor countries, the Chinese government labeled its foreign aid as South-South cooperation.

Within the OECD-DAC framework, foreign aid is measured in ODA. For taking foreign aid outside the ODA system into account, OECD defined OFF (Other official flows). OFF includes grants for representational buildings or to accelerate commercial purposes. Compared to traditional donor countries, China is known for funding and building representational buildings e.g. sports stadiums or conference centers.

Over the last years, many scholars have tried to measure and compare China's development cooperation with the ones of the OECD countries. From 2000 to 2012 the US was still the biggest provider of development finance, but China already ranked almost comparable in volume. Most of China's finance was given in the OOF category, the indicator defined outside the ODA category. China's ODA-like contribution was still low compared to the US and also compared to the other major donor countries.

After the start of the Belt and Road Initiative, China became by far the biggest contributor of development, but ODA-finance remained relatively low. Nevertheless, China's ODA-like finance did increase over the years and accounts for approximately 6 billion US dollars a year. About 50% of this amount is given to African countries. Compared to the OECD countries, China already ranks 6th place in ODA-like development cooperation, but still spends significantly less than the five biggest donor countries. Concerning its GDP per capita, China is ranking last, below the Czech Republic and Slovakia with only about 0.04%.


Characteristics of China's development cooperation are:

1. China's development cooperation differs from the OECD framework
2. China became the biggest contributor of international development finance but contributes relatively little ODA-like development finance
3. China is missing a clear distinction between government, commerce, and the third sector and its foreign-aid system remains fragmented
4. China's development cooperation experiences a decade of modernization, structural change, and increasing professionalization

ODA and CSO financing

Why is ODA important for CSOs? Traditionally the OECD countries give 15% on average of their ODA to CSOs. This makes ODA an important part of the funding for CSOs in their international development work. In total, almost 30% of CSO's international projects are funded by governments. Some countries channel more money through CSOs and some less. But overall ODA is an important funding source for CSO's international development work. In China, such funding for Chinese CSOs does not exist yet or is insignificant. Government funding of overseas development projects mainly goes to GONGOs and not to independent Chinese CSOs. However, Chinese CSOs want to work more overseas. In a survey of 2017, in which CSOs were asked if they should internationalize, almost 57% replied that they consider internationalization as necessary. But when they were asked if it was the right timing to do so, almost half of them said that they are not mature enough to do so. Only 17% said they are ready to internationalize. In terms of internationalization, CSOs in China are still immature despite the new role of China in the global economy.

The relatively underdeveloped Chinese private grant-giving system also becomes obvious when comparing private funding sources of Chinese organizations with the United States. In the US there are 1.6 million tax-exempt organizations and more than 100,000 grant-giving organizations. Figures of China's Blue Book on social organizations count more than 900,000 social organizations, of which only 10,000 are tax-exempt and only 100 foundations are grant-giving.

Obstacles for Chinese CSO to internationalize

What are the obstacles for Chinese CSOs to internationalize? In a survey, Chinese CSOs pointed out legal restrictions, including unclear legislation and outflow restrictions. Overseas engagement of Chinese CSOs was based on special exceptions or acquiescence by the Chinese authorities. CSOs also have limited resources. Compared to traditional donor countries, Chinese CSOs do not receive a lot of government funding. Public support is still missing as many people in China consider domestic development still as a priority and don't understand why they should donate overseas if the local GDP per capita is still relatively low.

In terms of Corporate Social Responsibility, Chinese enterprises are quite active in China, but they still don't see much benefit in doing CSR overseas. However, there is a changing trend over the last few years.


decade, in particular with the start of the Belt and Road Initiative, and more Chinese companies are interested in funding local development projects. Another reason is the lack of management within Chinese CSOs. They need more competence, partnerships, and exposure to improve engagement with international partners and to meet international standards. The fourth obstacle for Chinese CSOs to internationalize is a lack of professional and international staff because Chinese CSOs fall short of competitive salaries and overseas offices. The dispatch of staff from the headquarters to overseas is still common practice. In the survey, 54.4% of the participants voted missing policy support as the most important factor against CSOs internationalization and with 31.7% fundraising capacities as the second most severe obstacle.42

Supporting factors for Chinese CSOs to internationalize

Scholarships that researched aspects that benefited the internationalization of CSOs identified the number of years of education of the general secretary, number of full-time staff, as well as the exchange frequency with other overseas organizations as the most important factors supporting Chinese CSOs internationalization. Furthermore, the State Regulations for the Management of Foundations and the NGO Law, which enabled private foundations to raise funds for overseas projects supported CSOs internationalization. This shows the importance of legal support and its impact on fundraising. International disaster relief work also increased CSO's overseas projects, in particular in the course of the Indian Tsunami and Nepal Earthquake. Additionally, the Belt and Road Initiative increased the donations by Chinese enterprises and created an encouraging and enabling environment for Chinese CSOs by the government. In 2017 the China Foundation Center listed 49 foundations financing and implementing projects overseas and 10 overseas offices were founded. But the present scholarship is lacking comprehensive statistics.43

