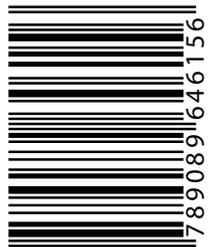


The UvA meets China

Collaboration with China has been designated a key strategic target by the University of Amsterdam (UvA). This booklet, published to mark the UvA's Opening of the Academic Year 2013-2014, gives the reader a glimpse of initiatives in this area that have already been launched from within the UvA community, while also placing them within a broader context. The booklet includes more than 20 contributions by various authors from both China and the Netherlands, particularly Amsterdam, on a wide range of topics of interest to the global academic community. As well as presenting an overview of successful academic cooperation, the stories that follow highlight many surprising links between our two countries and their broader cultures.

The UvA meets China

阿姆斯特丹大学邂逅中国



9 789089 646156

The UvA meets China
阿姆斯特丹大学邂逅中国

Editors

Johan van Benthem and Anouk Tso

Photography

Albertjan Duin | Bob Bronshoff | Corbis
 DSM Brand Experience, Mattmo Amsterdam
 Eduard Lampe | Flickr Creative Commons
 Fred van Diem | Hans Hordijk (HansKlevers)
 Hollandse Hoogte | Jacob van den Noort
 Jeroen Oerlemans | Kim Beijer | Maarten Schuth

Design

April Design, Amsterdam

© University of Amsterdam/Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2013

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the written permission of both the copyright owner and the author of the book.

Every effort has been made to obtain permission to use all the copyrighted illustrations reproduced in this book. However, if you believe you are the copyright owner of an illustration in this book and we have not requested your permission, please contact the publisher.

Table of contents

- 6 Foreword**
Dr Louise Gunning-Schepers
- 8 Editors' introduction**
Johan van Benthem & Anouk Tso
- 10 Strengthening ties between the Netherlands and China**
Xu Chen
- 13 Partners in trade, education and science**
Aart Jacobi
- 16 An open and inclusive city**
Eberhard van der Laan
- 19 Law in action in China**
Benjamin van Rooij
- 22 Climbing mountains will help you see further**
Fenrong Liu
- 26 Opening doors and building super-computers**
Peter Sloot
- 29 Networking and communication skills**
Xiangming (Joey) He
- 32 Shanghai**
David Verbeek

-
- 34 Dentistry in China: a fruitful cooperation**
Albert Feilzer
- 37 Exploring the nano realm**
Hong Zhang
- 40 A global community of minds**
Hans Clevers
- 43 Vibrant China**
Dimitri de Vreeze
- 46 New horizons for the humanities**
Junren Wan
- 49 Convivial China**
Jeroen de Kloet
- 52 Nodes in a global network**
Liang Guo
- 55 The secret to teaching in China**
Thijs Kouwenhoven
- 59 Complex systems and cultural diversity**
Shan Mei
- 62 The importance of international cooperation**
Dick Swaab
- 65 Beyond the safe confines of academia**
Huaxin Huang
- 68 Building a community in algebraic geometry**
Gerard van der Geer
- 71 Shedding light on social justice**
Wanhong Zhang
- 75 The philosophy behind practical contacts**
Martin Stokhof

-
- 78 Unfinished Self Portrait IV**
Haifeng Ni
- 80 More than flowers and milk**
Thomas Jin
- 83 Modernity with Chinese characteristics**
Michiel Leezenberg
- 86 Logic in a land of legend**
Johan van Benthem
- 90 UvA Facts & Figures**

Foreword



Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure that, on behalf of the University of Amsterdam (UvA), I offer you this special publication on our University's cooperation with China.

The UvA is an intellectual hub bringing together students with over 100 nationalities and forging cooperation between our researchers and many prestigious universities and research institutes abroad. In a world with fewer boundaries and ever-expanding knowledge, fostering an international outlook is essential to a research-intensive university with the ambition to consolidate its leading position.

Merely stating that we attach great importance to internationalisation no longer suffices: a genuine international strategy is required in which choices are made in terms of strategic objectives and geographical priorities. For this reason, the UvA adopted a 'Strategic Framework for Internationalisation', outlining these objectives and priorities for the years coming. Fostering research collaboration with partner institutions in China, in particular in research areas in which both the UvA's research groups and their Chinese peers excel, is a key priority.

Fortunately, we can build upon the many relationships the UvA's researchers already have with Chinese colleagues and partners, as described so vividly and personally in this booklet: the meeting of minds forging scientific collaboration.

Some of our students will follow in the footsteps of these researchers from Amsterdam and China. Yet many may do so in the private or public sector rather than via academic research. But they too will experience the expanding cooperation with China. We want to prepare them for that

future. Student exchange programmes and joint scholarship programmes will help us achieve that goal.

The existing and future connections provide the building blocks for the further enhancement of our University's collaboration with China. The UvA is eager to demonstrate its commitment to this cooperation and has therefore decided to select it as the main theme of the Opening of the Academic Year 2013-2014. Moreover, in the autumn of 2013, we will be joining a delegation from the City of Amsterdam on a visit to China, where we will be meeting with a number of the authors of this booklet and get a glimpse of the dynamics that make these collaborative research activities so successful. During this visit to China, we will be reaching an important milestone, as we will officially launch the UvA alumni chapter in that country.

This booklet contains a rich selection of stories about collaboration and I wholeheartedly invite you to join me on this journey and to get to know the students, researchers and organisations who together serve as the driving force for furthering this sustainable partnership.

Dr Louise J. Gunning-Schepers

President of the Executive Board

Editors' introduction

The University of Amsterdam (UvA) has decided to make collaboration with China a key strategic target. This booklet, produced to coincide with the UvA's Opening of the Academic Year 2013–2014, is meant to give the reader a glimpse of what is already happening in our University community, while also showing a broader context. You will hear the actual voices of people at the interface of our two cultures.

The following pieces cover a wide range of topics across Academia, with voices from both China and Amsterdam: mathematicians exporting algebraic geometry, computer scientists striving for unimaginable processing speeds, brain scientists setting up a brain bank in China, chemists exploring the nano-world, but also logicians studying games and communication, philosophers and historians comparing Chinese and Western thought, and legal scholars exploring the intricacies of law as it is being made today. And there is much more to be found in the stories that follow: you will discover many links between the two countries and their academic cultures that may surprise you.

However, perhaps the most important fruit of any academic contact is its effect on people: academics and students. Good education instils knowledge, but also broader attitudes and outlooks that last for life. Our book includes several student voices from Chinese alumni, a group of growing importance to the UvA.

China was already linked to the rest of the world via commercial routes millennia ago. This is the way of history: first business, then politics, and only then the academic world. We are very fortunate to have several pieces that represent this broader setting. The reader will find statements by two ambassadors, as well as the mayor of Amsterdam. And we also have some prominent voices from the world of business today.

Meetings between Amsterdam and China contribute to a concert of cultures. If that music is out of tune, we get a clash, if it is in harmony, we all benefit. The voices in this book have diverse styles. But the best music arises if voices in a chorus differ, not if they are the same. We hope our readers will enjoy the music and be inspired to join in.

This booklet could not have come into being without the kind support of many people. We thank the President of the UvA's Executive Board for endorsing the initiative, the experts at the UvA's Maagdenhuis for helping with the preparations, and Amsterdam University Press for producing it. But most of all, we thank our authors for their generous response. The editors' voices need a rest, now it is up to the reader.

Johan van Benthem and Anouk Tso

Strengthening ties between the Netherlands and China

XU CHEN



Ambassador Xu Chen, a university graduate, joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in 1985. During his career at the Ministry, he has held positions in China and abroad, including in the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations. Ambassador Chen was appointed Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands in March 2013.

Bilateral cooperation in higher education, research and innovation has greatly increased in recent years. China's Ambassador to the Netherlands foresees 'a new momentum for the UvA and its Chinese partners'.

Through joint efforts, the bilateral relations between the Netherlands and China have experienced stable and smooth developments in recent years. The Netherlands has been China's second largest trading partner among the European countries for the past 10 years in succession. Enthusiasm for our bilateral cooperation in higher education, research and innovation has greatly increased in recent years. With the growing strength of this important pillar, I believe that Dutch-Chinese relations will become more stable and strong. This positive trend is taking place at the right time, as the Chinese industrial structure is experiencing an innovation-oriented upgrading. Moreover, strengthened bilateral relations in this sense serve both countries' ambitions by 2020, with the Netherlands seeking to become one of the leading knowledge economies in the world and China aiming to become an innovation-driven society.

Universities and research institutions have been the most active players in our bilateral joint research programmes, such as the Programme Strategic Scientific Alliances, the Joint Scientific Thematic Research Programme, etc. Hundreds of students and



researchers take part in these programmes that target both Dutch and Chinese talents. This reminds me of Johan van Benthem, prominent University Professor at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and trainer of top talents, who accepted an appointment as Distinguished International Expert by the China Ministry of Education in June 2011 to work concurrently at Tsinghua University.

Joint papers in high-ranking international journals as well as patents are remarkable products of these cooperation programmes. The UvA has actively contributed to bilateral research in this regard and witnessed successful projects such as 'Luminescence up-conversion nanoparticles and application in diagnosis and therapy of cancer' with the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Furthermore, I hope that the joint research centre on logic between the UvA and Tsinghua University, to be established later this year, will provide a new momentum for the UvA and its Chinese partners.

Like many others, I sincerely wish to see new chapters of intensified cooperation in research and innovation cooperation between the UvA and its Chinese partners starting at the Opening of the Academic Year 2013-2014.

Partners in trade, education and science

AART JACOBI



Ambassador Aart Jacobi represents the Netherlands in China and Mongolia. He joined the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1984 and was previously the Ambassador for the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Surinam. He holds degrees in Japanese Studies from the University of Leiden and in Japanese constitutional law from Kyoto University.

The long historical relationship between our two countries is nowadays, to a large extent, founded on education and research, says the Dutch Ambassador to China. 'We will continue to support the academic activities of the UvA in China.'

The year 2012 was marked by 40 years of diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level between the Netherlands and China, as Jan Vixseboxse was appointed the first Dutch ambassador to China in 1972. The relationship between the Netherlands and China had already begun in the seventeenth century when the first trade convoys arrived in South China. Trade between the Netherlands and China blossomed quickly and the Netherlands has now developed into China's second largest trading partner and third largest investor within the EU.

There is also a long history in terms of cooperation in the fields of education and research. In 1876, the Dutch engineers Johannes de Rijke and George Escher (father of the artist M.C Escher) introduced Dutch water technology to Shanghai. In 1923, Cornelius Ariëns Kappers, the first director of the Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience, spent one year in Beijing as a guest professor at the renowned Beijing Union Medical Hospital. The first Dutch exchange students arrived in Beijing in 1972 and five years later the first formal cooperation agreement between our ministries of education was signed.



Nowadays, it is difficult to imagine our academic world without Chinese students and researchers, and we also see more and more Dutch students and researchers at Chinese universities. This year, a Dutch astronomer was even named one of the best young lecturers at the famous Peking University. International mobility and exchange form an important foundation for academic cooperation and I would also encourage more Dutch people to contribute to this by, for example, doing part of their study or research in China.

Four centuries after the world's first multinational, the Dutch East India Company, was set up in Amsterdam, the Netherlands and Amsterdam are still seen as the 'gateway to Europe'. Traditionally, Amsterdam was the European centre for maps and atlases. The lack of censorship in Amsterdam led to a flourishing book and publishing trade. In 1655, the Amsterdam publisher Johannes Blaeu brought out the *Atlas Sinensis*, the first Western atlas of China. Elsevier is another well-known Dutch scientific publisher that was founded in Amsterdam two centuries later.

