WORKING PAPERS
Global and Area Studies

www.duei.de/workingpapers

German Overseas Institute (DÜI)
Research Unit: Institute of Asian Affairs

Challenging Party Hegemony: Identity Work in China's Emerging *Virreal* Places

Karsten Giese

N° 14 **January 2006**

DÜI

GOI-WP-14/2006

Working Papers Global and Area Studies

Edited by the German Overseas Institute (DÜI) in Hamburg.

The Working Papers Series serves to disseminate the research results of work in progress prior to publication to encourage the exchange of ideas and academic debate. An objective of the series is to get the findings out quickly, even if the presentations are less than fully polished. Inclusion of a paper in the Working Paper Series does not constitute publication and should not limit publication in any other venue. Copyright remains with the authors. When Working Papers are eventually accepted by or published in a journal or book, the correct citation reference and, if possible, the corresponding link will then be included in the Working Papers website at:
http://www.duei.de/workingpapers.

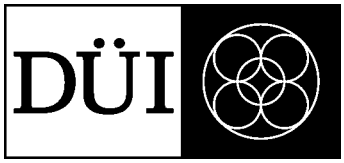
DÜI research unit responsible for this issue: Research Unit "Institute of Asian Affairs".

Editor of the Working Paper Series: Bert Hoffmann <hoffmann@iik.duei.de>
Copyright for this issue: © Karsten Giese

Editorial assistant and production: Verena Kohler

All Working Papers Global and Area Studies are available online and free of charge at http://www.duei.de/workingpapers. Working Papers can also be ordered in print. For production and mailing a cover fee of € 5 is charged. For orders or any requests please contact:
e-mail: workingpapers@duei.de
phone: ++49 – 40 – 42 82 55 48

Deutsches Übersee-Institut/German Overseas Institute
Neuer Jungfernstieg 21
D-20354 Hamburg
Germany
E-mail: duei@duei.de
Website: http://www.duei.de



GOI-WP-14/2006

Challenging Party Hegemony: Identity Work in China's Emerging *Virreal* Places

Abstract

The Chinese Communist Party has chosen to base the legitimacy of its rule on its performance as leading national power. Since national identity is based on shared imaginations of and directly tied to territory – hence place, this paper analyses both heterodox models for identification on the national and potentially competing place-based collective identities on the local level. This analysis, based on communication within a number of popular communication forums and on observation of behavior in the physical reality of today's urban China, shows that communication within the virtual and behavior in the real world are not separated realities but form a new *virreal* spatial continuum consisting of imagined places both online and offline. I argue that ties to place are stronger and identities constructed on shared imaginations of place are more salient the more direct the experience of place is – be the place real, virtual or virreal. Hence in China challenges to one-party rule will probably accrue from competing localized collective identities rather than from heterodox nationalism.

Key Words: China, Internet, political power, collective identity, nationalism, place, bulletin board system, online communication, online community

Paper presented at the International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS4), Shanghai, PRC, 20 to 24 August 2005 (extended version of December 2, 2005).

Dr. Karsten Giese
is research fellow at the Institute of Asian Affairs, Hamburg. He directed a larger research project on "Chinese Identities in the Internet Age", funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.
Contact: giese@ifa.duei.de · Website: www.duei.de/ifa/giese

Zusammenfassung

Parteihegemonie vor dem Ende? Identität und neue *virreale* Räume in China

Die Kommunistische Partei Chinas (KPCh) hat ihre politische Legitimität als allein herrschende Kraft an ihre Fähigkeit geknüpft, erfolgreich als führende nationale Kraft zu agieren. Da nationale Identität auf geteilten Imaginationen beruht und direkt an Territorium – also Lokalität – gebunden ist, werden in diesem Artikel heterodoxe Identifikationsmodelle auf nationaler und möglicherweise konkurrierende kollektive Identitäten auf lokaler Ebene untersucht. Diese Untersuchung auf der Grundlage einer qualitativen Analyse von populären Kommunikationsforen des chinesischen Internet sowie teilnehmender Beobachtung in ausgewählten städtischen Zentren Chinas verdeutlicht, dass Kommunikation im virtuellen und Verhalten im realen Raum keine voneinander getrennten Wirklichkeiten darstellen, sondern ein neuartiges *virreales* räumliches Kontinuum bestehend aus imaginierten Orten online und offline darstellen. Beziehungen zu einer gegeben Lokalität sind umso enger und darauf gründende Identitäten umso stärker, je direkter die Lokalität vom Individuum erfahren wird – unabhängig davon, ob es sich dabei um reale, virtuelle oder virreale Lokalitäten handelt. Als Folge wird die bestehende Einparteienherrschaft primär von Seiten konkurrierender lokalisierter Identitäten in Frage gestellt werden, nicht jedoch von heterodoxen Modellen nationaler Identifikation.

Article Outline

1. Introduction
2. Research Context and Methodology
3. Global or National? Internet with Chinese Characteristics
4. Chinese Bulletin Boards – Popular Places for Community Building
5. Withering National Identity
6. Local Identities and Sub-local Affiliation – Field for Identification and Collective Agency
7. Conclusion: Greatest Challenges from the Urban Grass Roots

1. Introduction

More than 25 years ago the Chinese Communist Party embarked on its path for modernization, reform and opening of the country to the outside world[1]. Since then, state and party have withdrawn in the course of economic reforms and political decentralization as normative authorities from a growing number of social contexts. As a result of these developments the CCP has – so far successfully – undergone a radical re-definition: In order to facilitate economic reform and to perpetuate one-party rule in China the party disembarked from communist orthodoxy, which already had lost much of its former attractiveness, and reconfigured itself as leading and only power of both economic modernization and national self-strengthening. Thus the Communist Party has tied its political fate to its performance as the leading nationalist power, its successful role in strengthening the country and hence has

[1] This article presents results of a larger research project on "Chinese Identities in the Internet Age", directed by Karsten Giese and generously funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. A research monograph is under preparation. The project is fully documented on the Internet: www.chinabbsresearch.de.

striven to construct a self-image based on shared national identity. As a result, heterodox discourses on national identity and the construction of alternative or competing collective identities on all social levels may create causes for political struggle and eventually challenge the existent power balance.

Growing social differentiation and diversification, on the other hand, have at least in theory also created new and growing spaces and opportunities for potential actors on the ideological stage and the construction of heterodox or competing sets of collective identities beyond the control of the CCP. In this context the introduction of the Internet as a global medium with its inherent capabilities of facilitating the free flow of ideas and many-to-many communication to China is widely believed to have added one of the greatest challenges to the current one-party rule in the People's Republic of China. There is, however, so far hardly any empirical evidence for this hypothesis and a second group of observers believes the Chinese Internet to be an instrument of oppression and ideological control. Hence the two core questions to be addressed in this paper are: Does the Internet in the PRC provide venues for heterodox discourses on national identity or the construction of alternative collective identities? If there is empirical evidence for competing identities, do they constitute a serious challenge to the Communist Party and its rule?