Examples of Chinese CSOs “Going Out”

China Foundation of Poverty Alleviation (CFPA)

“You cannot ignore the world’s suffering. You cannot turn a blind eye to African refugees. You cannot ignore the problems of the world!” (He Daofeng)

The China Foundation of Poverty Alleviation (CFPA) was established in 1989, supervised by the National Administration for Rural Revitalization. Initiated by the Chinese government, CFPA developed under the 17-years of the leadership of entrepreneur and visionary Daofeng He to become one of the biggest and most influential SCOs in China. CFPA operates nowadays mostly independently from the government. At the beginning of 2005 in the course of the Indian Tsunami, CFPA started to work with international partners and provided emergency relief overseas.44 In the

same year, CFPA provided disaster relief in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in the USA and the earthquake in Pakistan, followed by a flood relief project in Guinea-Bissau.

In 2008, CFPA started to build a hospital in Sudan, working with local NGOs and supported by Chinese enterprises. With establishing a local office in Sudan, Daofeng He indicated the year 2009 as the initial year of CFPA's real internationalization, in which he also addressed the topic to staff at the annual grand meeting. The overseas office followed further projects in Africa. According to Mr. He, the internationalization of CFPA is closely connected to China's economic development and the expectation of the global community for China to take more responsibility. Nowadays CFPA is working in 24 countries and regions and has implemented long-term projects in Myanmar, Nepal, Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Sudan. CFPA runs local offices in Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Nepal, and participates in the public discussion of the Chinese CSOs “Going Global”. The organization published an internationalization handbook for Chinese CSOs. CFPA's future international ambition is also confidently displayed on their website: to be the most trusted, the most expected, and the most respected international philanthropy platform.

The Amity Foundation

“The work of healing the planet has grown beyond the work of a single factory, region or nation. We can only approach it from a global standpoint.” (Bishop K.H. Ting)

The Amity Foundation was founded by Chinese Christians in 1985. Bishop Ting became the first president and Dr. Wenzao Han the founding general secretary. The religious background provided the Amity Foundation with a vast network of overseas church and international partners, from which the organization received most of its funding in its beginning. In 1986, the Amity Teacher program started, inviting thousands of overseas English teachers to China over the next decades, laying the foundation of the organization's overseas relations. From 1999 to 2003, the foundation organized south-south exchange programs with the Philippines-China Development Resource Center in Manila, providing capacity building for renewable energy, health, and more. Ideas of internationalization were already articulated in 2005 and considering the foundation's long history of overseas partnerships Amity's “Going Global” is a logical consequence.

In the year 2009, the Amity Foundation became a founding member of ACT Alliance, a global network of more than 145 churches and Christian organizations working for sustainable development and, followed by its first biogas project in Madagascar in 2009. From 2011 on, the Amity Foundation has provided disaster relief to overseas countries almost every year. Since 2015 the organization has also established overseas offices in Africa and Geneva and developed long-term overseas programs in Africa and South-East Asia. The foundation engages increasingly in international multilateral civil

society networks and with the United Nations e.g. the International Council of Volunteering Agencies (ICVA), ECOSOC, or the UNHCR. Nowadays most of the funds are raised online through individuals and increasingly through corporations, usually designated for specific purposes within China. Stable funding for overseas projects remains a challenge.

**Peaceland Foundation**

“Now, with the help of the rest of the world, China has become the second-largest economic entity globally. It is time for China to bear more international responsibility, and the government is not solely responsible for this. We, the Chinese NGOs, should play our part too.” (Wang Ke)

The Peaceland Foundation was founded by Wang Ke. He and his friends first engaged as humanitarian volunteers in the Sichuan Earthquake in 2008. This tragic natural disaster caused a rise in civil awareness and the emergence of many CSOs in China. Until the formal establishment of the Peaceland Foundation in 2018, Wang Ke and his team worked on poverty alleviation, education, and healthcare in China. In 2011 they provided earthquake relief for affected people in Myanmar in their first overseas operation, followed by earthquake relief in 2015 in Nepal. But the organization also conducts more unusual overseas projects, which observers might not anticipate for a Chinese CSO. Peaceland Foundation initiated as their first long-term overseas project an anti-poaching program in Zimbabwe.

In 2018, the organization was involved in the rescue mission of students in Thailand that were trapped in a flooded cave and which got global media attention. In 2019, after Wang Ke encountered a disabled musician during a tourist trip to Angkor Wat, the foundation started a demining program in Cambodia. Additionally, in May of the same year, Peaceland Foundation established its first overseas office in Lebanon to provide long-term assistance to refugees. In this year, 60% of the Peaceland Foundation's work had an international focus. According to their website, up to today the Peaceland Foundation has been active in 23 countries and has a strong focus to respond to humanitarian challenges, including the wildfires in Australia among many others. In 2021 the foundation established an office in Geneva and staff also engages increasingly in the global multilateral networks.