The establishment of the *Athenaeum Illustre*, the predecessor of the University of Amsterdam, was also the impetus for the development of Amsterdam into a centre for education, the

arts and sciences. During his inaugural address at the *Athenaeum Illustre* in 1632, Casper Barlaeus, one of Amsterdam's first professors, spoke about the 'wise merchant' (*Mercator Sapiens*), who he felt should focus on the pursuit of science, in addition to business pursuits.

Nowadays, we see that the close relationship between Amsterdam and Beijing is, to a large extent, founded on education and research, in addition to trade. Beijing is the academic heart of China and the home base of renowned institutions, such as Peking University, Tsinghua University and the Chinese Academy of Science (CAS). I am glad that the cooperation between the UvA and China, which has existed for many years, continues to develop.

With this publication, which has its origins in a Chinese invention (printing) and the Dutch entrepreneurial spirit and academic culture, the circle is complete. My Embassy, supported by experts such as the Science Attaché and the Neso office in Beijing, will continue to support the academic activities of the UvA in China.

An open and inclusive city

EBERHARD VAN DER LAAN



Eberhard van der Laan completed his Law Study (with honours) in 1983 at the VU University Amsterdam, and then worked as a lawyer for 25 years. From 2008 to 2010 he served as Minister for Housing, Communities and Integration of the Netherlands. Van der Laan was appointed Mayor of the City of Amsterdam in 2010.

Openness and inclusivity is what Amsterdam offers Chinese companies looking to enter the European market, and academics play a key role, writes the Mayor of Amsterdam. 'The City of Amsterdam is committed to promoting long-term partnerships.'

It is my pleasure to contribute to this booklet highlighting the strong ties between the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and China.

When the Dutch visit China, we have a tendency to be overwhelmed by the impressive figures that many Chinese businesses can boast. I too am impressed by China's growth. Notwithstanding differences in size, the Netherlands does, however, also have a lot to offer our partners in China.

I realised this when I visited Tsinghua University with the Rector Magnificus of the UvA and University Professor of Mathematical Physics (and at that time president of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) Robbert Dijkgraaf. As the mayor of Amsterdam, I was greeted with a lot of respect at Tsinghua University, but Professor Dijkgraaf was treated like a hero. I learned that Tsinghua University receives many delegations a day and also sees many mayors, but to have an opportunity to meet a world-class scientist like Professor Dijkgraaf was truly appreciated.



Just one week after I had visited the former mayor of Beijing, Guo Jinlong, in China, he visited me in Amsterdam. I received him at my official residence after a canal trip. When Mr Guo started to say, 'What I like best about Amsterdam...', I expected him to mention the canals, but he continued: 'What I like best about Amsterdam is its openness and inclusivity.'

This is one of the greatest compliments Amsterdam can receive. Openness and inclusivity is what Amsterdam wants to offer Chinese companies looking to conquer the European market and to the great number of Chinese talents aspiring to gain study or work experience abroad.

The City of Amsterdam is committed to promoting long-term partnerships between universities, companies and governments. This year, Amsterdam is honoured to be 'guest

city' of the Beijing Design Week. This will provide a platform to display the innovative, creative and commercial spirit of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. I am pleased that the UvA is again part of the delegation and look forward to the fruitful cooperation with the UvA and its partners in China.

Law in action in China

BENJAMIN VAN ROOIJ



Benjamin van Rooij is the John S. and Marilyn Long Professor of US-China Business and Law at the University of California Irvine. He is also associated to the University of Amsterdam as a professor of Chinese Law and Regulation. He is the academic director of the Long US-China Institute for Law and Business and the founding director of the Netherlands China Law Centre. His research analyses how law shapes economic behaviour.

Seeing the law in action requires fieldwork as much as pure academic thinking. A tale of shared academic and personal interests, as well as incremental collaboration.

Until I met Prof. Zhang Xiaohui, Chinese legal academics had been hesitant to collaborate. 'You want to study actual law enforcement? You want to understand not only what the government does, but also how companies respond? We academics do not do that, the government does,' as one senior scholar at the prestigious Institute of Law of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences once responded.

The moment I entered Zhang's office in the provincial capital of Yunnan province in 2003, I knew things were different. Scattered amongst the room were not just anthropological treatises, but also hiking gear including tents, sleeping bags and backpacks. Zhang and his students had just returned from a prolonged period of fieldwork to study the folk laws of one of their province's many ethnic minority groups.

To Prof. Zhang and his most promising student Wang Qiliang, my interest in law beyond theory, in terms of how it functions in practice, made perfect sense. Their years of empirical work to understand the unwritten folk law had sensitised them to the inherent gap between written rules and legal practice, as



well as to the methods needed to study such a gap. In short, we shared a common interest and there was a synergy in terms of the available and necessary expertise. Without special funding we were able to start a collaboration, with me teaching their PhD and postdocs in legal anthropology, and Prof. Zhang and Wang helping me gain access, in return, to local authorities, companies and villages.

Since then, the collaboration has expanded. After Prof. Zhang retired, Wang Qiliang took over his position and became vice-dean of the law school. He also became one of the most prominent legal anthropologists in China, heading a national network. Wang and I have retained close ties, seeing each other once or twice a year and sometimes for prolonged periods. The frequent conversations seem to have led us both to independently develop a research agenda that is highly similar, with a common interest in the implementation of law. We are now engaged in a blossoming series of studies about compliance, including tax evasion practices of lawyers, food safety behaviour in restaurants, and worker safety in the construction industry. In the fall of 2013, we are also jointly organising, together with a network of young promising interdisciplinary scholars, a course on methods to study law in practice for graduate students.

Since the collaboration with Zhang and Wang started in 2003, I have gradually learned that such successful research and teaching exchanges have several preconditions, which I have later sought, with mixed success, elsewhere in China as well. First and foremost, there must be a common academic and, to a certain extent, personal interest not only with regard to substantive questions, but also broadly speaking in terms of methods. Second, having collaborative funds is not necessary and may actually be counter-productive if such funds force you to work with unsuitable partners or unsuitable topics or methods.

Finally, incremental collaboration is key, with smaller-scale collaboration preceding large-scale projects. Or, as Deng said: '摸着石头过河' (*mozhe shitou guohe*), crossing the river by feeling the stones.

Climbing mountains will help you see further

FENRONG LIU



Fenrong Liu is professor of Logic at Tsinghua University in Beijing. She holds a New Century Excellent Talents Award from the Chinese Ministry of Education. She obtained a first doctorate from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and a second doctorate from the UvA. She initiated the International Workshops on Logic, Rationality and Interaction in China, and is an editor of the *Handbook of the History of Logic in China*.

An interest in logical reasoning and communication between cultures drives Professor Liu, a native of mountainous Shanxi, to ever further vistas. In this interview she describes her road from China to Amsterdam, and back.

When asked what makes someone a logician, Prof. Liu says: 'My earliest childhood memories are of the mountains of Shanxi, where my father was a primary school teacher. As a little girl, he showed me how climbing mountains enabled you to see further and I have kept a sense of curiosity about what lies over the horizon ever since. I soon found out that it is education that takes you to the next level, and logic is a telescope, which helps you see things far and wide.'

Prof. Liu goes on to describe the journey from Shanxi to Amsterdam, stating 'As a student, I had an immediate attraction to Logic since it reveals surprising patterns in reasoning and other everyday activities. To learn more, I did a PhD on solving practical problems in Artificial Intelligence at the Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing. Here logical systems describe how to change one's mind and discard old attempts at solution refuted by new information'. After graduation, Prof. Liu was offered a permanent job at the CASS, a situation admired by many of her classmates.



Continuing her research on information dynamics, she discovered the tradition of logics for communication and games at the UvA's Institute for Logic, Language and Computation, a place well-known in China for its long tradition going back to the Dutch mathematicians Brouwer and Beth. This intrigued her because 'the social aspect was very much in line with the Chinese culture I grew up with. I decided to leave the CASS, and apply for a scholarship to the UvA, despite the risks'. Just as with mountain climbing, there were times when she wondered if it was time to turn back. But excitement about new views always conquered hesitation. And finally she stood at the pinnacle, the rostrum in the Aula of the UvA on 28 February 2008, to defend her dissertation.

But did she manage to see more than just logical formulas and UvA buildings? Prof. Liu explains: 'The canals and bridges quickly became dear to me. I biked everywhere, though it was hard for me to get the right small-sized bicycle at first. I loved working in a lively research culture among professors and students, and got a sense of being a world citizen through travelling to many workshops and summer schools. Those were good times and I miss them a lot.'

And what about her current ambitions? Prof. Liu states: 'I chose Tsinghua partly for its great tradition. My role model is Jin Yuelin, a famous logician who started the department of philosophy in the 1920s after his education at Columbia University. His pioneering generation had to bridge language and culture gaps we cannot imagine nowadays, and helped to create the common language that connects China and the World today. This tradition is cherished by the University and I

am building similar bridges in my own world.'

All of Prof. Liu's research projects are international collaborations. She has initiated international workshops with colleagues across China and because of her interests in analogies and differences between styles of thinking in cultures, she decided to edit a '*Handbook of the History of Logic in China*': 'Our first meeting with experts from China and the West was in the Doelenzaal of the UvA, organised together with the IAS in Leiden, and cultures both merged and clashed sometimes.'

Prof. Liu 's career has progressed quickly back in China and her teaching is well received by the Tsinghua students, perhaps the most talented ones in China. She is very forthright when questioned on her feelings about the UvA: 'Without my education in Amsterdam, those things would not have been possible. I remain committed to making new contacts with my Alma Mater, such as the new joint research centre we have started and I hope that many more Chinese students will cross the bridges that I have negotiated.'



Opening doors and building supercomputers

PETER SLOOT



Peter Sloot is distinguished professor at the University of Amsterdam, professor of Advanced Computing in St Petersburg, Russia, and professor in the Complexity Programme at NTU, Singapore. He is a laureate of the Russian Leading Scientist president's programme and has been the PI of many European research programmes on complex systems. His main interest is in uncovering the rules by which nature seems to process information.