Following this introduction and the necessary notes on research context and methodology I give a brief overview on the state of Internet development in the PRC. I put emphasis on several specifically Chinese characteristics, namely the Chineseness of the medium and the matchless popularity services for interpersonal many-to-many communication enjoy among Chinese netizens. By adapting Oldenburg's theoretical concept of *Third Places* I then introduce the central idea of communication forums as imagined places for community building, which are embedded in offline social reality and together with places in the physical world form a new virreal spatial continuum for interpersonal social interaction and the independent construction of collective identities. The following chapter examines the central issue of national identity as one major collective identity based on shared imaginations of and directly tied to territory – or place. Here I discuss empirical findings, which suggest that nationalism as created by the party – though without competing alternative yet – constitutes a rather abstract concept needing strong stimuli in order to be invoked and otherwise lacking strong cohesive power. In the next chapter I contrast national identity with place-based collective identities on the local level. Providing empirical evidence from Internet communication and field work in China I argue that models of identification tied to localities, which can be directly experienced on a daily basis, possess stronger cohesive power and the potential for agency national identity is widely lacking. Hence I conclude in the final part that challenges for one-party rule in China will not accrue from heterodox models of national identi-

fication but rather from widespread negligence in this respect among the younger strata of society. The existing political balance of power, I argue, will not be challenged on the national level but by growing self-awareness of privileged social groups and identity construction based on both mutual interests and locality.

2. Research Context and Methodology

This article is part and result of a larger research project on identity construction on the Chinese Internet. Inspired by the open and circular research design of Grounded Theory approaches (Strauss 1994; Strauss and Corbin 1996; differently Glaser 1992) a research team has analyzed communication within several popular bulletin boards for a period of more than two years by applying qualitative sociological and ethnographic research tools that had in part to be developed for the purpose of conducting this research.[2]

So far, if Chinese bulletin boards were subject of academic research at all, authors have largely limited their attention to the famous Strong Country Forum (qiangguo luntan) maintained by the Party paper People's Daily (Renmin Ribao) (cf. Li et al. 2003). This BBS, however, is exceptional in a number of ways, not representative for the situation in general, and therefore had not been included in this study. In contrast to the Strong Country Forum the large majority of Chinese BBS does not have any political focus. They rather concentrate on lifestyle issues, entertainment, popular culture etc. and serve as platforms for exchanging information, news and opinions on a very wide range of topics, covering virtually all aspects of modern urban mainstream and even beyond. Although different from the non-representative conversations of the exceptional Strong Country Forum, communication within virtually all the other forums is nonetheless by far not apolitical.

Following several months of monitoring more than 60 communication forums we selected the four Chinese bulletin boards *Youth Topics* (cf. cyol 2002), *Fashion, Eating, Living, Motion* (cf. sina 2002), *Camp Emotion, Online Romance* (cf. sohu 2002a) and *Social Aspects, Exploring Culture* (cf. sohu 2002b) for in-depth analysis (detailed in Giese 2005d). These communication forums formally covered areas such as lifestyle, love and partnership as well as social, cultural and political issues. Although formally concentrating on certain topical fields, the actual contents were not at all limited to these predefined fields but rather covered a very

[2] For a more detailed discussion of theoretical concepts and the methodology employed in this research project, please compare Giese (2005d). I am indebted to my colleagues Britta Uihlein, Chin-Feng Teng, Julia Welsch, Shi Ming, Alexandra Dziuba and Pan Ching-ching who participated in this research project. Without their efforts and individual contributions at different stages of research this project would not have been the success it became.

wide range of topics and virtually all the issues that had to be regarded of broader interest in China during the time of observation.

Because the existence of a considerable amount of identity-related communication was one of the criteria for the selection of the BBS, the selection process was also used for preliminary explorations of possible categories through participant observation and the testing of suitable research methods for analyzing textual data. Potentially relevant dimensions of social identity reflected within BBS conversations were explored by taking the so-called Identity Family (Glaser 1978) as a starting point. Because indicators for dimensions of identity were more often than not – often unintentionally – hidden between the lines of identity-unrelated conversations as latent structures of meaning (Oevermann et al. 1979, 1987), sequential analysis as core method of Objective Hermeneutics was employed in order to reconstruct the relevant dimensions. Only main or peripheral statements should be recorded and classified respectively that contained semantic implications of first or second order. I.e. only indicators were to be encoded, which could be easily reconstructed from the recorded quotation when cross-checked by a second researcher possessing adequate phenomenon-related knowledge (cf. table 1). This open construction of categories (see Strauss 1994: 37ff., 58; Strauss/Corbin 1996: 43f.) led by basic or general knowledge (cf. Popper 1974: 85ff.; Früh 2001) resulted in dimensions – national identity and place-based identity being major ones – relevant to the research objective and made up the basis for the following in-depth analysis.[3]

Table 1: Example for encoding and interpretation of text sequences

thread topic	leaving the BBS
author	Eldest Female Disciple 007
quotation	It's just going back to the earlier peace and harmony of caring for the husband and educating the child, washing clothes and cooking, teaching and writing, earning money for the family[4]
argument	central
intention	neutral/expressive
dimension	gender
ascription	self-ascribed
interpretation	caring for a family is the destined role for a woman

[3] The relevant dimensions of individual and collective identities, which were identified through open coding are: **individual**, **gender**, **age group**, **ethnicity**, **culture**, **nation**, **locality**, **religion** and **ideology**, **political institution**, **socio-economical strata**, **formal** and **informal group**. These dimensions constituted the systematic categories for further analysis (cf. Giese 2005d).

[4] In the original data bank the quotations were recorded in Chinese and not translated in order to avoid distortions by potentially interpretative translation.

In-depth analysis of communication was conducted by – normally a contradiction in itself – reconciling Objective Hermeneutics (Oevermann et al. 1979, 1987) with Qualitative Content Analysis (see Mayring 2000) during a six months period from May to October 2002[5]. By applying the technique of sequential analysis described above two German-Chinese research teams surveyed the whole written conversation of the four BBS chosen as samples. In contrast to the extremely time consuming and labor intensive in-depth sequential analysis of Objective Hermeneutics, however, the data were searched for explicit and latent manifestations of the dimensions of identity established during the previous process of theoretical sampling. Quotations were to be encoded accordingly and to be interpreted on a relatively low level of aggregation. Due to the huge amount of empirical data – more than 98,600 individual postings by more than 11,400 authors within six months – specific rules for reducing the size of the sample were employed considering the discursive nature of identity construction. In order to further enhance the reliability and inter-subjectivity (i.e. triangulation) the interpretation process was carried out according to a discursive system of up to three stages of checks and cross-checks. Rather aiming at painting a general picture than focusing on single cases with questionable potential for generalization all the resulting approximately 8,000 sets of valid interpretations have then been transformed into a higher aggregated form by encoding in more universal and abstract concepts but preserving the original wording of textual sources as far as possible.