**Global Environmental Institute (GEI)**

“Building a healthy and multilateral world, where society, the environment and the economy can develop harmoniously.” (GEI-Website)

Originally founded in the United States in 2003 the GEI registered as an independent sister organization in Beijing in 2004. The initial US organization dissolved in 2011. GEI is focusing on environmental issues such as climate change, low-carbon technology, green investment, and

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biodiversity conservation. Thereby, it works closely with academic and government institutions, as well as local communities and enterprises with a strong focus on policy change and advocacy. In 2005, GEI started its first overseas biogas and agriculture project overseas in Sri Lanka. After setting up a local office in 2006, the project came to an end in 2009 because of a lack of funds. Since then GEI has worked in numerous South-East Asia countries including Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, Russia, and various African countries. A previously established office in Laos also had to be closed due to the termination of corporate funding. GEI is listing a broad variety of environmental sustainability projects and programs on its website. The organization's international context of its founding does also provide GEI with an international network of partners. GEI also supports other Chinese CSOs in its “internationalization” strategies by sharing its experiences and with its own “Going Global” publication series.

Summary:

Coming from governmental, religious, personal volunteering and environmental contexts, the previous examples of Chinese CSOs working overseas exemplify heterogeneity of China's CSO landscape. They show, despite sometimes contrary uttered assumptions and misgivings, that the “Going Global” initiative of the Chinese third sector is not a top-down initiative by the Chinese government. It has been developing within China and in correlation with authorities, academia, and overseas partners. Chinese CSOs are actively engaging in the discussion of “Going Global”. Over the last decade, a rich pool of literature and case studies emerged on this topic.

The challenges that have been articulated over the last decade, in particular regarding policy support and domestic fundraising remain. While the Chinese government might consider security aspects, too, reform and legislation over the past decade can be interpreted first and foremost as addressing the practical shortcomings of the present system. Compared to international organizations, Chinese CSOs are still lacking policy support and more sustainable sources of funding that enable them to conduct long-term projects. ODA is an important source for such funding for international organizations in traditional donor countries. A noticeable amount of foreign aid is channeled through CSOs.

With the establishment of CIDCA, more legal clarification, and standardization, the Chinese government is laying the foundation for a Chinese development aid system, similar to the western one. However, Chinese CSOs still lack the capacity, resources, and legal security to work overseas. While the Chinese government is actively reforming its development cooperation structure, Chinese CSOs are simultaneously and increasingly engaging in international social development. With the

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professionalization of China's ODA-like development finance, Chinese CSOs might receive government funds and have an improved legal basis to work overseas.

China is nowadays the biggest contributor of international development finance. But China's ODA-like foreign aid remains relatively low and is still dominated by state actors. Organizations from China conducting overseas projects are often exchange associations and not service providers. GONGOs are often just allocating money. Chinese CSOs on the other hand can more easily internalize international development standards based on their international experience and networks. They are more committed to establishing offices and running long-term comprehensive and sustainable projects and programs.55

Conclusion

It is no surprise that Chinese CSOs are facing similar reservations as established international CSOs. A critical dominant narrative of CSOs is for example that CSOs are agents of their founders or their government’s agenda. They are embedded and supporting either or both a private neoliberal-capitalist or a state-capitalist system of dependencies that creates losers and winners. However, Chinese CSOs will play a stronger role in international development. The modernization of China's development cooperation will proceed. There is the trend that the Chinese official development cooperation increasingly converges with the traditional one of the OECD. Global development becomes increasingly hybrid and is shifting to development finance. ODA remains just a little part of overall development finance.56 However, ODA or ODA-like finance reaches people, who are often left out in private international development finance. The 2018 report to end poverty points out that ODA is critical because private development finance increases inequality. This is in particular important for Africa, as the continent is affected most by extreme poverty. While infrastructure and economic growth are important for development, the people in most need should not be left behind.57

Moreover, when governments and private companies are increasingly competing in their international development endeavors, CSOs can offer platforms of global cooperation, mutual learning and understanding. Therefore the channeling of funds through CSOs is important. They have a unique position because they can work predominantly without political agendas. CSOs can cooperate where governments or economic actors compete or follow their own interests. CSOs can provide space for cooperation when other spaces of international cooperation and communication are shrinking. So far, examples of Chinese CSOs “Going Global” show that they act relatively freely in their choice of overseas partnerships, projects, and in their engagement with global civil society. Therefore, the evolution of the Chinese foreign aid structure can be seen as an opportunity. Established international CSOs “Going Global” and ODA can be a funding source through which governments can still indirectly cooperate. Africa can be a ground for new forms of international development cooperation. Trilateral projects, for example, could provide opportunities


for mutual learning, and understanding. They might even function as role models in times of uncertainty of the global order and increasing needs of development cooperation.