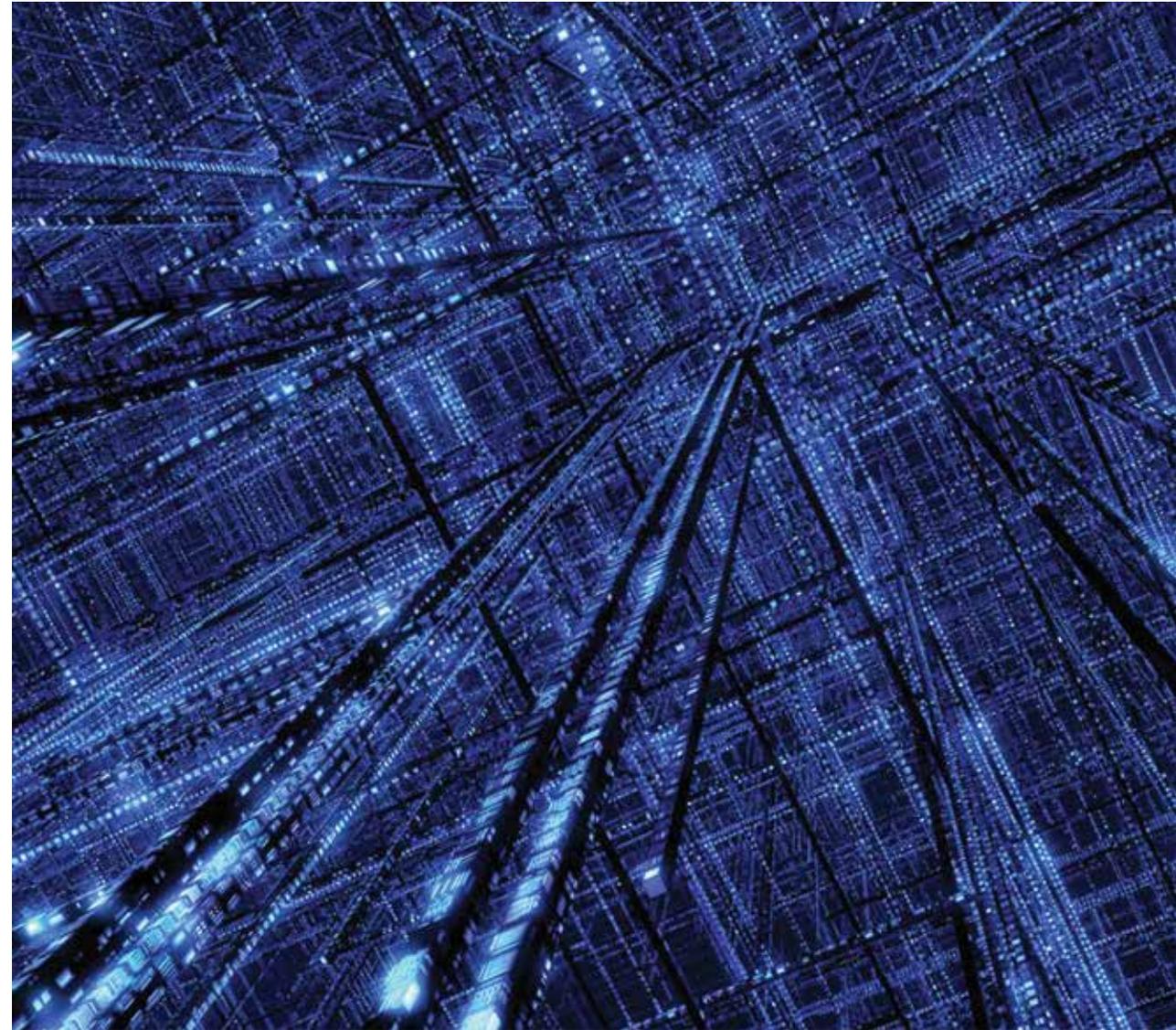
Computational science is taking off in China on an unprecedented scale, and Dutch professors are fortunate to be a part of it.

师傅领进门，修行在个人 'The door is opened by the teacher, you only have to enter.'

In the early 1990s, before I was introduced to the young Computer Science postdoc, Chengzheng Sun, who would be working with me at the University of Amsterdam (UvA), I was only familiar with China from the rare television reports and articles in some newspapers. Since we could not pronounce his first name correctly, he became known as 'the Illustrious Mr Sun'.

One of the most striking features of Mr Sun was that he conducted science with the same energy and focus as he played table tennis, and with the same goal: to win. I am writing this almost 23 years later and Chengzheng Sun, who is now a full professor, is sitting in the room next to me at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore, where I am a visiting professor in Complex Systems. I learned the Chinese proverb with which I introduce this piece, from him and it very much reflects the Chinese attitude to academic endeavours. Chengzheng proved to be a prototypical Chinese scientist.

Even now, after having worked with a great number of Chinese PhD students, postdocs, and professors, I am still impressed by the dedication and professionalism with which



they conduct research and teach. A few months ago, I was visiting the National University of Defense Technology (NUDT) in Changsha, an amazing place in many respects. There was a lot of ‘hush-hush’ going on and I was told that the government would soon announce a big step forward in supercomputing.

Upon my return to the Netherlands, the news was out that China had produced the fastest computer ever, the Tianhe-2 (or *Milky Way 2*) supercomputer, with a whopping performance of 35 Petaflops* running over 30,000 computer cores. This is by far the most complex instrument ever built by humans, which is an amazing feat for a country that did not even take computing seriously a decade ago.

But what is even more impressive is the recent focus on ‘computational science’, the science of modelling and simulation of complex systems, the field in which I work myself. I am

sure that China will soon lead the way in this field. It beggars belief to think that if you are the best scientist in a group of 1,000 scientists in China, there can still be a million of you! If they set their mind to it, and it will happen, the sheer dedication and vast resources will make China the place to be. China has opened up the door, now we only have to enter.

* That is 35 x one thousand x one million x one million floating-point calculations *per second*!

Networking and communication skills

XIANGMING (JOEY) HE

Xianming (Joey) He explains in this interview how he learnt three key lessons at the UvA. He is now with Philips in China, and remains committed to alumni contacts with the Netherlands.



Xiangming He studied at the Beijing University of Technology, and then enrolled in the UvA's Master's Programme in Business Studies. He graduated in 2008 and is currently Marketing Strategy Manager in External Relations for Philips Lighting China, Beijing office. Joey He is also a 'Study in Holland Alumni Ambassador' of the Netherlands Alumni Network in China (NANC) and of the Netherlands Education Support Office (Neso) China.

What were your main reasons for choosing the University of Amsterdam (UvA) when pursuing a Master's degree?

‘The UvA enjoys a very good reputation internationally and I was attracted by the multicultural atmosphere, both within the University and in the city of Amsterdam. I expected that studying at the UvA would enable me to gain more intercultural communication skills.’

What key insights did you gain during your studies in Amsterdam?

‘Key courses in the Business Studies Programme included Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Research and Leadership. There are actually three main lessons I took away from the UvA: 1) sufficient data can help you in finding the truth and you gradually develop skills for using complex data sets; 2) simplifying complex matters can be done by using analytical skills; 3) always stay focused on your target.’

Do you feel that your studies in Amsterdam contributed to developing your current career path?

‘Yes, my personal experiences are quite positive as I had the privilege of joining the Royal Philips Headquarters in Amsterdam from the first day after my graduation onwards! The disciplinary knowledge combined with the analytical and communication skills I obtained during my Master’s studies were very important when adapting to and integrating into working life in my first job. Furthermore, I still greatly benefit from the networking skills I developed during my period at the UvA.’

As Study in Holland Alumni Ambassador of the Netherlands Alumni Network in China (NANC), would you like to share your views and expectations on the new UvA alumni chapter in China, which will be launched in September 2013?

‘I am very pleased with this initiative, as I consider the opportunity to network locally with other UvA alumni of added value. It will also help in staying up-to-date with the latest news from the UvA and could even be an incentive to consider moving back to Amsterdam once again in the future! In my view, it would be good if these networking opportunities would be combined with communication tools focusing on alumni, such as Weibo (Chinese Twitter) and Wechat.’



DAVID VERBEEK



David Verbeek is a director/filmmaker who graduated from the Amsterdam Film Academy. David works mainly in Shanghai, where he directed the films 'Shanghai Trance' (2008) and 'Club Zeus' (2011). He is currently working on his new film 'Dead & Beautiful', a vampire film about the second generation of the very wealthy elite in China.

'Shanghai, the beauty awakes by night. For those who should already be sleeping, cannot sleep or do not want to sleep.'



Dentistry in China: a fruitful cooperation

ALBERT FEILZER



Albert J. Feilzer, PhD, DDS, is professor in Dental Materials Science at the UvA, and dean of the Academic Centre of Dentistry Amsterdam (ACTA). ACTA is the combined faculty of Dentistry of the University of Amsterdam and the VU University Amsterdam

The dean of the Amsterdam Dentistry School talks about dental care in China, the joint search for effective treatment options, and working with the top five dental schools on joint PhD programmes, student exchanges and specialised dental education.

The Academic Centre for Dentistry Amsterdam (ACTA) has a long-standing history of collaboration with different Chinese universities, a cooperation that has mainly been based on research activities. Many PhD students from Chinese universities have conducted part or all of their doctoral research at ACTA (UvA and VU). However, we have broadened our collaboration to focus on teaching and are looking forward to creating a generation of exchange students. Several Chinese schools have shown interest in our dental curriculum and our virtual environment, in which multiple dental procedures can be practiced.

Compared to the Netherlands, the dental care in China is more cure-oriented and is totally different in terms of organisation. The quality of dental care ranges from academically educated doctors to 'barefoot doctors'.

In dentistry, as in medicine, we still have serious diseases such as Oral Lichen Planus (a mucosa condition of unknown origin) for which our treatment options are not always effective. By contrast, in China, patients suffering from such diseases are referred to the academic department of 'Traditional Chinese



Medicine' where the application of Chinese medicines, which are unavailable or unknown to us, seems to be more effective than our methods.

During 2010 and 2011, I visited some of our partner schools. It was nice to experience the differences in organisation of dental schools, as well as the dental care, during this visit. In contrast to the Dutch situation, a Chinese dental hospital includes a few, by our standards, enormous floors with ward beds for the oral surgery department. Even oral cancer patients undergo their surgery in the dental hospital.

As ACTA is a multidisciplinary faculty in itself, with a broad range of interests, we decided to continue and expand our cooperation with China, focusing primarily on its top five dental schools. Together, we will develop more joint

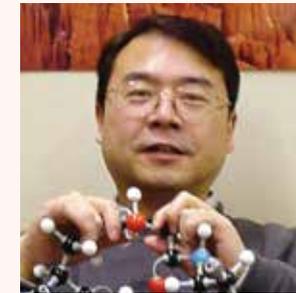
PhD programmes, increase student exchanges and collaborate on the development of specialised dental education programmes.

Finally, I would advise everyone to visit China. The country may be impressive, but the people's hospitality is even more extraordinary.

Exploring the nano realm

HONG ZHANG

Professor Zhang's group was granted several prestigious Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences projects as part of the China Exchange Programme. This interview is about the synergy in research on nanochemistry between Amsterdam and China.



Hong Zhang took a Master's in China, a doctorate in Antwerp, and joined the UvA in 1993. He is associate professor of Chemistry at the Van 't Hoff Institute of Molecular Sciences, Professor at the Changchun Institute of Optics, Fine Mechanics and Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and Chair Professor at Northeast Normal University. His research specialism is photonic nanomaterials and excited state dynamics of confined systems.

China may be a mysterious country, but photonic nanochemistry seems an even more mysterious realm. What is it?

'The nano-level lies in between molecules and visible objects, which makes it an exciting border area in science. Classical and quantum physics meet here, and the behaviour of surfaces and interiors of objects becomes equally important. This is also where chemists are creating exciting new objects that may have a dramatic impact on societal applications.'

Why did you yourself travel to the nano-realm?

'My lifelong interest has been how light interacts with materials, and at the nano-level, this leads to the discovery of many exciting phenomena. My group in experimental chemistry at the Van 't Hoff Institute works on these, using spectroscopic techniques that allow us to see and manipulate things at this microscopic level.'

Nanoscience is a major concern for many governments today. Why?