After theoretical saturation had been reached in the course of the online survey, findings were to be evaluated by an additional offline survey in China. Samples and methods were chosen on the basis of the provisional interpretations derived from online sampling and adapted to the double aim of 1) identifying manifestations of the dimensions found to be core elements within the construction and (re-)negotiation of social and collective identities in Chinese BBS, and 2) evaluating our interpretations for potential generalizations and, furthermore, possibly exploring dimensions not yet identified. Regarding research instruments as well as localities and target groups for the fieldwork, the approach once again was a mixed strategy combining inductive with deductive elements. Considering diversity in regard of geographic setting, regional culture, political function, stage of economic development, and dynamic of Internet penetration Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu were identified as distinct regional urban centers and very suitable localities for parallel offline surveys. Featuring distinctly different characteristics, it was assumed that it should be possible to

[5] Analysis covered all threads that were started within this period but in a larger number of cases lasted much longer, sometimes until March or even May 2003. All threads and individual postings have been downloaded and archived. These archives have been made available online for facilitating further research (cf. BBS Youth Topics 2002a; BBS Fashion, Eating, Living, Motion 2002a; BBS Exploring Culture 2002a; BBS Online Romance 2002).

find evidence for either strong regional influences on identity construction and resulting in distinct differences or – in case of largely corresponding findings – potential generalizations regarding common dimensions of Chinese identities. Following Denzin's (1989: 236ff.) approach for triangulation data- as well as observer-triangulation was realized, i.e. participant observation including accompanying interviews as well as additional analyses of artifacts and visual data was carried out in several observation sites in each of the chosen cities and observation was designed to be conducted by more than one researcher at the same time and each followed by systematically cross checking preliminary interpretations via interpersonal discourse.

Due to the methodology employed in the larger research project the arguments presented in this paper have to be viewed as highly aggregated results of a very complex process of discursive interpretation, which makes the usual way of providing references impossible. I have, however, included supporting quotations from the original Chinese source material as illustrations (see threads 1-28)[6]. These representative examples hopefully will enable the reader to relate to the interpretations presented in this paper. Moreover, if I will make use of quantifying formulations while presenting research results in the following passages, these should be viewed not as results of quantifying methods and counting but rather as qualifying statements and views that have been identified as clearly dominating the discourses within the empirical source material. Furthermore, if correlations between statements and views with specific groups (age, social positioning etc.) are presented, these are generally based on additional data collected on individual authors and groups of participants for whom their self-representation and reactions thereon by other authors provided clear and reliable cues for grouping them by age group, socio-economic positioning, and place of origin or abode respectively. If arguments ground on field work in physical places in China, this will be indicated within the text. The same applies to interpretations that have been reached by including additional Chinese media sources.

---

[6] The author has made efforts to preserve the original nature of the quoted individual postings and threads by replicating the structure, accompanying emoticons etc. In the same way, non-idiomatic Chinese and inadequate grammar or usage of terms within the Chinese originals have been preserved by recreating similar patterns in the English translations. Single letters, words or phrases printed in Italics in the quotations indicate that Latin letters or English words have been used in the original Chinese language material. Omitted phrases within postings are indicated by "(…)", omitted postings within a thread by "…", while necessary additions are indicated by square brackets "[ ]".

3. Global or National? Internet with Chinese Characteristics

In the Chinese political context the Internet has been envisioned as either liberating weapon of the weak empowering the people versus the government or powerful tool in the hands of the ruling party for intensifying political and social control (cf. i.a. RSF 2003, 2004; Kalathil/Boas 2003; Mooney 2004; Wong 2003; Hachigan 2001). The truth, however, is much more complex than either the utopian or the dystopian extreme may suggest, and is, moreover, not easy to discern. The often highly deterministic arguments exchanged between both the proponents of technology-driven liberalization and democratization on one hand and those who predict the CPC's capacity to control and suppress the democracy-seeking masses will even grow with the invention of networked technologies on the other hand are reflecting hopes, fears, and ideologies of the respective individual or collective proponents rather than providing a balanced account of Chinese reality[7]. I fully agree with my German colleague Gudrun Wacker who concluded that

> "The common practice of conducting activities under the cloak of pseudonyms in Chinese cyberspace and the relative weakness of 'virtual' sanctions might still make the Internet more of a catalyst of social change than other media, but it is most likely to play a significant role if a social or political movement emerges in the non-virtual world. (…)The Internet might ignore territorial boundaries or surmount them without much effort (although even this has begun to change), but this does not mean that it exists in a social and political vacuum, detached and independent of its environment." (Wacker 2003: 73).

In the same way as Wacker advocates an approach that takes into account the social and political reality in which Internet usage is always embedded and rooted, any one-sided interpretation from the distance, may this be dystopian or utopian, certainly also falls short of reflecting the actual experiences of the average Chinese Internet user himself/herself. At this point I dare to say that for the majority of users in China daily Internet routine probably appears far less spectacular than numerous rather sensational accounts within the Western mass and academic media may suggest (see also Kalathil/Boas 2003; Tsui 2001). In order to assess the role the Internet plays today and may potentially play in the course of the sociopolitical development of the PRC it is of utmost importance to shed some light on the way in which the by now more than 100 million Chinese users themselves actually experience *their* Internet.

First of all, the Chinese Internet today is by no means an international or global medium but an almost exclusively Chinese one. This Chineseness of the Internet experience in China is

---

[7] For a general discussion of politically induced constraints to online behaviour in the PRC, which lies beyond the scope of this paper, cf. Giese 2005b: 30ff., 2005c.

reflected not only by the huge amount of locally produced content but also by the fact that 82.6 per cent of the Chinese Internet users surveyed by CNNIC in late 2004 convincingly stated they exclusively accessed and viewed domestic Chinese websites – mostly commercial with content catering to the particular needs and tastes of users in the PRC (CNNIC 2005: 19f.; cf. Jiang 2004: 4f.; Giese 2005b: 22). Moreover, Internet experience is by far not universal or evenly spread within China, since high degrees of Internet adoption within highly urbanized regions of Eastern China clearly indicate that Internet usage is predominantly an urban phenomenon (cf. CNNIC 2004: 4f.; Burkholder 2005). As Chinese Internet researcher Guo Liang put it earlier,

> "in social reality, people at the top of the social ladder can set foot more easily into virtual space. (…) Therefore, we can predict that the Internet's effects on China will not be the same at each social level, but rather will be a process originating in the upper-middle classes." (Guo 2003: 14).