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1. Personal background of China and Africa Relations

The connection between China and Africa is rooted in my memory since childhood. My uncle Dr. Hans Meister was a medical doctor. He worked as Head of the Basel Mission hospital in Kanton/Guangzhou in South China 1933-1950, when all foreigners had to leave the country under Mao. He then continued to serve the Basel Mission (now mission 21) in Ghana/West Africa as Head of the mission hospital in Agogo until his retirement. As a child, I looked at the Chinese children’s book and children’s games and later heard his stories and experiences from Ghana. Not knowing as child, how distant China and Africa geographically are, the emotional basis for the bridge was given by my uncle and my aunt. Their three daughters, all born in China, grew partly up in Africa and one served as teacher in Africa.

Later, as Director of the development organization ‘Bread for all’ (The Swiss ‘Bread for the World’) and as ethicist, I started a program to set up and support ethics centers in order to strengthen value-driven development and to better equip church leaders with ethical instruments for church development and advocacy. The first program 2002-2004 included a program in Nairobi and Shanghai. It was for me so obvious to support both. Out of these ‘test programs’, I then invited in 2004 25 ecumenical ethics experts for a one week intense work at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey/ Switzerland. I invited handpicked experts from all continents, including from China and several African regions. It was the founding week of Globethics.net where the exchange and cooperation between African and Chinese regional programmes is alive.

I studied in St. Paul’s theological College, now St. Paul’s University, in Limuru/Kenya in 1974/75 as the first white student. I work since four decades with African partners, churches, universities, regional and pan-African institutions, on development programmes, trainings, as visiting professor, publication series etc. I visited China in the last two decades 2-4 times per year for teaching, researching, cooperation programmes, trainings for entrepreneurs, exchange programmes etc.

58 Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Christoph Stückelberger, President Geneva Agape Foundation, Founder and President of Globethics.net Foundation, Professor of Ethics Basel, Moscow; Enugu/Nigeria, Beijing/China. Cooperation with China since over 20 years and on China-Africa since 10 years.
59 www.globethics.net
I mention all this only as introduction and background for better understanding the next chapter. Based on these experiences I jump now to some summarizing observations in form of ten benchmarks for fruitful, innovative China-Africa cooperation.

2. **Ten Benchmarks**

1. **Relations:** *Personal relations between humans are the foundation for institutional cooperation.* Even with all technological instruments of communication like emails, zoom, and video-conferences (which are key especially in times of the pandemic), the personal contact and trust is fundamental. Emotions and empathy are the basis for cooperation.

2. **History:** *Increased knowledge about the political, cultural, religious and ethical history of the others is needed.* I am often surprised, how little we know about each other’s history and context, even among very well educated people. We cannot understand Chinese without acknowledging their deeply rooted identity in their 5000 years of history (3600 recorded years).\(^6^0\) And we cannot value the identity of Africans if we continue with the prejudice that African history started with colonialism. When we recognize, that the first humans, homo sapiens, originated from East Africa and we study the history of Africa, discovering that it includes cultures as old as the Chinese (e.g. the Badari Culture 5000 BC)\(^6^1\), we can meet at eye-level.

3. **Respect:** *The attitude of mutual respect is a condition for building trust and cooperation.* Before we see the others and ourselves as citizen of a nation, as representative of a religion or denomination, as part of an upper or lower social class or as defendants of our gender roles, we should first of all see the others and ourselves as human being. We all are humans with similar basic needs of food and water, shelter and security, love and joy, a sustainable environment and aging in dignity. The same faith facilitates to find this respect. It is the role of Christians to emphasize and live this mutual respect. Different faiths need increased attention and sensitivity, but also enables mutual respect.

4. **Cooperation:** *Dialogue and joint action go together.* Cooperation starts with talking and careful exploring. It then should go beyond talking and lead to walking the talk by acting together. Let us take philanthropy as example. Publications are important for mutual understanding.\(^6^2\) Mutual cooperation and support needs an understanding of charity, philanthropy, diaconia\(^6^3\) etc. a rich field for further exploration as it is no more a unilateral process from Europe/North America to China or to Africa, but a fascinating complex multilateral exchange. In addition to European and American Christian

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\(^6^1\) Ki-Zerbo, Joseph: *Die Geschichte Schwarz-Afrikas*, Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag: Wuppertal 1979, 60.

\(^6^2\) All books mentioned below which are published by Globethics.net, are available for free download from [www.globethics.net/publications](http://www.globethics.net/publications) and for print order on the same page.

Development and Mission agencies and philanthropic institutions, Chinese philanthropy foundations\textsuperscript{64} and networks (like the Amity Foundation\textsuperscript{65} as one of the first in modern China), the African Philanthropy Forum\textsuperscript{66} with African Donors came up. It is important to understand common praxis, but also different concepts, including different roles of states, private sector, non-governmental and religious organisations\textsuperscript{67}.