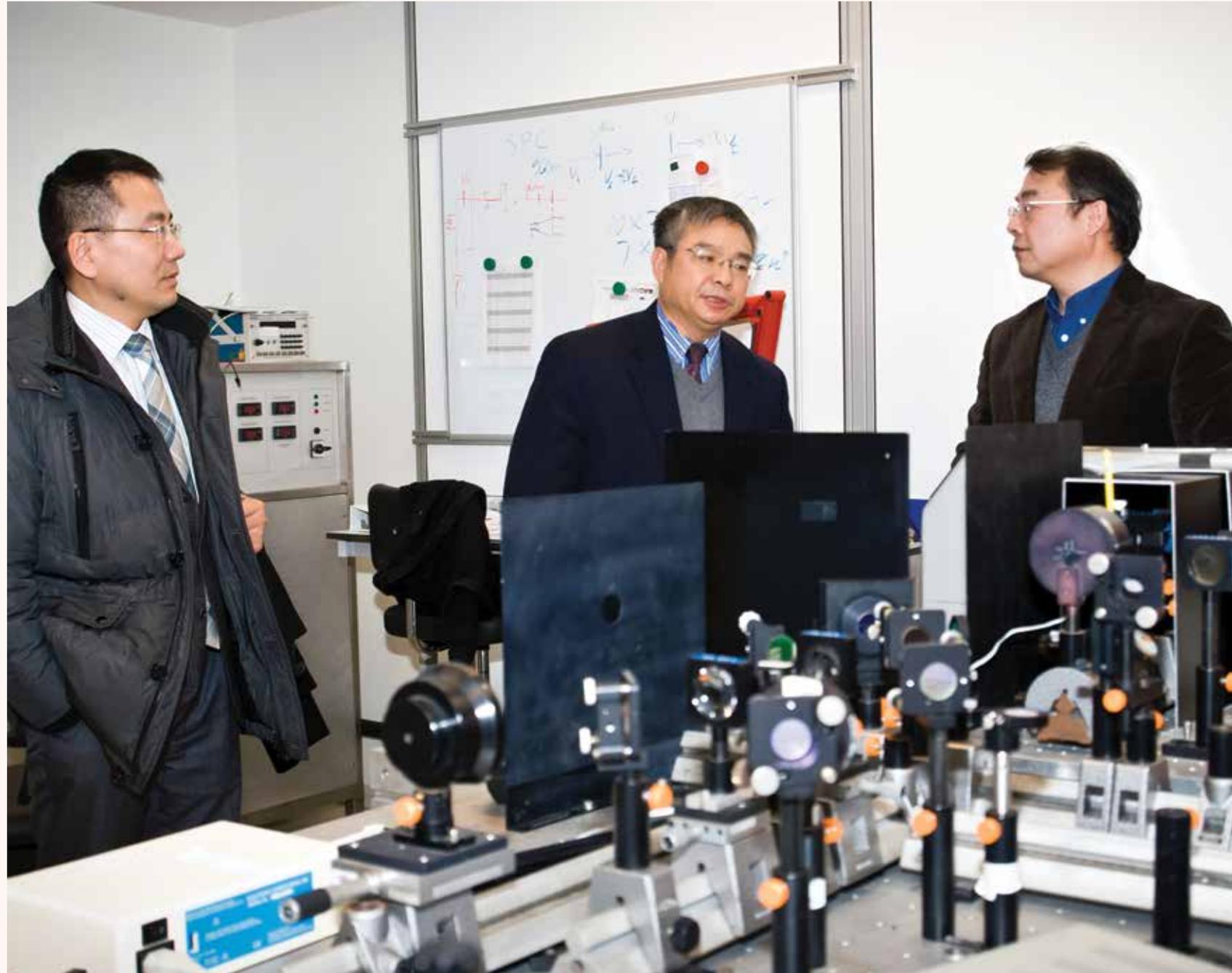
‘Our own work gives you some concrete answers. We produce light-sensitive nano-particles that can be embedded into organs and, after activation by infrared light, destroy surrounding tissue locally. We work closely with cancer researchers on this new therapy that has already been tested on animals. But we also make nano-biosensors that can detect diseases such as malaria and, in another world, that of catalysis, our group is involved in the design of light-driven catalysts.’

What do your UvA China contacts mean in practice?

‘We do joint research and co-publish with various institutes in China, the Changchun Institute of Applied Chemistry (CIAC), CIOMP and NENU. There is real synergy: our expertise and experimental equipment are complementary. We perform joint research by extensively exchanging researchers and frequently communicating experimental results. Another measure of scientific contact is people. Over 30 PhD students and postdocs at the UvA, CIOMP and NENU are directly involved in our joint projects. Those numbers say it all. Recently, we also started training joint PhD students with the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the first one obtained his PhD from the UvA in 2011.’

What would someone with your extensive hands-on experience recommend to the UvA regarding its China outreach?

‘Of course, I cannot tell others what to do, but if you insist... We in the Netherlands may need to make a bit of a mental shift: usually we know what we want, but we also need to know what our partners want, and the only stable contacts are those producing mutual benefits. As latecomers competing with American and other European universities, we must work more effectively since there are still opportunities with mutual needs.’



A global community of minds

HANS CLEVERS



Hans Clevers studied medicine and biology, obtaining his doctorate at Utrecht in 1985 and later working as a postdoc at Harvard University. From 1991 to 2002, he was professor of Immunology at the UMC-U (Utrecht University), and from 2002-2012 director of the Hubrecht Institute, one of the seventeen KNAW research institutes. He was elected president of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in May 2012.

The President of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences explains how working on issues which are relevant for both countries is key, from water management, agriculture and food, chemistry and healthcare to law and the welfare state. 'We are creating a global community of minds for the coming decades.'

He who writes about China, soon finds himself writing in and about superlatives. This applies to almost all conceivable activities, including the traditionally Dutch bicycle. It is, therefore, not surprising that the scale on which science and scholarship is practised in China is of such impressive magnitude.

I first became acquainted with Chinese academia when I received an honorary professorship in a city then unknown to me, Changsha, in 2002. That city has seven million inhabitants. Now that I have been cooperating with our Chinese sister academies as president of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) for one year, my awareness of Chinese academia and its scale has increased. The Chinese Academy of Sciences, for example, houses no less than 98 research institutes, compared to which our 17 institutes seem rather paltry. We are inclined at such moments to comfort ourselves with the observation that it is not just about quantity – until the scale of Chinese investments in science and innovation becomes apparent.



In no more than 20 years, China will not only be an economic and political superpower, but also one of the most important players in the field of science and technology. The Chinese government has set itself the goal of transforming the country from a production-based economy into a knowledge economy, with an accompanying level of education and technical-scientific infrastructure. The country is making substantial long-term investments in teaching, research and innovation. In view of these efforts, China is expected to quickly develop into one of the most important suppliers of academic talent and academic data, and into a location for advanced, large knowledge infrastructures. Let us, therefore, cherish our academic cooperation with China. It is not only important for the internationally oriented labour market for researchers and academics. It is also desperately needed, given the increasingly fierce battle for academic talent.

The KNAW has been working for more than 30 years with its counterparts in China: *the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology*. Since 2008, the KNAW has been working together with the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) on joint research projects and to stimulate the exchange of researchers and knowledge. Dutch and Chinese academics are, for example, currently working on issues which are relevant for both countries: water management, agriculture and food, chemistry, health care, law and the welfare state. We also organise events for Chinese academics in the Netherlands to introduce them to Dutch academic culture. And we support initiatives like the Netherlands Asia Honours Summer School, where Dutch

students can work on a project in China for a few weeks. Finally, cooperation in research is more than academic products. It is an investment with many further effects, which sometimes last a lifetime. We often observe that a Chinese academic who has worked in the Netherlands secures a high-ranking position upon return to China – in the academic world or within a ministry. In this way, we are creating a global community of minds for the coming decades.

The UvA is making a substantial contribution to the KNAW/NWO China programmes. Projects are being financed, for example, in a diverse range of academic disciplines, such as chemistry, medicine, law, philosophy and logic, but also dentistry. These are projects within which Dutch and Chinese academics, from research fellow to professor, are examining common issues. As a Dutch academic once said: 'The Chinese and the Dutch are the best possible match.'

I wish the University of Amsterdam a very successful Opening of the Academic Year, also in light of its cooperation with China!

Vibrant China

DIMITRI DE VREEZE



Dimitri de Vreeze joined Royal DSM in 1990, and held several positions in different countries. He became president of the Business Group DSM Resins & Functional Materials in 2010, before being appointed member of the Managing Board in charge of Materials Sciences on 1 September 2013.

A member of the Management Board of Royal DSM explains three principles that he learnt in his long business contacts with China, though he would say that 'they apply to everyone interested in finding his or her place in today's exciting world'.

Every time I travel to China I get excited. And every time I return from China I feel re-energised. It's the vibrant community, the speed, the atmosphere that inspires people to come up with new initiatives. I have travelled the country extensively and interacted with many members of its business community. The company I work for is growing fast in China. We currently have about 3,500 Chinese employees, and over the last decade we have established many joint ventures and other partnerships with Chinese companies in nutrition, pharmaceuticals and materials. In 2012, our revenue in China was \$1.7 billion.

I have learned my lessons about China the hard and the easy way. There are three personal takeaways in particular that I would like to share with you:

1. *Everything is possible, but nothing is simple.*
There is this great movie, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, in which the main character, played by Will Smith, explains to his son that he (the son) should pursue his dream: 'Don't ever let someone tell you that you cannot do something. Not even me.' China is the country where everything is possible, but



nothing is simple. Our Western mind is our biggest barrier. In China, it is all about seizing opportunities quickly, something which seems almost impossible in the Western world nowadays.

find that it's worth the effort – from both a business and a personal perspective.

2. Business is the universal language.

Many people think the language is the barrier, but if you have a good business idea and a good plan to implement it, the Chinese will understand immediately what you are talking about. Business is the universal language.

3. Asia will reshape history.

Doing business in China requires perseverance and modesty. Europeans find it hard to be modest: in their dealings with China, they often think and act as if they occupy a superior position. They forget that, in the Common Era, China and India dominated the world from the AD 1 until 1820; that the period in which the Europeans and later the Americans took over only spans a 200-year window (the 19th and 20th centuries); and that China and India are sure to regain their number 1 and 2 positions in the world by 2050. We will simply have to come to terms with this global shift and prepare ourselves for our role in this new reality. My advice: be open to learn and integrate what this reshaping will mean to society at large and to you as an individual.

The relevance of these principles extends beyond the business community. I would say that they apply to everyone: business people, academics or just anyone interested in finding his or her place in today's exciting world. So, by all means go to China, enjoy the experience, learn as much as you can, expect to fall flat on your face and just keep trying. You will

New horizons for the humanities

JUNREN WAN



Junren Wan is dean of the School of Humanities at Tsinghua University, Beijing. He is a Changjiang Chair Professor of the Ministry of Education in China, with extensive publications in ethics and political philosophy. He was a Fulbright Scholar at the Harvard-Yenching Institute. His honours include the First National Universities Excellent Achievement Award and the Second Jin Yuelin Academic Achievement Award.

The dean of the newly refounded School of Humanities at Tsinghua University explains the rich history of his institution, and looks at the future of his cooperation with the UvA.

One day, during a pleasant visit to the Netherlands, I was given a book entitled *From Illustrious School to University of Amsterdam*, and it gave me a complete history of this institution. I was impressed by the contrast between the current success of the University of Amsterdam (UvA) and its humble and quiet beginnings. In this respect, one might compare our two universities. Tsinghua University was established in 1911 during a period of radical change in China. Partly funded by the 'Boxer Indemnity', it functioned at first as a preparatory school for those students who were sent by the government to study in the US. The University subsequently became a major centre of academic activity, as well as a place for building international contacts, especially with American universities – an influence that can still be seen in the architecture of our beautiful campus. Our centennial celebration in 2011 showcased much of this history, but of course, it looked mostly to the future.

People are amazed by the progress that Tsinghua has made over the last century to become one of China's premier universities, but few are aware of the struggles in its history,



especially with regard to the humanities.