Regarding these strata of the Chinese population, however, duration and frequency of weekly usage (CNNIC 2004: 12; Guo 2003a: 19ff., 22ff.) strongly suggest that for a significant proportion of young and well educated middle class Chinese urbanites Internet usage has become an important leisure activity already deeply integrated with their daily routines. Among the dominating entertainment functions provided by the medium it is clearly the communicative aspects and services that are most appealing to Chinese Internet users. Asked for the services they used most frequently 34 to 39 per cent of the surveyed favored online chat most, and around 18 to 19 per cent quoted Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) to be their favorite activity (CNNIC 2004: 13; Guo 2003a: 26). The results of the CASS survey on Internet usage in selected Chinese cities reveal that almost 60 per cent of the interviewees have used BBS at least sometimes (Guo 2003a: 87).

4. Chinese Bulletin Boards – Popular Places for Community Building

Although a medium of mass communication in its own right, metaphors, however, of space/place/locality and community have clearly dominated much of the discourse on Internet and its various services and functions. And for many users too, the Internet is as Hardey (2002) suggests "just a different space where they may meet others and make use of a vast number of services and resources". Internet or cyber*space* in general, though neither a place nor a fixed space in the common sense (Sant 2001), can, however, be described as a space of sheer countless interlinked virtual or *imagined places* where you can "interact with other human beings without actually being in physical proximity" (Fletcher 1998). A concept that goes beyond this by including technologically mediated psychological proximity, defines

this imagination, which is – in technical terms – created by architecting an online site, as *network locality*, if this place "grounds a diffuse form of affiliation and enables an intentional community" (Ito 1999: 12). As surveys show, this theoretical approach corresponds with the way the Chinese users perceive *their* Internet. Almost half of the Internet users interviewed by CASS envisioned the whole Internet as a meeting place (Guo 2003a: 1).

It is not hard to imagine that affiliation and proximity do not in the first place evolve from an abstract locality in the form of a particular website itself, but from the people meeting there and building communities tied to locality, grounded and driven by the force of certain shared imaginings (Ito 1999: 12). Numerous ethnographic and sociological studies have shown that localities in cyberspace are conducive to community building – basically by facilitating many-to-many communication (see i.a. Bruckman 1992; Reid 1994, 1995; Turkle 1995; Cogdill 1996a; Breeze 1997; Ito 1999; Wellman/Gulia 1999; Rheingold 1994; Sant 2001). The Bulletin Board Systems so popular with Chinese Internet users and omnipresent on the Chinese web certainly are services providing virtual or imagined localities that – ideally – connect people so that they can feel to be part of a community they build themselves simply by participating in online conversation for some time. In this way Chinese BBS are localities where communities are built out of the conversation and celebrated within the conversation at the same time. In other words, Chinese BBS as well as other online communication forums elsewhere (Wellman/Gulia 1999: 185-188; Sant 2001; Horrigan 2001: 11), fit into the picture Ray Oldenburg (1989/1999) has elaborated of the informal social gathering places he calls Great Good Places or Third Places.

These third places according to Oldenburg (1999: 16, 42) are – in contrast to family and work place as first and second places – core settings of informal public life. In this way, the café or coffeehouse is probably most often referred to as a third place. And although Oldenburg strictly confined his concept to physical interaction and explicitly dismissed the idea of virtual third places as escapism, for many younger Chinese these forums filled an existing vacuum in the physical world of Chinese cities when they were invented and – though not existing as physical localities – have created urban places of a new quality.[8]

Concentrating on Chinese Bulletin Board Systems these forums are best imagined as gathering places for socializing, informal places in a neighborhood, a street corner café, a pub etc. located in the case of a BBS, in a virtual environment created by the website it is located on. Like in offline environments you will make a first visit to take a peek and give it a try, and if

[8] Physical public places only very recently became a relevant issue for Chinese urban planners and architects who previously have been rather obsessed with creating impressive skylines and motorways but largely neglected functions of everyday urban life such as public places at the core of social life (cf. ABC 2005).

you feel comfortable with the place (accessibility, visual appearance, convenience, programming) and the people (nicknames, netiquette, content of conversation) patronizing the locality, you will come back to take a closer look and then, eventually, leave forever or decide to make the place one of your favorite *hangouts* for interpersonal communication and social interaction.

Since these hangouts on the Chinese Internet generally boast a rather informal and playful atmosphere, they also seem to be most conducive to discussing and debating sensitive or controversial topics. Supported by pseudonymity people feel at ease here to reveal or test even very unconventional or politically daring attitudes and views without having to fear potentially severe sanctions in the physical world. Hence, a wide range of topics is discussed in Chinese BBS, and many conflicting viewpoints are voiced, often as heterogeneous as the range of topics itself. Online communication forums, however, as said before do not exist in a vacuum. They are deeply rooted in the social reality of the offline world and in the individual experiences the participants accumulate while living in distinct physical places in today's urban China (Giese 2003a: 201f., 207f.; cf. Wellma/Gulia 1999: 170).

Within the Chinese BBS, which constitute virtual places, we find a huge number of hints pointing to both these distinct physical places the participants live in and themselves as individuals of flesh and blood in the physical world. Of many participants at least sex, approximate age, profession and socio-economic positioning is commonly known. Sometimes detailed and intimate personal information is voluntarily disclosed by individual BBS users. This information, however, is in most cases selective. Authenticity of the virtual persona and her behavior seems to be more important than full information on the real world person behind the nickname. Whereas social relationships in physical places are founded on trust that is built over time, trust in the virtual place called BBS is more closely associated with authenticity and thus predictability of behavior (see e.g. Orthmann 2004: 20f.; Donath 1999: 55; Burkhalter 1999; O'Brien 1999). But although the majority of participants still has to rely on intuition and cues when judging each other online, offline contacts and gatherings, which are already not uncommon in the Chinese context, seem to increase over the years. Chinese netizens, although they are free to hide behind pseudonymity, rather often choose not to do so, as social interaction in a given virtual third place grows more regular and social ties closer and eventually expand into the physical world (see also Yang 2003: 418).

Summing up, most Chinese Bulletin Boards have to be regarded as imagined localities – i.e. places – where real people meet for experiencing community and exchanging emotions and opinions closely related to their offline social environment and directly reflecting their experiences as real persons (cf. Rheingold 1994; Codgill 1996a, 1996b; Horrigan 2001). This feature of offline experiences transcending online behavior, however, is no one-way street,

since "all that is virtual bleeds into reality" (Fletcher 1998), also influencing people's perception of reality and behavior in physical places – at least potentially. BBS as imagined places in virtual space hence have to be regarded as parts of a larger social, political and cultural space they are embedded in, together forming new virreal places for interdependent and interlinked social (inter)action and last not least the construction of collective identities.