5. \textbf{Business}: Business cooperation has a great potential, especially when using \textit{international common social and environmental standards} such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)\textsuperscript{68}, Environmental-Social-Governance criteria (ESG), ILO and ISO Standards, the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals SDGs, which are accepted and promoted in China and in Africa! The trainings for African church leaders and church administrators on management of church assets (ACAP)\textsuperscript{69} is an ongoing programme of Globethics.net, Bread for the World and the All African Conference of Churches AACC since 2015. It could also be enlarged by trainings for Chinese or joint trainings. E.g. a training was planned in November 2020 in Ethiopia, but postponed due to Covid and the war in Ethiopia. The extensive trainings on values-driven entrepreneurship for Christian entrepreneurs, mainly of SME’s, in China since 2013\textsuperscript{70}, is in discussion to be adapted for similar trainings in Africa with the St. Paul’s University in Limuru/ Nairobi, Kenya.

6. \textbf{Faith}: China-Africa-Cooperation can and should also include spirituality, Bible reading\textsuperscript{71}, church structures, anti-corruption\textsuperscript{72} from faith perspective and much more. I could mention many encouraging examples. Also the strengthened ecumenical cooperation between the Council of Churches in Asia (CCA) and the All African Conference of Churches (AACC) – the two large continental Regional Ecumenical Organisations - could be fruitful. However, there are also obstacles related to politics and church politics, as the cooperation between the China Christian Council CCC and

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item https://amityfoundation.org/eng/
\item https://www.africanpf.org/
\end{thebibliography}
CCA is sensitive due to the churches in Taiwan being member of CCA. Nevertheless, creative and innovative ways of cooperation on basis of the common faith in Jesus Christ is possible on other levels than church leadership structures, e.g. in theology, publications, diaconia etc.

7. **Environment**: Environmental concerns (Climate, water management, water quality etc.) are global concerns and need definitely global cooperation. China as the largest provider of solar cells is widely present in Africa. African solar production and many other areas of cooperation need to be strengthened. Environment – as most of the other of the ten benchmarks – are of course also to be considered for trilateral cooperation China-Africa-Europe.

8. **Technology**: Respectful cooperation on affordable and good quality technology and agricultural products is essential. Poor quality of some Chinese products in Africa or African agricultural products with some standards issues led to some backlash and hesitations. At the same time, in the perspective of affordability in Africa and of mutual trade, also of African products to China, the increased trade of mutual benefit. Christians and Christian partners can support for values-driven, fair, corruption-free and qualitative trade of products and services. I also work with African and Chinese experts and and partners on a promising programme for e-health for hospitals and rural areas in Africa, which is already successfully implemented in China.

9. A) **Politics, bilateral**: Resist the new Cold War. The new Cold War between USA and China already started to lead to situations in African countries or sectors such as education, mining, health and agriculture, that they more and more have to decide if they stand on the side of China or the USA. This was a disastrous experience in the old Cold War in the 1960-1980th. The victims as re vulnerable people and poor or weak states. A concrete example is also the technological ‘war’ between the Western oriented big four technology/mobile/internet companies GAFA (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, now GAMA, with the change from Facebook to Metaversum) and the respective Chinese big four companies BATH (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent, Huawei). Cooperation instead of a ‘bloody’ economic or military confrontation is needed. In Christian perspective, ideologies have to be replaced by poverty-orientation, means working for and with the poor: «My color is neither red nor blue but the Cross» is my slogan.

B) **Politics, multilateral**: Strengthen the multilateral UN-System. The bi-polar impass can be avoided with multilateral and regional cooperations. Ecumenical partners of this conference like the mission societies, development agencies, churches, regional ecumenical organisations and foundations such as GAF and Globethics.net need a more explicit and coordinated strategy how to strengthen the multilateral global and regional cooperation.
10. **Publications**: “*Publish or Perish*”. Publications are an efficient, scalable and in online form affordable good instrument to support these benchmarks. Use e.g. over 250 books of [www.globethics.net/publications](http://www.globethics.net/publications) with download for free and print copies for sale for modest prices, many of them from Chinese and African authors. Use also the free online library [www.globethics.net/library](http://www.globethics.net/library) with 3.6 million documents, 150+ journals and 75+ collections, such as e.g. on [Online Chinese Christianity Collection](http://www.globethics.net/library) OCCC with over 32’000 documents. I also invite to publish online for low cost with Globethics.net and Geneva Agape Foundation. \(^{73}\)

\(^{73}\) [www.globethics.net/publications](http://www.globethics.net/publications)  [www.gafoundation.world/publications](http://www.gafoundation.world/publications)
Expectations and Opportunities in Sino-African Cooperation: Experiences in the United Evangelical Mission (UEM)

Dr Dyah Ayu Krismaewati

Introduction

I very much appreciate the opportunity to present my thoughts on the topic of expectations and opportunities in Sino-African cooperation.

I find this topic very interesting, not only because it is politically current and has sparked much debate about the role of China around the world, but also because cooperation is of central importance within the UEM. The UEM has a member church in Hong Kong – the Chinese Rhenish Church Synod (CRC) – as well as a good relationship with the Amity Foundation. In Africa, the UEM has fifteen member churches in seven countries (Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, and Tanzania).