In 1952, a nationwide restructuring of institutes of higher education began and Tsinghua became a multidisciplinary polytechnic university specialising in training engineers. All researchers in the humanities and sciences were moved to either Peking University or the Chinese academies. Soon after that the University realised that the study of engineering was not possible without a proper education in the sciences and humanities. From the 1960s, some broader subjects were already reintroduced. In 1999, I was invited by Tsinghua's leaders to rebuild a philosophy department. So I moved from Peking University to Tsinghua and switched from being a pure philosopher with a career in the field of ethics to being an administrator who also has to think about organisation and manpower. There are many stories to tell about this process of rebuilding, but the full support of the University enabled me to hire the most excellent faculty members from China and even abroad. This has led to a very international group of researchers that I am proud of. China is experiencing a dramatic economic transition and there are many new social and philosophical problems for Chinese contemporary philosophers. As a moral philosopher, I feel the urge to learn Western theories while maintaining faith in Chinese traditions. My contact with colleagues at Harvard, the UvA and other universities worldwide has shaped my views and perspective.

I participate in and encourage current contacts between the humanities faculties at the UvA and Tsinghua, funded by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), which are highly appreciated by the

Tsinghua University management. My personal experience is one of intellectual benefit, shared insights and friendship. Last year, the School of Humanities was re-established, and it now consists of philosophy, Chinese language and literature, foreign languages and literature, and history. Being the dean, I am conscious of the new challenges ahead of me. Remaining open-minded and emphasising international collaboration has been one of our major policies. As long as we keep sharing opinions with our international colleagues, I can judge what to do. We are determined to further strengthen our current ties with Amsterdam and expand it to literature, history and other subjects in the future.

Convivial China

JEROEN DE KLOET



Jeroen de Kloet is professor of Globalisation Studies and director of the Amsterdam Centre for Globalisation Studies at the UvA. His work focuses on cultural globalisation, in particular in East Asia. Recent publications include *China with a Cut – Globalisation, Urban Youth and Popular Music* (2010) and, with Yiu Fai Chow, *Sonic Multiplicities: Hong Kong Pop and the Global Circulation of Sound and Image* (2013).

Received wisdom about national cultures erodes fast in contacts with China, especially when conviviality builds trust. 'The freedom to experiment, to start anew, to move ahead, fills Beijing with energy that is increasingly lacking in Western Europe.'

My first visit to China was as a student, to Xiamen, in 1992. I envied scholars who had witnessed the Cultural Revolution and other historical events. By now, 1992 is something more like a narrative, or a legend. Students born around that year are curious to hear about the 'Foreign Exchange Certificates' and 'Friendship Stores' for 'foreign friends'.

Mentioning 1992 also looks like a claim to knowledge: if I was there back then, and so frequently since, I must know a lot about China! Such claims are to be deeply mistrusted. Not only from a theoretical perspective (think of Foucault and Said), but also in the light of my own experiences.

Back in 1992, I found China authoritarian. I considered rock music, the topic of my research, the sound of revolt. Later, I became confused when freedom turned out to be a slippery notion, and revolt was soaked in boredom. The ease with which my friends in Beijing start businesses, move elsewhere or change jobs contrasts with the slow and highly regulated paths of change in Amsterdam. The freedom to experiment, to



start anew, to move ahead, fills Beijing with energy that is increasingly lacking in Western Europe.

I frequently work with Chinese colleagues. In the mid-1990s, with the Communication University of China, I set up a large survey into the lives, media habits and values of China's youth, with 650 youngsters in Beijing, something I could never have done on my own. Ten years later we worked with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to grasp Internet uses in China. Recently, intensive contacts in Hong Kong have resulted in a co-authored book on Hong Kong pop culture, and one forthcoming on youth in China. In all this, I work closely with research assistants for many days and months. This makes new friends, but also enriches research, adding complexity, inserting doubts, and generating better questions.

In fact, with each statement about China, its inverse pops up. The Chinese care more about their family? I doubt it, thinking about some of my friends' complex family problems and eventual escape. China is deeply Confucian? More Chinese are guided by Taiwanese pop and Korean drama. Journalists may dislike nuances and politicians prefer clarity. Yet, I value doubt. It enables my friendships, it allows me to place people outside their cultural frame. I doubt my friends' Chineseness as much as my own Dutchness.

Writers of popular books thrive on fixed cultural ideas: name cards offered with two hands, the head of a fish facing the door, and personal relations so important that a Chinese term is needed: *guanxi*. I wish to protest! Such assertions harden cultural differences,

rendering personal engagement more difficult.

Instead, I have learnt that national cultures matter less than one might expect. My Beijing friends get up in the morning with questions like 'What to wear today,' 'Should I quit my job,' 'What to eat tonight,' 'Am I still in love'... This may be disappointingly mundane, but beyond the exoticising orientalist gaze, China proves *gezellig*, or convivial.

This mundane observation also relates to my research. Conviviality seems pivotal for successful cooperation, as it brings trust, commitment and fun. Joint research relies on individuals, not institutions. Conviviality is an underestimated factor, and it depends on people, much less on culture. This may inspire future research: how can we, with our Chinese colleagues, move beyond simplistic East versus West binaries, and think culture as contingent and relational?

Nodes in a global network

LIANG GUO

Whether in Law, the MediaLAB or other areas, the deputy director of International Relations at Shanghai Jiao Tong University foresees a sustainable partnership with the UvA, as fellow members of a worldwide network of research-intensive universities.



Liang Guo is Deputy Director of International Relations at Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU). She is in charge of the drafting and implementation of the international strategy of the university, and represents SJTU in the Managers' Group of Universitas21.

Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU) is a well-known name in international circles. What is the nature of its relationship with the University of Amsterdam (UvA)? 'Our initial contacts were established when the UvA joined the international network Universitas21 (U21) in 2010. U21 is a global network of research-intensive universities, currently comprising 27 member universities from all over the world. U21 helps further the bilateral relations between its members by providing a platform for collaboration and exchange of best practices, and in doing so, we are building incremental levels of mutual trust and developing ideas for cooperation. Thus, our work and interactions in the context of U21 have contributed greatly to establishing an inter-institutional relationship between our two universities.'

Both SJTU and the UvA have had the privilege of hosting U21 events for students and early career researchers. When SJTU hosted the Early Career Research Workshop in December 2012, in which



two UvA researchers participated, and in July 2013, three SJTU students and one staff member visited Amsterdam, as the UvA hosted the U21 Undergraduate Research Conference focusing on Urban Challenges. ‘These exchanges prove to be very fruitful, and over and above that, the resulting personal contacts between researchers and students are key to furthering our bilateral relations.’

What are the future plans for SJTU-UvA cooperation?

‘At present, personal links have been established between researchers on both sides. That is very important. At the institutional level, we are currently exploring areas for mutual benefit, in which SJTU and the UvA share an interest. One example of such an area is Law: the SJTU KoGuan Law School and the Amsterdam Law School are keen to develop collaborative research and the exchange of students and staff.’

Furthermore, in September 2012 the UvA hosted a delegation headed by SJTU’s vice-president for Research and International Affairs, Professor Zhang Wenjun, accompanied by vice-president Wang Yao and other representatives of the National Engineering Research Center for Digital Television. The delegates spoke very highly of the research and inspiring learning environment of the MediaLAB Amsterdam that they visited. When I asked vice-president Wang Yao for his opinion, he had this to say:

‘The University of Amsterdam is really a beautiful and historical place. We visited the MediaLAB Amsterdam in September 2012. We met the coordinator Gijs Gootjes and other researchers during our visit, where four recent projects were presented, such as Local Square Advisor and Interactive News Formats. I was impressed by the wonderful combination of Media, Technology and Design, which usually can’t be achieved in

one single lab in China. Complicated user requirements were transformed into simple technical solutions with friendly and fashionable visual interfaces. Moreover, all the projects were application-oriented and had some pilot commercial deployment in real social life. We all felt this was an amazing visit to a wonderful university.’

All in all, it is clear that there is sufficient common ground for shaping a sustainable bilateral partnership between SJTU and the UvA.

The secret to teaching in China

THIJS KOUWENHOVEN



Thijs Kouwenhoven has been a research professor at the Kavli Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Peking University, since 2009. He took a Master’s degree in Leiden and his PhD at the UvA in 2006, and then worked at the University of Sheffield. In 2009, he was awarded the International Astronomical Union PPGF fellowship prize. His research focus is the formation and evolution of planetary systems orbiting stars other than our own Sun.

A young Dutch astrophysicist who was recently awarded the third prize in an all-Beijing University Teaching Competition tells us about making a career in China at one of the world’s scientific hubs of astrophysics, the Kavli Institute at Peking University.

When asked what drove a promising young astrophysicist in 2009 to apply for a professorship in China, Kouwenhoven explains: ‘Whilst at the time that I applied for a faculty position at Peking University (PKU) employment of foreign researchers was still rare in China, I saw an interesting opportunity in this emerging scientific nation. I was well aware of the economic growth China was experiencing and I noted a parallel trend in the development of Science and Technology in China. I felt that I might be able to grab opportunities in establishing a solid position in the field of astrophysics that I would not be able to achieve so quickly if I stayed in Europe. I decided to apply for one of the Bairen Research Professorships at the Kavli Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics (KIAA) at PKU.’

The prospect of working at a newly opened Kavli Institute was a very attractive one, as only six Kavli Institutes in the field of astrophysics have been established worldwide. The KIAA aims to promote basic research in astrophysics and cosmology in China, which meets the highest international standards. The KIAA has been very successful in creating a truly international research environment, with approximately 50% of the faculty



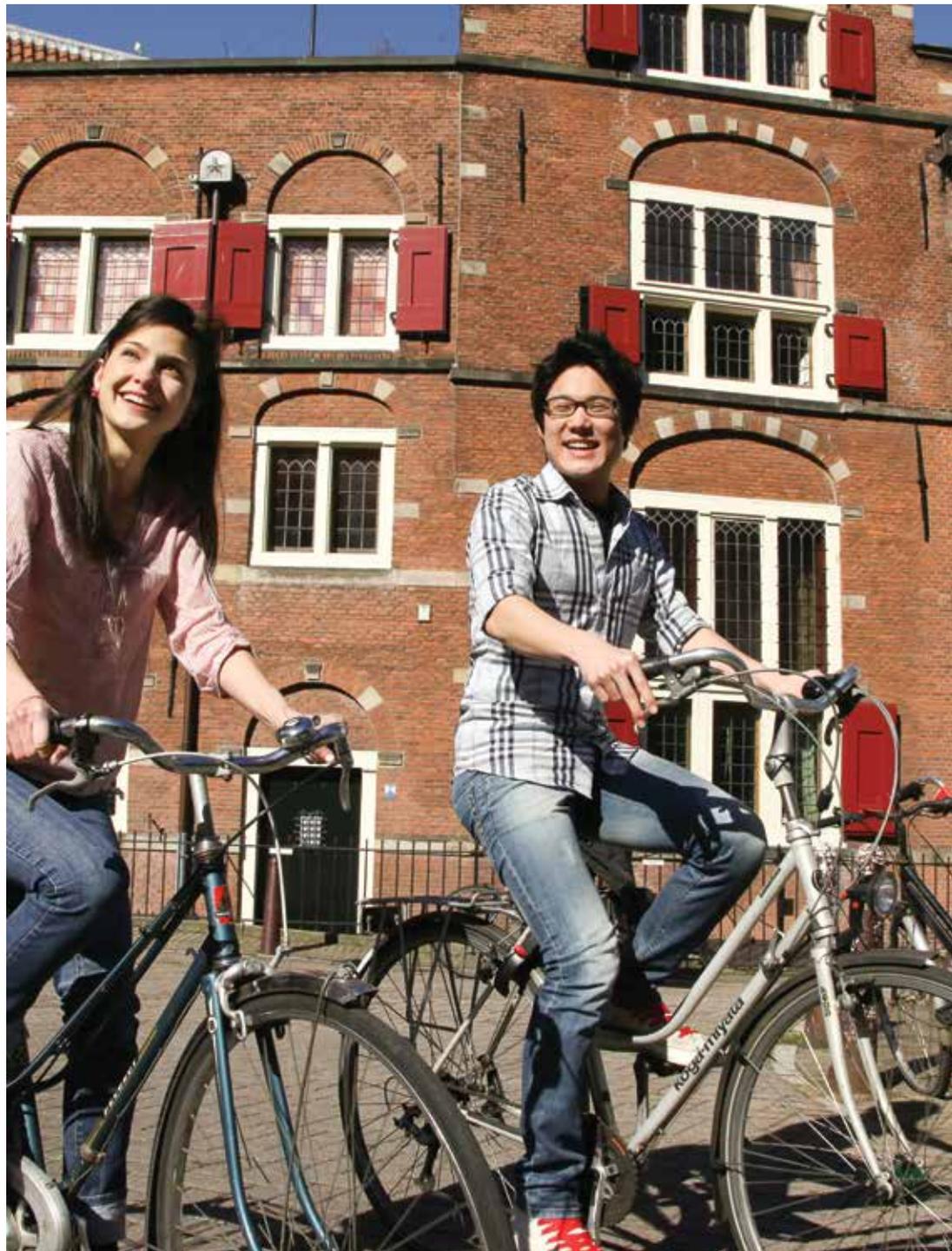
coming from abroad and the remaining 50% comprising mainly Chinese nationals who obtained their PhD degrees abroad.'