If assuming that individual and collective identities are generally socially constructed in a reciprocal way (cf. i.a. Butler 1990: 33; Baker 2001: 3f.; Bourdieu 1993; Boyd 2002), verbal interaction in these virtual places and virreal spaces can be regarded as discourses on identity or at least related to identity, although the actors themselves might not be aware of this fact. As collective identities interlink individuals, they provide security through a shared sense of we-ness based on shared (imagined) attributes in contrast to others. The main feature of collective identities, however, is the provision of meaning based on faith and emotional bonding (cf. Schöpflin 2001; Bourdieu 1993; Lear 1998). The link between individual and collective identity is realized via communication, and both individuals and collectivities are engaged in reciprocal discursive construction of identity, a process that includes negotiation of both core issues and demarcation – often in contrast to the 'other'. Discourses of collective identities are multidimensional and fragmented (cf. Melucci et al. 1989; Jasper & Polletta 2001), a fact that leaves room for innovation within existing collectives but also for conflicting alternatives to hegemony and orthodoxy to emerge (Schöpflin 2001). Based on moral propositions collective identities generally can be regarded to regulate orientations, values and behavior of their members and bear the potential for agency (cf. Castells 1997; Snow 2001). The shared sense of we and a common cause can be motivating to act together in the interests of (imagined) collectivities.

The Chinese Party state itself has made great efforts in identity work, and the creation of a modern Chinese national identity under the guidance of the Chinese Communist Party is centerpiece of these efforts, but by far not the only one. Before this background *unguided* discourses such as in bulletin boards of the Chinese Internet – although efforts to manipulate communication are under way at least in the more popular and political forums – possess the potential to undermine the Party state's efforts in constructing and continuously reinforcing own models of identification. The rather organic nature of the construction of individual and collective identities within these imagined places might furthermore challenge the Party state's capacity to enforce its citizens' compliance in both the virtual and the physical world, particularly if a feeling of agency emerged and were added to alternative collective identities. Hence the crucial question is whether alternative models within existing collective identities and newly emerging collective identities with their capacity to regulate behavior show the potential to challenge hegemonic discourses and, by creating heterodoxy

and a sense of agency, may pose a threat to the extant power balance. Although the construction of a considerable variety of collective identities can be observed within virreal places, the scope of this paper is limited to the macro and the micro level on which such identities are constructed and performed: The national and (sub-)local dimensions of collective identification both form relevant fields for potential political conflict.

5. Withering National Identity

The CCP realized that a unified national identity – a construct – can serve as powerful tool for social and political integration (cf. Seckington 2005: 25f.). Originally initiated during the early 1980s by Chinese intellectuals in search of new and distinctively Chinese modernity, this discourse quickly moved center stage within the CCP's efforts for legitimizing the perpetuation of its autocrat rule (cf. Lackner 1998). Retreating more and more from the orthodox Chinese communist ideology the party defined its new role as nationalistic party of modernization (cf. Heberer 1997) and hence has dominated the Chinese discourse on national character, modern Chinese identity and national culture (cf. Geist 1996). In this way exercising and maintaining political power has become directly related to the capacity to control relevant discourses within the Chinese society. However, from the beginning of this project in the 1980s there have always also been dissenting voices and efforts to create alternative models of identification, as for instance the intellectual debates in the field of Chinese literature showed (Geist 1996). And of course, the 1989 movement led by students clearly also was a strong manifestation of such dissent and heterodoxy. Last not least, this was indicated by the widespread public controversy over the Chinese TV documentation *He Shang* (River Elegy), which developed not least before the background of struggles for personal power and political directions within the CCP itself (Cui 1988; Peschel 1991).

Generally speaking Chineseness or Chinese national identity seems to have two dominant dimensions, a pseudo-biological racist one and a more modern political one. Although the Party state has emphasized both in its construction of national identity, it is particularly the political dimension that might backfire at party and government when being subjected to unguided discourses in virreal places. Politically there seems to be virtually no-one in the many virtual places of the PRC who does not positively, though in a rather abstract way, identify as citizen of this country. National identity however seems to be not at all tied to the leading role of the ruling party as intended by the Party state. On the contrary, discourses in virtual places show a widespread tendency towards constructing alternative models of identi-

fication that potentially compete with CCP orthodoxy. The following excerpts (threads 1, 2, 15) are representative examples for this tendency.

Thread 1

Eastern Wood Arrogant, perfidious, shameless, and egoistic Japanese 26.10.2002 12:21
(…)[9] I do not deny that there are more traitors to our country than in any other country in the world, but that's because no other country in the world has a larger population than China. I do not deny that there do exist a lot of problems in regard of corruption within the government, but we should not forget how the Chinese satellites were positioned up in the sky, how the explosion of the nuclear bomb was achieved, and how the Chinese have become rich after the reforms and opening. No matter which period, there have always been a number of outstanding persons in China who have been standing on the leading edge of social development. These persons are the pillars of China.

(BBS Youth Topics 2002b)

Thread 2

wangluotuzi There are a lot of problems but there is also a bright future! 28.06.2002 11:02
China is lacking clear-sighted leaders, but the Chinese people are industrious, intelligent, brave, and prudent; our ancestors were brilliant. No other nation possesses these [strong points]. We should be confident that China will have a bright future,

(BBS Youth Topics 2002c)

But national identity also seems to provide individuals with a rather latent channel for identification with a larger collective. In everyday life it is bearing relevance only for social strata that regard themselves as politically active intellectuals. The average Chinese does not seem to be particularly interested in reflecting upon the own nation or national identity, and there seems to be no sense of inherent agency, as well. This not least suggests the low level of participation debates within the Chinese bulletin boards under observation, which directly address related issues. Like in many countries the Chinese national teams' performances in international sports competitions such as the Olympics or the Football World Cup are an issue of national pride and identification. In this way they also give reason for developing a – rather short-lived – kind of agency (cf. thread 3).

[9] See footnote 6.

Thread 3

pongkey Today the Chinese national soccer team lost a match but did not loose face 08.06.2002 21:16

Reflecting Snow in June *pongkey*, you're completely right :))) 08.06.2002 21:26

There is still a long way to go for Chinese soccer.

We Chinese should still enthusiastically and passionately all-out support ~~~~

pongkey Hee hee, should China win over Brasil, snow in June will also be possible ^O^ 08.06.2002 21:35

Reflecting Snow in June Hee hee hee hee hee hee~~~~~~~~~~~~ 08.06.2002 21:55

Really would like to see snow in June :)))))))

(BBS Fashion, Eating, Living, Motion 2002b)

Generally speaking, conceptions of the Chinese nation and national identity are almost exclusively voiced as reactions towards anniversaries of painful historical events closely related to the arch enemy Japan, namely the Nanjing Massacre, the so called May 30 Massacre[10], the victorious end of the Chinese War of Resistance etc. – and triggered by specific media reports for instance on visits to the Yasukuni shrine by a Japanese prime minister, the introduction of biased Japanese school books and so on. The following representative quotations from the studied BBS illustrate this phenomenon. They also demonstrate the widespread irrelevance for the individual (thread 5), the general lack of agency, the indifference towards the national cause, and also the ambiguity of anti-Japanese nationalism and national identity based on historic experiences even the most agitated of the participants demonstrate in their statements (thread 6).