This article is an attempt to share my views as a practitioner in the context of my experience at the UEM. I will look at how we, in the UEM, have supported cooperation between the member churches in Asia and Africa (a South-South relationship) and the member churches on three continents, and at the expectations and opportunities for future cooperation between China and Africa.

The UEM and the relationship between China and Africa

In this section I will briefly present the UEM experience over the past five years to demonstrate the relationship between China and Africa in the work of the UEM. I will give two examples of the relationships between the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT-ECD) and the Amity Foundation, as well as the relationships between the three Rhenish churches – the Chinese Rhenish Church Hong Kong Synod (CRC), the Rhenish Church in South Africa (RCSA) and the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (EKiR) – and all of the member churches of the UEM.

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74 Dr Dyah Ayu Krismaewati is the Executive Secretary for Asia and Member of the Management Team of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM)

75 The Amity Foundation is an Associate Member of the UEM in Asia.

76 I am grateful to Dr John Wesley Kabango, UEM Executive Secretary for Africa, for the provision of documents.
The predecessor organizations of the UEM developed out of the “classic” mission societies of the nineteenth century, with their missionizing from the Global North to the Global South (“here” to “there”). These were followed by the merger to form a mission society (the UEM) with mutual exchange between north and south, or bidirectional mission, so to speak, after which they ultimately evolved into an ecumenical communion of churches in three continents.

Today the UEM and its member churches form a communion in which all members are involved in the decision-making processes about common missionary tasks.

This makes cooperation between China and Africa a commonplace occurrence in the UEM today.

The CRC, the RCSA and the ELCT-ECD all trace their origins to the work of missionaries from the Rhenish Mission and Bethel Mission (as the predecessor of the UEM).

The UEM is the connecting link in this chain and brackets the connection between the churches: figuratively speaking, the UEM is the mortar between the bricks. Because of its current structure as an ecumenical communion, however, it is stepping back and ceding the broader field to the active churches. The UEM offers support and acts as an intermediary.

The UEM communion has encouraged south-south relationships (a relatively recent idea in a mission-historical context) through a paradigm shift in its organizational structure and will continue to support and expand these relationships in the future.

The cooperation and solidarity of the countries of the Global South goes back to the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955. Even as these and other solidarity conferences are to be assessed very positively, these usually economically oriented confederations of states often have internal rivalries. This is an incentive for the UEM to do better at the church level in bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral partnerships/relationships.

The differences between Chinese and African cultures are certainly a great challenge for partnerships, but they also enrich them.

1. The Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and the Amity Foundation

The relationship between the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT-ECD) and the Amity Foundation began in 2016. The first visit took place
from 26 September to 4 October 2016, when social services staff from the Eastern and Coastal Diocese, along with the UEM staff member and project coordinator for the Mlandizi Vocational Training Centre (MVTC), visited the Amity Foundation in Nanjing, China. The MVTC will become a training centre in Tanzania for young adults with intellectual disabilities. The visit was financed by the UEM as part of its support of the ECD. The MVTC will be the first training centre in Tanzania for people with intellectual disabilities.

The object of the visit was to learn from the Amity Foundation's experience in the social field, particularly in the field of vocational training for people with intellectual disabilities.

The successful “Amity Bakery” vocational training facility in Nanjing, for example, offers gradual preparation for life in the working world to people with intellectual disabilities. This flagship project of the Amity Foundation for young adults with learning difficulties also offers schoolchildren and other interested parties the opportunity to find out about the concept of inclusion for disabled people.

Another aim of the visit was to examine possibilities for future collaboration with the Amity Foundation, for example in the area of staff training.

Both sides agreed to further explore the following fields for the future: development of assessment tools and curricula, exchange of experiences in social marketing and advocacy, business operations in the social sector, economic and social sustainability, involvement of disabled and non-disabled people, and staff training.

2. The three Rhenish churches: RCSA, CRC, EKiR

The three Rhenish churches – the Rhenish Church in South Africa (RCSA), the Chinese Rhenish Church Hong Kong Synod (CRC), the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (EKiR), and the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) – met on 27 and 28 October 2015 for a conference in Elsies Rivier, a suburb of Cape Town in South Africa. The theme of the conference was “In Conversation with Our Heritage: Respice and Prospice (Looking Back and Looking Forward)”.

Together with the UEM, the participants agreed to initiate a research process into the history of the Rhenish mission congregations and two years later, the churches in South Africa and Germany made a return visit to Hong Kong.

Expectations and opportunities for the China-Africa relationship

Using this historical approach as a jumping-off point for a partnership between the Chinese Rhenish Church in Hong Kong, the Rhenish Church in South Africa, and the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland is a fine start to establishing deeper relationships and cooperation among the three churches. The development approach by the ELCT-ECD and the Amity
Foundation is another alternative that is considered to be “common practice” in the China-Africa relationship.