Kouwenhoven is convinced he made an excellent choice by coming to Beijing: 'The students are fantastic! Universities like PKU and Tsinghua University are amongst the top educational institutes in China and recruit only the top students from all over China and this group is highly motivated to pursue the best possible results. Furthermore, the Chinese research landscape is very stimulating for those seeking to undertake research, with ample funding available from Chinese research funding organisations.'

At the end of 2012, Kouwenhoven was the first foreigner ever to win a prize at the PKU Young Teachers Competition, when he was awarded the second prize in the science and engineering category. Following this remarkable result, Kouwenhoven advanced to a broader competition for teachers organised by the Beijing Municipality, where he won the third prize in a competition spanning all scientific disciplines. Kouwenhoven says that there is no particular secret to his teaching skills: 'It helps that students are very keen to learn about astronomy and they are eager to participate in classes taught in English, because this is a

relatively new phenomenon in China. Finally, I still benefit from a course I once took at the Anton Pannekoek Institute at the UvA, which was taught by an actress. She explained to my fellow PhD students and myself that teaching is as much about giving a performance as it is about the subject matter. That is one of the takeaways from my time at the UvA.'

As far as the future of the UvA's co-operation with China is concerned, Kouwenhoven points out that the competition is fierce, with many foreign institutions coming to China seeking collaborations. However, alumni and other colleagues are important contacts who can help open doors for their alma mater, as long as the visiting universities are able to clearly state what they have to offer to their Chinese partner universities.



Complex systems and cultural diversity

SHAN MEI

A researcher at one of China's top universities talks about modelling the dynamics of infectious diseases, and learning much more besides in Amsterdam.



Shan Mei is an associate professor at the Department of Simulation Engineering of the College of Information Systems and Management, National University of Defence Technology in Changsha. Her interests include complex systems, and complex-network-based and agent-based modelling and simulation of infectious diseases. In 2008, she spent a year on her PhD project at the UvA, under the supervision of Professor Peter Slood.

What can you tell us about a national defence university?

'The National University of Defence Technology (NUDT) is a key university that is under the dual supervision of both the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Education in China. NUDT has been selected in the two national plans for stimulating the development of Chinese higher education, known as "project 211" and "project 985". Through the years, NUDT has developed into a comprehensive university covering disciplines ranging from science and engineering to economics, law and history.'

What makes a young researcher based at a national key university in China decide to move to Amsterdam?

'My plans for my PhD research fitted in well with the focus of Peter Slood's research group in Amsterdam and this is why I was invited to do part of my PhD project at the UvA. The aim of my research project was to understand the dynamics of the spread of infectious diseases (HIV and the influenza virus

H1N1) by mimicking the epidemiological system, investigating the characteristics of human contacts/ infections and evaluating the impact of mitigating policies.’

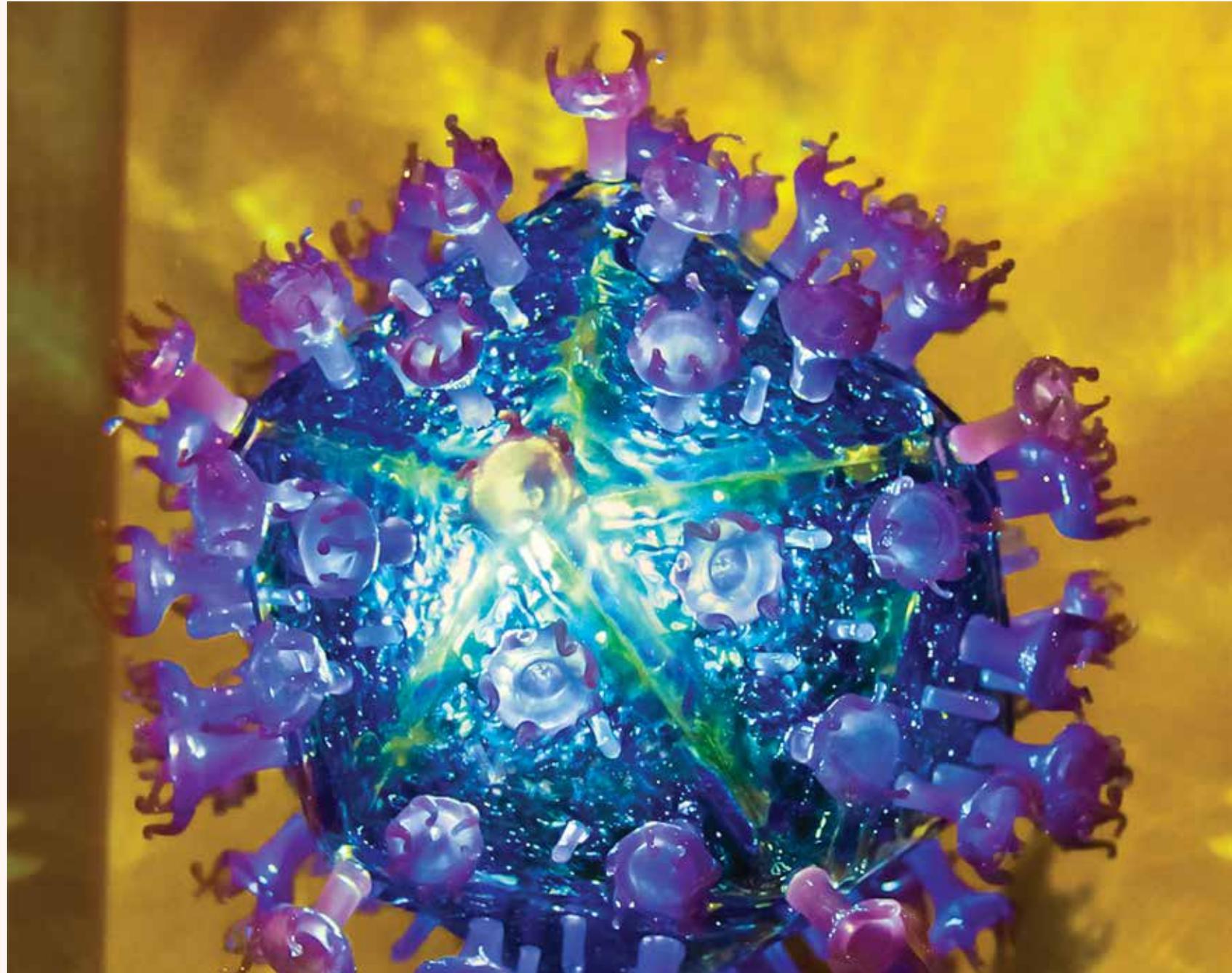
In addition to the contents of the research, I was also interested in the Netherlands and keen to learn more about the Dutch culture and society.

What were your most memorable experiences in Amsterdam?

‘One thing is the research culture at the UvA. I rapidly developed into a stronger researcher, capable of writing scientific articles and engaging in fruitful interactions with colleagues. I could always count on the advice of colleagues, both in relation to work-related questions as well as personal matters. On a more personal note, the multicultural and diverse range of cultures in the Netherlands greatly contributed to broadening my perspectives on life and helped increase my understanding of other people. All in all, my stay at the UvA has had an enormous impact on my personal development, more than I could have imagined before coming to Amsterdam.’

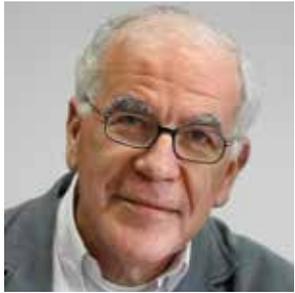
What will be the future links between the NUDT and the UvA?

‘Of course, I hope we will be able to continue our collaborations and be successful in jointly applying for research funding for future projects. More specifically, I would very much like to contribute to setting up bilateral cooperation between NUDT and the UvA, in particular in the field of joint PhD training.’



The importance of international cooperation

DICK SWAAB



Dick Swaab is a former director of the Netherlands Institute for Brain Research, and founder and director of the Netherlands Brain Bank. He is emeritus professor of Neurobiology at the UvA, and heads a research group at the Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience. His research covers topics ranging from Alzheimer's, depression and obesity (in particular Prader-Willi syndrome) to schizophrenia, gender identity and sexual orientation.

In this interview, a prominent brain researcher and author of well-known scientific and general publications talks about his longstanding association with China since 1989. It included supervising 36 Chinese PhD students, some already with their own PhD students. 'They are my scientific grandchildren.'

A chance concurrence of circumstances first brought Dick Swaab into contact with China. In 1989, Zhou Jiangning wrote a letter ('before emails'), asking if he could conduct his PhD research in the Netherlands. After Swaab expressed interest on the condition that he found funding, Zhou obtained a scholarship from the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC). This was the beginning of a fruitful scientific collaboration leading to a major article in the journal *Nature* in 1995, which revealed that genetically male transsexuals have female brain structures.

Zhou Jiangning is now a professor at Hefei University of Science and Technology and one of the leading figures in neuroscience in China. He introduced Dick Swaab to China and this 'fanning of the fires' led to four guest professorships. He currently holds the Chao Kuang Piu Chair at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou. Swaab has supervised 36 Chinese PhD students since 1989 and collaborations with Chinese scientists have resulted in articles in *Brain*, *Molecular Psychiatry*, *Archives of General Psychiatry* and *Nature*.



Dick Swaab's current focus is the newly launched *Chinese Brain Bank, Zhejiang*. This is a bold venture in a country where post-mortem examinations are frowned upon, due to the belief that a body should be left intact before cremation. However, Swaab is enthusiastic about the project's chances of success. A Chinese pathologist trained at the Netherlands Brain Bank is now back in Zhejiang and a Chinese psychiatrist is currently receiving training in Amsterdam.

When asked what sets Chinese scientists apart, Swaab notes how they excel at brain research at the molecular and cellular level. They are now among the world's best in this field. Swaab is also highly complimentary of the role of the Chinese government in stimulating scientific endeavour. 'It's very refreshing to work in an environment where research is stimulated by the government, whereas I have only experienced cutbacks.'

Prof. Swaab is also extremely impressed by Chinese students. 'They are very good researchers, as well as being hard-working and highly motivated young people who work through the weekend, investing more time than students of other nationalities. Still, there is also a note of caution: Chinese students have a tendency to be too subservient.'

'Hierarchy is very strong in China. However, innovation is more important than politeness. The best students are those who cause problems and cast doubt on things.'