Thread 4

Arrogantly Looking Down Upon A Number Of Heroes Why don't we get enraged? 10.09.2002 23:36

(…) September 18 is near, compatriots, prepare your rage and make the Japanese bastards know that we'll never forget history and never will forget the pain.

I, *Arrogantly Looking Down Upon A Number Of Heroes*, hope that those who share my feelings will join hands and preserve our dignity! My ICQ ID is 24903389, email czw9876@sina.com.cn

(BBS Exploring Culture 2002b)

[10] This is an interesting example in its own right. During anti-Japanese protests British police killed a dozen Chinese civilians. Only recently the Shanghai municipal government erected a huge memorial at the west end of Nanjing East Road. The people, however, occupied this piece of land for their own private purposes: couples stretch on the lawn, children play and climb on he monument etc. – practices that definitely can not be regarded by the Chinese government as adequate behaviour in such a place but obviously tolerated by local authorities.

Thread 5

Small Lascivious Immortal A Problem that is not easy to ignore 20.09.2002 10:41
[On the occasion of] 9.11 a female student of Beijing Normal University offered flowers to the American embashit, [but] how many people offer flowers to war victims or the martyrs of the revolution on September 18? Think about this, all of you!

(BBS Exploring Culture 2002c)

Thread 6

Though Getting Wet By The Rain … Fucking Japanese ———— 25.10.2002 10:22
(…) it's because I watched a documentary on the Nanjing Massacre, September 18, on the web. Even before, there was no space in my mind for any different image of the Japanese, only cruelty and abominableness. (…)
Japan had become a model for us, and many Chinese students, like the masters of modern literature Lu Xun and Guo Moruo, went to Japan to study. Many of the leading officers of the Guomindang also studied in Japan. At that time the notion was quite popular in China that the strong Western capitalist countries in America and Europe were the biggest enemies of China and neighboring Japan across a narrow stretch of water was our friend.
This inevitably makes me thinking about the current state of Sino-Japanese affairs. Nine tenths of the young Japanese believe that the Nanjing Massacre is a lie, and more than half of them think Japan should take revenge for having been defeated by the Chinese in WW II. Almost every Japanese prime minister has visited the Yasukuni Shrine in order to invoke the souls of those who died in the name of militarism. The Japanese have occupied our Diaoyu Islands and do not intend to return them. And what will our future bring? We are watching Japanese soap operas all day long, we are watching romantic love stories of Japanese men and women, we are dreaming, dreaming the dream of Sino-Japanese friendship, and even believe that the Japanese a related to the Chinese by blood ties. Wake up! I do not oppose foreign cultural imports, I also do not oppose Japanese soaps and I even watch Japanese soaps myself like anybody else. I only want to remind our young friends not to forget September 18, not to forget the Nanjing Massacre, and not to forget unit 713[11].

(BBS Youth Topics 2002d)

Public commemoration and exaggeration of historical national traumata by the state media seem to be most conducive to evoking and activating national and nationalistic sentiments paired with a vague sense of agency (cf. thread 4). However, the feeling of such collective agency inherent to national identity, sometimes resulting in extreme and also violent but largely symbolic action, all in all seems to be rather short-lived. The recent anti-Japanese

[11] Even this author seems to be not too familiar with current Chinese history. The military unit he refers to actually is unit 731. Unit 731 was a secret military medical unit of the Imperial Japanese Army that researched biological warfare and other topics through human experimentation in North-East China during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and World War II era.

demonstrations in virtually all major Chinese cities are a good example. The demonstrators took to the streets only after 1) the Chinese media reported on Japanese schoolbooks that were allegedly distorting history, 2) a campaign against a permanent seat in the UN Security council for Japan was launched on major Chinese Internet portals, 3) discussions had become almost omnipresent in virtual places connecting both issues with the Japanese legacy from WW2 in general (Giese 2005a: 3f.) and 4) widespread calls for demonstrations appeared in almost every Internet forum. Heated debates in virtual places drew even more people into physical places in a second wave of demonstrations. If one were cynical, both verbal anti-Japanese activism in virtual and action against physical manifestations of the Japanese in physical places could be regarded as "extreme leisure activities" in a virreal spatial continuum driven by nationalism, since online discussions generally took place in the off-hours and demonstrations on weekends ending abruptly shortly before dinner time. Furthermore, even most Chinese observers – though not in public statements – agree that these demonstrations have to be regarded more as a rare opportunity for uninhibited individual and collective behavior in the public the urban youth and the white collar workers have widely made use of for letting of steam (Giese 2005e). The interlinkage and interdependence of virtual and physical places is further demonstrated by the fact that state authorities successfully approached potential protestors in both the virtual and the physical places and issued warnings against further demonstrations through traditional media channels, via short message service, websites and in bulletin boards in order to put an end to the demonstrations in the physical world (Giese 2005a: 7f.).

Even such situatively induced upsurges of strong national sentiments do, however, not only demonstrate a shared imagination of being Chinese or a general agreement with the national imagination purposefully constructed by the Party state, but rather possess considerable potential for heterodoxy. Quite often, this Chinese nationalism, activated by exogenous stimuli, mutates into a collective feeling of opposition against government, CCP and their representatives. Historical injuries China suffered from the imperialistic powers of the past are still constitutive for the mixed feelings towards the own nation today. The Chinese psyche – though there has developed a strong collective feeling to be on the way to be a strong power step by step regaining the once leading position – still seems do be dominated by the strong feeling of temporary inferiority and vulnerability as a nation and – as a direct result – the need for self-strengthening efforts in order not to be pushed around anymore in the future. This widely perceived current state of vulnerability is, for instance, held responsible for the search of good relations with the Japanese arch enemy and the necessity for demonstrating the degree of good will China is currently showing to its Asian neighbors in general (see thread 7).

Thread 7

Year Of the Horse [I] know that China is not yet rich and powerful, that's 09.10.2002 07:51

the reason why we need to cultivate good relations with our neighbors; in order to acquire still more technologies, and to save military expenses.

Pseudo-patriots like you, in their self-adulation craze, will only spoil everything. [What you suggest is] nothing but a short-lived acting out of rowdiness.

[We] have discussed for such a long time now, and you still do not realize that you are behaving ridiculously?

Once again, do you want your girlfriend to wear a Taliban chador?

(BBS Youth Topics 2002d)

Hence, there is further consensus that both China has to rise, has in part risen already and will rise to full strength again in the near future. There seems to be a general consensus among the different groups of the Chinese population that internal political and social deficiencies largely based on historical traditions, mismanagement and abuse of power have to be held responsible for this largely home-made national weakness (see threads 8, 9).