The China-Africa relationship in the UEM communion seems very promising to me. Both regions have many opportunities to exchange ideas, but communication between the two regions should be intensified.

If we are to further develop Sino-African relations, I would like to mention a few points that I consider important.

A. Avoid a one-way relationship

In a relationship, each side must play their part and learn together. This is facilitated when the stereotypes and prejudice each side may have about the other can be eliminated.

A relationship is inequitable if only one side benefits: one side feels affluent and competent and “helps” the other, while the other side feels poor and incapable, with no means to be anything but the receiving party. When both sides enter into a relationship with these roles, only one of them will be an actor in the relationship; the other becomes an object. A relationship of this kind leads to entrenched superiority and inferiority, especially when the partnership is primarily based on financial support from a partner.

Money cannot be the basis of a good relationship, even as money is an important element in the partnership.

Well meant is not always well done. In healthy relationships, there must be give and take on both sides, learning not just from one another, but with one another, together.

Global learning is becoming increasingly important in our globalized world. It is important to us, too, which is why the UEM has launched the process known as “Global Learning in Ecumenical Perspective” (GLEP). Beginning in 2017, the originally purely educational approach has continually evolved into an ever broader field of activity for the knowledge gained. More and more, the results are also determining other areas of the daily work of our organization and have set precedents in all fields.

This also means, of course, that misunderstandings and biases can arise as part of discussions, so there must always be a “safe space” built in. Partnership relationships require this too.

B. The China-Africa relationship as a safe space

The challenge in a partnership relationship is how partners can open up to one another in a variety of ways and make the partnership a safe space. This is important because partnership

often brings with it many misunderstandings. If these go unaddressed for fear of causing further problems, the existing problems cannot be tackled, exacerbating them further. If a partnership ceases to be open, it is only a matter of time before it dissolves.

It is therefore necessary to establish a relationship from the start as a safe space to discuss difficult and sensitive topics, where each party’s views are respected at the same time. A partnership relationship is not only about implementing a project, but also about jointly coping with important problems in the community, such as the fraught issues of racism, discrimination, and injustice.

C. Grassroots: The relationship should reach people at the grassroots and involve them

In partnership relationships, congregation members and the local community are often seen as mere objects. A partnership is usually planned and carried out by church and political leaders. Church members and people without political decision-making authority therefore tend to become objects, when in fact all of the church members involved in planning and maintaining a partnership relationship should be subjects.

With strong involvement by congregation members and their own voice in setting guidelines for the partnership, they too will feel like actors in the relationship. A partnership relationship that includes people at the grassroots level will then also be sustainable in the long term.

D. A long-term rather than short-term relationship

Here are some suggestions for achieving a sustainable relationship:

Develop partnership activities and programmes that are jointly planned, supported, and evaluated by the partnership groups. This creates a sense of belonging that can support a good long-term partnership.

Invite young people to get involved.

Young people must be included not only as participants, but also as actors in the partnerships, bringing in new ideas. These ideas also create new forms of partnership, and this is what keeps the partnership vibrant. In addition, including young people in the partnership helps to sustain the continuity of the relationship.

E. China-Africa relationships as ecumenical relationships

In an ecumenical context, the relationship between China and Africa can be developed into a partnership that is not just a relationship within the Christian community.
People of other faiths or even a-religious people can enrich the partnership in a broader and more comprehensive perspective. In this way, the community that has sprouted can integrate a whole range of networks and be useful to many, as it offers space for others and does not exclude any social or religious groups. This is how a partnership relationship can fulfil God's mission to spread the Good News in the world.
A Chinese Civil Society Organisation Going Global: How China House Develops Partnerships

Huang Hongxiang

The Founder

With a BA from Fudan University and a MA from Columbia University, Huang Hongxiang has been researching Chinese overseas investment and its socio-environmental impacts in developing countries since 2011.

Huang has worked with many international organizations to understand and engage Chinese businesses in Africa, Latin America on issues of sustainable development.

Huang’s experience in investigating ivory trade was featured in the 2016 documentary The Ivory Game by Terra Mater Film Studios and shortlisted for the 2016 Oscar for Best Documentary.

The Idea

Since 2014, China House has sent over 2000 young Chinese people to work on sustainable development projects in 27 countries (including China). By doing so, China House’s mission is to cultivate global vision, global competence, and global citizenship in young Chinese people. Its vision is to build a bridge for communication between China and the rest of the world.

China House works on global sustainable development challenges in cooperation with other organisations. It develops ‘project-based learning’ activities such as on the ground cooperation and recruitments. Moreover, it sometimes funds young Chinese people to participate in these learning activities.

China House is dedicated to a ‘triple win’: it wants to generate a positive impact in light of ongoing sustainable development challenges; facilitate the professional development of its Chinese participants and make a profit to sustain itself as an organisation.