One of Swaab's current Chinese PhD students, Juan Zhao, also talks of the particular benefits of studying in the Netherlands. 'Scientists here are open and willing to communicate,' she says. 'They tell you whatever they know. There are 22 nationalities in our centre and every Friday there is a symposium, which we don't have so regularly in China.' Swaab warmly endorses this international outlook, which he feels is vital to genuinely innovative science. Talking about the legacy of his long-standing relationship with China, he ends on a nostalgic note: 'It has gradually become a big family. My PhD students are my scientific children. The people who have become professors, of which there are 16, also have their PhD students. They are my scientific grandchildren. It is beautiful.'

Beyond the safe confines of Academia

HUAXIN HUANG



Huaxin Huang is a professor of Philosophy, and currently dean of the School of Humanities at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, as well as director of its Centre for the Study of Language and Cognition. He also holds the positions of associate chair of China's Logic Association, deputy director of the Committee for Semiotics, and chair of the Zhejiang Logic Association.

The dean of Humanities at Zhejiang University talks about interdisciplinarity, and outreach to the bustling business world of Zhejiang province. Cooperation with the UvA is blossoming fast. 'Working with Amsterdam means working with the whole world.'

When people talk about the vital importance of interdisciplinarity these days, it is nothing new to us. Philosophers and linguists were already working together closely at Zhejiang University in the 1990s and this trend has spread ever since. For instance, in our humanities faculty, the Centre for Logic, Language and Cognition (CLLC) brings together researchers from many fields, including cognitive science, computer science, and artificial intelligence, all interested in understanding what it is that makes us humans intelligent, interactive beings.

But there is much more to the world than merely conducting research within the safe confines of the university. In our view, academics also have a social mission and at the humanities faculty that means, amongst other things, the realities of daily communication, as well as improving people's understanding and performance. Zhejiang province, an industrial hub of China, which has long been a centre for its international business outreach, provides an ideal setting for this. CLLC's general courses on reasoning and argumentation attract some 1,200 people annually, many of them with jobs in administration or management. The lectures are well received and we



received the annual innovation prize of Zhejiang province for outstanding contributions to business and society in 2008.

Our cooperation with the University of Amsterdam (UvA) started only recently, following a meeting in a quiet villa where Mao used to stay and study English, now marked by a commemorative rock. But it is blossoming fast. We host UvA professor Robert van Rooij on a regular basis, who teaches and conducts joint research in the field of language and cognition, and we have sent some of our best junior faculty and students to Amsterdam to absorb your research culture in various fields, such as the work being conducted by Professor Van Eemeren in argumentation theory.

But we are also learning a lot from the famous organisational skills of our Dutch colleagues. This coming October, we will host the fourth International Workshop on Logic, Rationality and Interaction (LORI-IV), a meeting of researchers from China and the rest of the world initiated by the UvA and some Chinese universities in 2007. Working with Amsterdam means working with the whole world.

Finally, Western readers who know their own classics will appreciate that truth belongs together with beauty. There is a Chinese saying: 'Up above there is Heaven; down below there are Suzhou and Hangzhou.' Zhejiang University's home city, Hangzhou, is deeply embedded in Chinese poetry and novels, with stirring legends attached to its famous West Lake and the bridges of its causeways. If you want to collaborate with Chinese researchers on the truth, and at the same time love beauty, just come and visit.

Building a community in algebraic geometry

GERARD VAN DER GEER



Gerard van der Geer is professor of Mathematics at the UvA, with a main interest in algebraic and arithmetic geometry. He is a member of the Scientific Committee of the Max-Planck-Institut für Mathematik in Bonn and many other organisations. He chairs the Foundation Compositio Mathematica, has initiated conference series like the 'Texel' and 'Schiermonnikoog' meetings, and is a frequent visitor at research institutes worldwide.

At Tsinghua's fast-growing Mathematics Institute MSC, a small colony of Dutch algebraic geometers is forming, with a UvA professor deeply involved. After an intensive stay in 2012, 'four gifted Chinese students asked me to be their graduation thesis supervisor'.

When the new Mathematical Sciences Center (MSC) at Tsinghua University in Beijing invited me to come and visit for three months in the autumn of 2012, I had no hesitation in accepting their offer. These days in China, every effort is put into promoting excellence in mathematics at the main universities, and the resulting atmosphere of a country on the way up contrasts positively with the somewhat depressed one that currently hangs over our country, where the government talks about innovation while shrinking the budgets.

I had the privilege of living on the campus of Tsinghua University, located on the former site of the Qing Dynasty royal gardens in the north of Beijing, which has now been transformed into a haven for science. The MSC was founded by China's most eminent mathematician S.T. Yau. I was conducting research and lecturing on algebraic geometry for a class of gifted and very motivated students. It is MSC policy to bring in prominent Western researchers and this has been quite successful. In particular, a small colony of Dutch algebraic geometers is forming. My colleague Looijenga from Utrecht has accepted a full-time position at Tsinghua, and the famous



Dutch algebraic geometry school might well become a Dutch-Chinese one.

Tsinghua and other leading Chinese universities have long sent students abroad to get a PhD, especially at the best universities in the US. Although this policy has borne fruits, it has drawbacks in that the best students may not return in the end. But this is changing now and the MSC recently started its own graduate programme, stimulating their students by bringing them into direct contact with first-class research researchers hired from the West.

After such lively encounters, lasting relationships are built. While at the MSC, four gifted Chinese students asked me to be their graduation thesis supervisor. As a result, they stayed for three months at the UvA during the spring of this year, in order to work with me and write their thesis, all paid for by Tsinghua. It was a pleasure in every way.

Tsinghua provides apartments on campus for visitors and their spouses, and living there is an experience in itself. Situated in the lush greenery of the former Imperial Gardens, the campus also serves as a town where 30,000 students and university employees live, which means a diverse mix of people populate a campus full of life. There are small shops, people do their morning exercises and evening dances on the streets, and fruit sellers try to persuade you to buy their wares. Traffic is dominated by bicycles, a strong link with life in Holland, and while bicycle size and traffic rules may seem foreign to us, there is one striking similarity. One day, my faithful bike disappeared and when asked for an explanation, my students laughed and said that bikes get stolen all the time. This citizen

of Amsterdam then felt even more at home.

MSC has asked me to come back. I am looking forward to spending my autumns in Beijing in the coming years and contributing to the creation of a strong Chinese research community in algebraic geometry.

Shedding light on social justice

WANHONG ZHANG



Wanhong Zhang is senior fellow at the Netherlands China Law Centre. He earned his PhD in Law from the Wuhan University School of Law, where he now holds the position of associate professor of Jurisprudence. He has mainly been working on legal issues related to human rights, public interest and civil society.

Truly understanding the realities of the law in China involves legal, social and anthropological expertise. A stay at the Netherlands China Law Centre was a key stimulus for Professor Zhang. 'Sino-Dutch academic exchange is reciprocal and win-win.'

In 2011, I spent an unforgettable two months in Amsterdam for an NWO-WOTRO project. I still treasure the experience, which expanded my academic horizons, enhanced my ability to engage in scientific research and enriched my life greatly. During my visit, I communicated extensively and exchanged ideas with professors at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). I was impressed by their solid academic foundation and moved by their hospitality. I learned a great deal, especially through my interactions with Professor Benjamin van Rooij and his team. Under his leadership, scholars from different disciplines and cultural backgrounds are engaging in meaningful research at the Netherlands China Law Centre. The active academic atmosphere at the Centre and the distinguished tradition of the UvA make the Centre an ideal base for Chinese legal studies.

In the joint research I am still undertaking with Professor van Rooij's research group, my team in Wuhan, China, has obtained a lot of experience on how to integrate sociological and anthropological methods into our human rights and legal research. In this way, we shed light on the conditions and strategies of community legal empowerment and social



mobilisation among disadvantaged groups. The socio-legal studies in our joint research project, approached through rural water pollution cases will draw the attention of scholars from different disciplines to work together on specific legal issues, help activists to understand the contextual power dynamics and to realise social justice with local fellow actors. The research also benefits professors and students in our law school in terms of solid data, vivid narratives, inspiring perspectives and, most importantly, the idea of empirical studies and 'action research' with the people concerned.

China is changing rapidly in many ways – economically, politically, socially and culturally. Many issues require a response from scholars. However, due to language skills, research limitations and other restrictions, Chinese scholars do not yet make enough contributions to international theoretical debates. The experience gained by visiting renowned overseas universities such as the UvA can help Chinese scholars to participate in international academic discussion. At the same time, Dutch scholars can engage directly with China's social changes. Sino-Dutch academic exchange is reciprocal and win-win. I am willing to continue contributing to the enhancement of academic exchanges and cooperation between China and the Netherlands, especially between the UvA and Wuhan University.



The philosophy behind practical contacts

MARTIN STOKHOF

Cooperation with China is a main target for the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and also for the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). In this interview, the Chairman of the Joint KNAW-NWO China Committee talks about his general view of what is happening today, as well as his personal motivations as a philosopher interested in cultural contacts.



How does an Amsterdam philosopher and semanticist of natural language become involved with China?

‘I was invited to the department of philosophy at Tsinghua University in Beijing by Professor Wang Lu, whose research interests in philosophy of language are close to mine, but there must have been a discrete go-between, probably one of our Chinese ILLC students.’

But was there more than just social pressure?

‘I went for a reason. From my youth I had been interested in Chinese culture, inspired by my father who had a sizeable number of works on Chinese philosophy, literature and history in his library. Also, I once co-taught a course with Karel van der Leeuw, a pioneering UvA specialist in classical Chinese philosophy and language, on linguistic and logical issues from classical Chinese and modern Western perspectives. So when the invitation came, I jumped at the chance.’

Martin Stokhof is professor of Philosophy of Language at the University of Amsterdam. He studied philosophy and linguistics, and has worked on various topics in formal semantics and philosophy. He is a former director of the Institute for Logic, Language and Computation at the UvA, former chairman of the Humanities Council of NWO, and currently chairs the joint KNAW-NWO China Committee.

What is your cooperation about?

‘Professor Wang Lu and I share an interest in the origins of the analytic tradition in the writings of Frege, Wittgenstein and Russell, and in contemporary theories of semantics. Wang Lu has been very influential in China in bringing these themes to the attention of a large philosophical community. His historical interests go back to classical Greek philosophy, in particular to Aristotle. My own concern with these issues has taken a pragmatic twist, which, interestingly, has more in common with the classical Chinese tradition.’

Where is this encounter leading?

‘It is a distinctive feature of philosophy that, where in many sciences the past is just that, in philosophy there is hardly any contemporary school of thought or systematic set of issues that isn’t tied up in some way with the history of the discipline. As a result, cooperation in philosophy across traditions is more complicated, but very rewarding: shared research also involves coming to understand one another’s traditions and styles of thinking.’

You are also chair of the joint KNAW-NWO committee on China cooperation. What do you see going on today?

‘For Dutch research to continue to thrive, ties with China are crucial. China is already an economic and political world power, it will also be a major player in research and technology within 10 to 15 years. China aims to turn its manufacturing economy into a knowledge based one, and to that end it invests heavily in education, training and research, with ambitious programmes that are based on a long-term vision. The leading universities in China, such as Tsinghua, Peking University or Fudan, want to become top-ranked in the world, and the Ministries of Science and Technology, and Education, and the National Science Foundation of China, along with the Chinese Academies of Sciences and of Social

Sciences make long-term investments. China will become a major provider of scientific talent and a hub of advanced scientific infrastructures. For a small country like the Netherlands it is of crucial importance to maintain ties to these resources.’

What would this mean for the UvA?