Thread 8

Bagong Mountain Man The real dangers that we face 20.07.2002 12:37

(…) Today the greatest danger lies in the fact that the economy is growing rapidly and society is changing radically on the one hand and 99 percent of the people are barred from actively participating in the political life and the society of the country, and power is monopolized by a small group of people on the other. The lower social strata cast more and more doubts regarding the legality of power of those in power (although they might be unconscious of these doubts). In order to pull the ordinary masses together who economically have become highly divided and who in political matters do not enjoy any freedom of speech, the mainstream media more and more radically employ the traditional ideologies of the central authorities, such as imperialism, anti-American thinking, rejection of democracy and value orientations of the West, stirring up hatred towards Japan, India and Taiwan, and revanchism as [social] glue. By doing so, the young generation will be educated to be ignorant, arrogant, and radical. If this becomes reality, then the catastrophe for China and the world will not be far.

…

Voice Rich nation and rich people, that's real patriotism (rich nation does not mean rich government) 14.10.2002 18:29

The problem is that the masses are unable to fully benefit from the current economic construction. Of course dictatorship is not democratic; hence [you only can rely on] solidarity within your own circles. (…)

(BBS Youth Topics 2002f)

Thread 9

Ever Persistent Dugu[12] How much suffering has the severe and lingering disease corruption brought about China? How could this last for thousands of years until today and does not turn for the better? Should the historical inertia really be that strong?? 28.06.2002 11:46
Longing for the downfall of the corrupt party! (…)

(BBS Youth Topics 2002g)

Today the whole new wage-earning urban middle class is completely convinced of the political nature of the underlying causes for this perceived national weakness. Being most outspoken and critical, this group - which in fact was the main force behind the recent anti-Japanese demonstrations – clearly holds the Communist Party and the Chinese government responsible for the unsatisfactory condition of the nation (see thread 8). Although the Chinese government claims the political system to be socialist, this large group criticizes the current system to be dictatorial, producing corruption, hierarchies and exploitation in addition to prolonging existing backwardness and poverty. Due to a general lack of freedom, democracy and universal human rights, without radical change truth will be further suppressed and widespread self-deception will prevail (see a.o. threads 8, 14, 15, 16, 25).
Hence, the current state of national weakness and vulnerability would be prolonged indefinitely, and China would be further treated with contempt by the powerful nations. Generally speaking, current national weakness is viewed as a result of internal political deficiencies under the rule of the CCP and the pointless leniency of the communist government towards other competing nations, former aggressors in particular. The political leadership is generally viewed as incapable of making adequate use of the actual strength the nation has already acquired over the years. Hence, the rare incidents of Chinese politicians taking up a tough stance towards allegedly antagonistic nations are appreciated very much (see thread 10).

Thread 10

I'm Old Yang Well then, Youngor[13], since you cannot come to an end with your affirmative mentioning of it, I will repost this posting that a senior fellow apprentice sent to my mailbox. Those of our compatriots who are living in Japan, you can discuss your impressions of Japan yourselves. 27.11.2002 21:26
(…) If our country did not enforce the suppression of Japan's potential hostile attitude, and instead invariably propagated the shallow impression of "Sino-Japanese friendship,

[12] Persiflage of "Nine Swords Dugu" (Dugu jiu jian), a character from the martial arts novel "Laughing in the Wind" (Xiao ao jianghu) by Jin Yong.
[13] Brand name of a major Chinese garment producer with headquarters in Ningbo.

the result inevitably will be that the young Chinese will develop a wrong understanding of the "Japanese nation", will neglect their vigilance, and thoughtlessly tap into the trap of economic control the Japanese have set.
The last time chairman *** visited Japan he provoked strong reactions among the Chinese living in Japan. Never before had we felt our back to be that strong. It was the first time within living memory that a Chinese prime leader so sternly condemned Japanese militarism in public. How could this not be to the great joy of the people? Every place chairman Jiang went, he did not forget to address history. This left the Japanese unable to back down with good grace. This proves that China should not bow to other countries at the expense of justice. Developing the economy and standing up for justice are two entirely different things.

(BBS Youth Topics 2002h)

In such a situation, innumerable participants in many virtual places are convinced, loyalty to state and government should not be granted unconditionally; on the contrary, the government has to earn loyalty of the citizens by treating them humanely, and the people in exchange should keep a watchful eye on their government (see threads 11, 12).

Thread 11

…

101 **Native Dog** We are drifting in the void, don't know how this will end, don't know where we come from, nor where we go, can only helplessly create new gods again and again for driving away the fear. 18.06.2002 02:29
Mankind has learnt how to mutually rely on each other, how to survive in society and in a nation. They know how to reap the largest possible individual profits from the smallest possible investments. This means mankind opted for society and state; this has been a result of choice but not an obligation. In the same way patriotism is only a result of choice, as well.
The state, just like a plough or a spoon, is only a tool that we created. Shall we forget about our own existence and make the aircraft-carriers and intelligent spacecrafts we developed our totems, only because we admire their sophistication and greatness?
P8 was right; we should love the country like we would love a son. We transferred our own power to our state, and. its strength is so enormous and intimidating. Do we not have good reason to be frightened, as long as there is no similarly sophisticated and perfected controlling system to manage it and to remind it forever that it is still the slave of every single of its creators? If those in control usurped it and perverted the original creation, should we not resist this power or do we have no choice but still to love it "unconditionally"?
Since it is that strong and has been taken possession of and turned against its own aims, we should protect ourselves against it like we prepare against robbers.

We are drifting in the void, don't know how this will end, don't know where we come from nor where we go, can only helplessly create new gods again and again for bowing to them in worship.

…

Swordsman Snow Patriotism is unconditional? 16.06.2002 11:26
If so, why should we condemn the Nazis? They're really patriotic, unconditionally patriotic

…

(BBS Youth Topics 2002i)

Thread 12

Vertical No single interest of the state can be superior to freedom and dignity of the people 24.08.2002 22:49

(BBS Youth Topics 2002j)

On the other hand, both personal and universal human rights as well as spiritual guidance – but not necessarily also democracy – are very much in demand, not least from a virtuous government (cf. thread 13).

Thread 13

Blue Cat Those people who are dying to propagate democracy 19.06.2002 18:43
(…) The Chinese have no corporate feeling, they lack the notion of nationalism, they even very easily fight each other to the finish.
Other people have religion, moral education, which restrain an individual's conscience and behavior. But what do the Chinese have? (…) In such situation everybody can turn out to be a beast.