INFOBOX

On China House 中南屋:

China House is a social enterprise that helps young Chinese people participate in global sustainable development. They work on projects relating to conservation, community development, sustainable Belt And Road Initiative (BRI) development, and youth engagement.

Founded in Kenya in 2014 and incubated by Columbia University's Development Practice program, they have registered in China and are now based in Shanghai. They conduct research and projects in collaboration with governments, NGOs, academic institutions and enterprises, to help China integrate into global sustainable development.

Website: www.globalchinahouse.com
The Partnerships

Partnerships are very crucial for China House’s work. Internationally, the organisation usually interacts with two levels of partnership: local partnerships with local NGOs and global partnerships with international development organisations.

China House identifies local grassroots NGOs and establishes partnerships with them. It contributes to these partnerships by raising funds in China, researching and helping to understand China and recruiting young Chinese talents.

China House provides research consultation services for academic institutions, NGOs, and think tanks on topics related to overseas Chinese businesses and sustainable development. It offers communication services for international organisations to engage Chinese stakeholders in Africa, Latin America and Asia on the topic of sustainable development.

China House possesses extensive knowledge on and networks in Chinese communities in the Global South. Its work has also been endorsed by the Chinese government and reported on by Chinese media.

In my experience, the most important thing in cooperation is to understand the needs of each other.

First, we assess the needs of our organisation: we need partnerships to create opportunities for Chinese youth to participate in global sustainable development and to ensure funding. We identify our value proposition: to help people understand and engage Chinese stakeholders when it comes to Chinese overseas businesses and sustainable development.

Second, we approach international or local partners. Usually, we communicate with them based on the background knowledge of their interest regarding China. We conduct research to find out their specific needs. We observe that under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) our potential partners usually share similar interests and needs to understand or engage Chinese players for sustainable development. At the same time, each organization has different interests and a specific agenda with regard to the BRI. Whether we reach out to potential partners or they reach out to us, we communicate to understand the needs of them and therefore build partnerships based on them.

For us, a communication about needs is a two-way learning process. Our partners learn about China House as a Chinese civil society organization. They learn about China/Chinese stakeholders through us. At the same time, we learn to understand the international development industry (through our international partners) and particular conditions in the developing countries (through our local partners).

The Projects

Indonesian Orang-utan Conservation (August 2017 – present, East Kalimantan)
In Indonesia, orang-utans and other wildlife have lost their homes and lives due to deforestation caused by oil palm plantations, mining, and logging. To conserve orang-utans, China House has partnered with CAN Borneo, a local NGO, to establish the first wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centre in Indonesia.

BASE CAN provides rescue, medical care, and rewilding training for homeless wildlife and help them return to the forest. Meanwhile, China House is working to protect natural habitats of wildlife and promote sustainable economic development in local communities. China House raised more than 100,000 CNY for the rescue center. A nursery funded by China House is cultivating 85,000 seedlings and is expected to restore 100 hectares of forest habitat for orangutans.

Ol Pejeta Wildlife Conservation (June 2018 – present, Conservancies in Eastern and Northern Kenya)

In Africa, many wildlife is under severe threats due to poaching, smuggling, illegal trade and human-wildlife conflicts. Ol Pejeta Conservancy protects the last two Northern White Rhinos globally and runs the Sweetwaters Chimpanzee Sanctuary. The Conservancy is one of the only two nature reserves in Africa on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Green List.

China House has worked with Ol Pejeta Conservancy to enhance local wildlife protection, including improving and donating Lion Lights, investing in beehives, contributing camera traps, filming documentaries, conducting international business marketing, and raising public awareness.

China House students improved solar-powered Lion Lights invented by a local Kenyan. An improved Lion Light costs only one-third of its original price. Upon their return, the students led a fundraising campaign in China, commissioned a Chinese manufacturer for light production, and donated 620 Lion Lights to the Conservancy.

To protect the last two Northern White Rhinos and other wildlife, China House initiated student-led fundraising campaigns in China. And they donated six monitoring camera worth 8,000 CNY, to the Ol Pejeta Conservancy. China House produced the first Chinese student-made Northern White Rhino documentary Meet the Last Three Northern White Rhinos in Africa.

Anti – FGM Project in Kenya (December 2015 – present, Oloitoktok Town, Eastern Kenya)

In Maasai tribes in Kenya, about 78% of women aged 15 to 49 have undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Because many FGM operations privately operated by people with little professional training, and the sanitation is often unqualified, women are vulnerable to wound infection, massive bleeding, and HIV infection after surgery.

China House has partnered with two local NGOs – Maasai Girls Life Time Dream Foundation and Divinity--to take in girls threatened by FGM and provide them with living expenses, tuition
fees, and professional development opportunities. It is the first Chinese civil society organization involved in anti-FGM in Africa. China House has donated over 100,000 CNY to the centers, and has been currently supporting for 5 girls.

Moreover, China House donated 21 laptops for Divinity to build a computer lab, helping girls and community members with online learning opportunity. In the future, the computer lab will serve as a computer skills training center for the local community.