‘The focus of Chinese research is less and less exclusively on natural and life sciences and technological fields. Collaborative research between China



and the Netherlands on agriculture and food, water management or energy is well-established. But also major social developments are studied intensively, such as the future of the welfare state, urbanisation, population change, healthcare, or the legal system. And the humanities will soon join. In all these areas, there are common concerns and opportunities for new fruitful collaborations for the broad research university that the UvA wants to be, and I am happy to play my own role here in the area of philosophy.’

What is your most vivid experience of staying in China?

‘That’s a tough one! It is hard to choose among so many fascinating things. Let me just mention my sense of amazement: that China is so huge, with so many people, such enormous cities, and so many of them, with an immense countryside that I have, unfortunately, only seen the tiniest fraction of yet. And yet, somehow, despite all that, it works.’

HAIFENG NI



Haifeng Ni was born in Zhoushan, China, and currently lives in Amsterdam. His work stems from an interest in cultural systems of exchange, language, and production, including inspirations from the history of Sino-Dutch trade. An installation on a time line through archeological finds is on the shortlist of the artwork competition for stations of the Metro Noordzuidlijn in Amsterdam.

Unfinished self portrait IV



More than flowers and milk

THOMAS JIN



Wei Huang (Thomas) Jin is deputy general manager of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (Europe S.A., Amsterdam Branch). Having served at the ICBC for some 22 years, he is an experienced professional in international banking business and administration. He is an expert member of ICC (International Chamber of Commerce), the China Banking Commission and ICC DOCDLEX (Documentary Credit Dispute Resolution Expertise) Paris.

The deputy general manager of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), which has established its European headquarters in Amsterdam, talks about the temptations of the Netherlands for Chinese companies.

The Netherlands is a beautiful and charming country, well known for the diligence of its people and its immense economic vitality. Dutch people are really very kind and open-minded towards Chinese people, as I have experienced during my stay here for the last two and half years. For the numerous Chinese companies located here, the Netherlands is not only full of flowers and milk, but also endowed with a number of irresistible temptations:

- the Netherlands embraces a long-standing, fine and proud tradition in trade and finance dating back to the 'Golden Age' in the seventeenth century. It is easy to find a business partner in the Netherlands, as many Dutchmen are business masters;
- the Dutch state has a sound financial standing, keeping its triple-A rating in spite of the storms of the financial crisis; the Dutch unemployment and inflation rates have been among the lowest in the EU for a long time;
- the Netherlands has a very glamorous image in various sectors, such as electronics, chemicals, new energy, shipping, transportation and agriculture, serving as an excellent



- complement to China's industries;
- the Netherlands boasts 12 Fortune 500 corporations, which is really remarkable given the size of the country; there are well-developed and advanced logistics systems, ensuring the country is well connected with the rest of Europe, well-positioned to function as the 'Gateway to Europe';
 - the Dutch labour force are well-educated, highly-qualified, dedicated and multi-lingual, and speak excellent English, which makes it for us Chinese easy and convenient to communicate with them;
 - there are preferential tax measures for both companies and private individuals, which are very attractive to foreign investors;
 - the efficiency and transparency of the Dutch government is really praiseworthy. Our experiences with the Dutch embassy in China, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), the City of Amsterdam and other governmental bodies have been very pleasing;
 - the Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency (NFIA) and the *amsterdam inbusiness* agency help and assist Chinese companies a lot in setting up offices in the Netherlands. They even provide Chinese websites and Chinese bulletins and brochures, which are not commonly seen in other European countries;
 - moreover, the clean, nice and pleasant environment in the Netherlands is refreshing and a source of great enjoyment during our stay here.

Modernity with Chinese characteristics

MICHIEL LEEZENBERG



Michiel Leezenberg teaches in the Department of Philosophy and in the Master's programme 'Islam in the Modern World' at the University of Amsterdam. Among his interests are comparative and non-Western philosophy, the methodology and history of the humanities, and the intellectual history of the early modern Ottoman Empire.

Modernity has many roots, writes a UvA expert on the history of Islamic and Asian cultures. Encounters with cultures like China, and paying attention to language, literature and intellectual life at all its locations, may challenge European views of the world.

Everybody knows about the monuments of classical Chinese civilisation, from Confucianism and Taoist-inspired art to the Great Wall, but how much do we know about modernity in China? This question links up with my own intellectual-historical interest in the comparative history of modernity. We are well informed about the scientific, economic and political dimensions of the modern world: the scientific revolution, the rise of industrial capitalism and the emergence of the nation state based on popular sovereignty. We know rather less, however, about the linguistic dimensions of modernity. Yet, in the eighteenth century, new literate use of various vernacular languages emerged: in Europe, German and Russian emerged as languages of learning and literature; in the Ottoman empire, various languages spoken by Muslims and Christians alike acquired a new written status; and in India, Urdu replaced both Sanskrit and Persian. Thus, the eighteenth century shows an almost worldwide process of vernacularisation.

Almost – but not quite. Early Qing China did not experience a similar rise of the spoken language. It was not until the turn of the twentieth century that the modern dialect of Beijing came



to replace the classical written language, Wenyan, as the language of literature, education and administration. This revolutionary shift was pioneered by literary authors like, most famously, Lu Xun. Moreover, it also followed an internal dynamic; it was not simply imposed by Western powers, nor was it merely a reaction to Western challenges. This distinct path makes the Chinese experience a fascinating case for comparative studies of modernity.

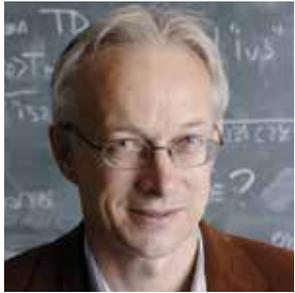
Although my own expertise lies with the linguistic modernisation of the Ottoman empire, I was happy to confront my still budding thoughts on such questions with the Chinese experience during my stay at Tsinghua. In encounters with Chinese colleagues and students, a good many historical, conceptual and normative assumptions of existing Western theories are quickly unmasked as little more than ethnocentric prejudice. Famously, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas believes that a public sphere of cultural and political debate, as a crucial aspect of modern bourgeois democracy, is a uniquely Western European development. But Habermas, on the one hand,

overlooks the fact that the coffeehouse, the prime locus of the early modern public sphere, was in fact an Ottoman import to Europe; thus, he is blind to possible non-Western roots of Western modernity.

On the other hand, explicitly normative approaches like Habermas's cannot do full justice to interestingly different developments as in China. As has already been mentioned, the emergence of a Chinese vernacular public sphere has followed its own path; and, of course, modern Chinese sociability has centred around tea rather than coffee – at least until the recent arrival of the Starbucks chain. I find these questions a fruitful and challenging field of research, and I hope to continue learning from the exchange with Chinese colleagues and students. And, of course, in my spare time, I made a little literary pilgrimage to Lu Xun's house in downtown Beijing – a modest but fitting monument to the linguistic side of Chinese modernity.

Logic in a land of legend

JOHAN VAN BENTHEM



Johan van Benthem is University Professor of Logic at the University of Amsterdam and Henry Waldgrave Stuart Professor of Philosophy at Stanford University. He was a Distinguished Foreign Expert of the Chinese Ministry of Education at Tsinghua University until 2012, and will be a Chang Jiang National Professor starting in 2013. In 1996, he received the Spinoza Award from the NWO for his research.

Successful academic and cultural encounters require emotion, not just information, writes Johan van Benthem. On bridges with China in humour, literature, language and logic.

China was a land of legend in my youth, but my first encounter with the country came in 1966. The Chinese Embassy in The Hague was close to my high school and one night it offered us a screening of the film 'The East is Red', during which we all received a copy of the 'Little Red Book'. It is still on my shelf right here and must be a collector's item by now. So close to China for a Dutch kid, yet so far away. I bought a world receiver to listen to Radio Beijing, but the sound quality was poor and I felt the shortwaves bouncing all across Siberia to Holland. Today, I am a Foreign Expert for the Chinese Ministry of Education. My plane flies over the Silk Road, and mountains and deserts rush by where caravans used to plod.

My task is to foster contacts between China and the international community in creative research. That delicate culture is not just about studying hard and raw intelligence, but also about asking new questions, argumentation and apprenticeship. I teach all aspects, using methods ranging from intensive seminars and workshops to drinking ceremonies and mountain hikes climbing the Fenghuanling Stairway to Heaven. One difference with the West is the Chinese view of teacher-student relations



as parent-child ties. This is warm, at times moving, but it can stifle independence.

My own research is about reasoning, communication and social interaction, and logic provides my methods. That is why I can work with Chinese colleagues: mutual understanding is easy at an abstract logical level. However, my themes connect with burning issues today. Compare practical Chinese thinking with the Western style, two of the greatest wines on Earth. Are they compatible? Can we really communicate? One test is humour: I love the Chinese sense of wit. It jumps across alleged cultural barriers like a spark of electricity.

And there are other close encounters. I once read an ancient text on Chinese logic in classical characters and suddenly felt close to colleagues from 2,500 years ago. Studying such texts, written at the time of Aristotle, shows how diverse history has been, giving the lie to 'monolithic cultures'. By the way, we have some of these texts only because ancient Chinese gentlemen left their libraries in their graves – an excellent habit that University of Amsterdam professors should copy.

Working with Tsinghua students on all this is a thrill. They come from the gruelling Chinese exam system and at the end of courses I ask them to share their paths from childhood, sometimes in small villages, to our campus. The stories are amazing. My students may look normal, but their lifetime of family sacrifices is not.

Nevertheless, my motives are not purely intellectual. Successful encounters require emotion, not just information. Like the West,

China has a high culture, including allusions to classical poems. The Chinese language is a wonderfully flexible device that has opened itself to the world through its modern vocabulary. Chinese novels speak to our hearts. But there is more than words. Take parks like Yuanmingyuan, where I love to sit and study, with their skilful blend of nature and culture. The way that they differ from European gardens says so much. And finally, there are the common people that build China's high-rises and drive its economy. The predominant emotion I feel when walking the streets is one of respect.

What will result from all this, the 'one world one dream' of the Beijing Olympics, or a clash of cultures? On that issue, all I will say is a word to my Chinese readers: what do those Westerners whisper to themselves in Beijing cafes? 'It is a privilege to be here now.'



Studying at the UvA

Intellectual hub

Founded in 1632, the University of Amsterdam is an intellectual hub. With over 100 nationalities represented among its 30,000 students and 5,000 staff members, it collaborates with countless national and international academic and research institutions. The UvA forges a meeting of minds for the advancement of education and science.

Open campus

The UvA is inextricably linked with the city of Amsterdam, sharing its tradition of tolerance, learning and innovation. It has long-standing ties with many cultural and educational institutes and the vibrant business community in the city, and is located on four open campuses within the city.

High standards, high rankings

Dutch higher education is renowned throughout the world for its high standards. With 12 Dutch universities in the top 200 of the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, the Netherlands occupies the third place worldwide (after the UK and the USA). The UvA itself is ranked between 50 and 100 in all of the internationally recognised university rankings (THE, Shanghai and QS).

Stimulating academic environment

In terms of education, our aim is to offer an inspiring international academic environment in which both staff and students can develop their talents optimally. Teaching and research are inextricably linked in all programmes at the UvA, with research-intensive training beginning early on in the Bachelor's phase.

Learning at the UvA

The UvA's academic tradition places great emphasis on active personal responsibility in learning and on critical independent thinking. Our aim is to stimulate personal interests and motivation.

Facts & figures

- 7 faculties: Humanities, Social and Behavioural Sciences, Economics and Business, Law, Science, Medicine and Dentistry
- 30,000 students
- 3,000 international students
- 7,000 first-year students
- 1,158 PhD students (50% international)
- 130 English-taught programmes

