
Foreword

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Some things are best written in China. When the editor asked me to prepare a foreword to this book I was in Europe. From there, China has many faces but they are all slightly out of focus. Chinese creativity is shrouded by Chinese economic power, by a crashing market, or by disinterest. There, it's difficult to know what to say except the obvious. China's creative and cultural spheres of activity are essential topics for the contemporary media, culture and communications scholar and student. Read this book, please.

Here, six months later in Suzhou, everything is more distinct, and increasingly interesting. The Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP) houses Fortune 500 companies, Chinese and international universities, including the brand new but already international School of Music at Suzhou University, and is yet within a 30 minute drive of the old city of Suzhou, once one of the biggest and busiest capital cities in the world. Indeed it was only in 1860, during the Taiping Rebellion, that much of that historical fabric was destroyed. Now, SIP is the face of China's vision of accelerated modernization and leapfrog development in the region, but also another transformative version of the essence of Suzhou's entrepreneurial and cultural past. Down the road, Suzhou the old city has remaining charms, particularly architectural, of an earlier iteration of Chinese investment and trade. It is in the conjunction of these two Suzhous that one sees both the value of culture and the capacity of creativity in China now. Keane's introduction to this collection expertly presents the contradictions and crossover between culture and creativity in Chinese political and policy discourse. In this context, it all makes sense.

But also, as I write, news comes through that the Chinese Ministry of Trade (MOFCOM) has invested 200 million *yuan* in a rural e-commerce initiative. Peasants will be supported through new technology, better infrastructure and legal incentives to run e-platforms for trade that ousts the proverbial middleman. Although there are already skeptical commentaries about peasants' capacity to actually use the technology, I recall a grassroots initiative along similar lines in an Anhui bamboo-shoe factory way back in 2004. It didn't work because the infrastructure wasn't there, not for lack of entrepreneurial will or will to learn to use the equipment. The 2015 MOFCOM investment is an economic decision but it is one

that will rely on the creative input of designers, gameification experts, and hardware producers if the peasant-farmers who need to make it work, are to have a real chance to do so effectively.

My point is that the discussions in this book from the perspective of Western and Chinese trained academics and commentators, are an invaluable source for thinking through how culture is translated through creativity and how creativity is bent to serve culture. The collaboration of the voices here demonstrates that perspectives and approaches do differ considerably across regimes of thought. The point is, to read both, and understand more.

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