(BBS Youth Topics k)

Thread 14

Blue Cat You, *Ordinary Joe 2002*, are really substandard 19.06.2002 18:33
The key points are equality and justice of society, and human rights; democracy is a double-edged sword.
Those people who habitually call for democracy are only sitting at home thinking.
Never been face to face with those huge numbers of incurably poor quality Chinese …
Not all the people are the same … The Chinese are masters in exploiting loopholes. The key issue is to cultivate the morality of the coming generations. There are too many among the ordinary people who have lowest moral standards. No moral values anywhere.
Since Chinese are masters in exploiting loopholes, [you can imagine] in what state of chaos society would end, much more appalling than the degree of corruption today.
Take the Chinese press for an example. Let's assume press freedom was granted. Then, what if an underworld urchin menaced you, would you still dare to publish? Without safe environment, nothing will be achieved. It can only get worse

(BBS Youth Topics 2002l)

Although the leading role of the Communist Party is rarely directly and openly challenged as long as it is the only political power with the capacity to safeguard national unity and a satisfying level of individual safety (cf. thread 14), the widespread discontent regarding the one-party system and the corruption, the denial of human rights like freedom of speech or the right of informational self-determination are creating the breeding ground for constructing alternative forms of national identity independent from the Party state and potentially also in strong opposition to the CCP.

Thread 15

Vertical I would have liked having been borne in Northwestern Europe. It's a pity it didn't work out like this, have to make the best of being a Chinese 17.06.2002 12:03
Like to ask **Katydid**[14] a question: Where has this signpost reading "Chinese and dogs are not allowed to enter" been mounted? At the gate of the park on the Bund or at the gate to freedom and human rights?

(BBS Youth Topics 2002m)

These common reservations indicate an evolving emancipation from the historical nationalism and models of national identification constructed top-down by the CCP since 1989. They reflect a beginning alternative process of national identity construction that actually challenges the linking of national identity with loyalty not only to the party but also to the government (see thread 16; see also Guo 2004: 45).

Thread 16

Flame Who says nobody is watching 06.09.2002 22:13
Still would be the best without revolution, but if a revolution were to start no-one of us would be able to stop it.
To give an example: When the Chinese go by public bus it's always the same. Before they have entered the bus they press ahead and push those in front of them. "God damn, enter, hurry up, go ahead." Once they have entered the bus, they shout at those still outside. "What the hell are you pushing? There's no more room inside." Just wait till those who are unable to enter the bus become too many. When they will start to make trouble, nobody can go anywhere anymore.

Go on developing „the economy", build some more high-rises for showing off, and accelerate the catalysis. Perhaps it's better to make trouble earlier than later. Have a big unrest.

[14] Name of an insect in North America. It might also be a play of words. The Chinese two identical characters consist of two parts each that alone would read "chong" (insect) and "guo" (country). Read as a two-character word this would mean "insect country" but also sounds like a persiflage of China (= Zhongguo). In this way the nick name might be interpreted as a sigh: China, oh China…

> It would be the best, if there were international intervention, deployment of international peacekeeping forces. If there even were a puppet government by grace of a Western country, it couldn't come any better; we would welcome it. Maybe some problems even would be solved this way,
>
> (BBS Youth Topics 2002n)

Taiwan is another test case for the effectiveness of state constructed unified national identity. Although national unity seems to be undisputed, even the issue of reunification with Taiwan so much emphasized by the Chinese government does not produce a sufficient feeling of agency inherent to the Chinese national identity. Taiwan is simply not a prominent topic both online and offline. The Chinese government seems to be aware of this tendency and hence media coverage on this issue and the official condemnation of tendencies in Taiwan that might result in the island shifting away from the mainland and possibly resulting in the rejection of re-unification and the unity of the Chinese nation is left almost exclusively to CCTV 4, the television channel targeting at overseas Chinese audiences. Only on CCTV 4 the warning can be heard on an almost daily basis, that the PRC might be forced to consider the use of military force against the island in order to realize and safeguard national unity (Giese 2003b).

There is, no doubt, a widespread fascination for military matters and modern weapon systems in particular among the male population. This is well reflected by the large range of special interest magazines on sale in the streets of big Chinese cities: "Military Affairs Observer", "Straits Military Conflict" and "Military Display" are only a few examples of such magazines, which – by the way – all repeatedly address the military option for solving the Taiwan issue. There is, however, also huge regional variation between the cities under observation. Whereas the selection of such print products is quite small in Shanghai and not large in Beijing as well, Chengdu seems to be a major market. This doubtlessly is strongly influenced by the large military presence in this city hosting the headquarters of the Central Military District and several military departments offering specialized courses of study within the city's universities (Giese 2003b). On a national basis, however, this does not find any big echo within the general public online, and the majority of voices reflecting on this topic in virtual places put the military option in question regarding both the price to be paid and humanitarian issues. The following excerpts from a thread (see thread 17), which was maintained for more than one month, clearly mirror this widespread opposition against any military solution of the Taiwan question and give a good impression of the nature of the discourse.

Thread 17

…

Li San Is Coming Warmongers, both of you. This time I caught you red-handed. Confess 17.08.2002 22:21

1. If there were a war, would you volunteer? Not that the two of you, once the flame of war will be ignited, hunker down and bawl: Attack!
2. How now? War has to be fought, even if the earth will be scorched? Is this your earth? You just want it to be scorched earth and it will be scorched? Damn it! You do not even own the smallest piece of earth; what right do you have to let theirs become scorched earth?
3. How now? Recapturing actually means recapturing [territory] from the hands of another county. It's still the Taiwanese who are living on the Taiwan soil; what right do you have to heist it? You are really too poor to think, aren't you.

Look what you've said yourselves: "Fifty years have already past, since Jiang Jieshi withdraw and Taiwan left the bosom of the motherland." Ridiculous. Was Jiang Jieshi no Chinese, was his government not the Chinese government? I can see you do love your country, but you're actually distorting history and producing secession. What if they looked at it from the opposite angle: "Since [we] lost the civil war, the mainland has left the bosom of the motherland? Sounds funny, doesn't it?

(…)

…

Li San Is Coming [You want] to attack Taiwan and explicitly state you don't care how many will die. What kind of logic is this, to victimize the lives of the Taiwanese „for the sake of the Taiwan people"? Do you really think that a war's killing and wounding will be as precise as one shot from a rifle? 17.08.2002 23:23

(…)

War means suffering, for the other and for us. Peace is unconditional. Safeguarding the unity of China has to start with own efforts. Looking for new resources to [exploit and] run down after having run down the own country enough, isn't it? To be a patriot means to love the country and the people. To think that patriotism means [Taiwan] must be returned to us means the country is doomed.

…

Kitty Makes Meow Meow Is there any tangible advantage the people could achieve from reunification? 17.08.2002 23:52

(…) Taiwan, you, and **Li San Is Coming**, do you not all long for reunification? The motherland cannot but always long for unification – – – – – what does this all mean? Mere talking about serving as soldiers is easy. Those who have really integrated into society, who have worked for many years, find corruption and injustice all around with the naked eye and see through XXX's policy of brainwashing that wants us to become cannon fodder for attacking Taiwan. Just to give certain people the opportunity to reclaim for themselves the historic title of Commander of Reunification – no way!

Back to the previous [posting]: How many inhabitants has Taiwan? How big is Taiwan? China['s territory] is so huge; Mongolia has become independent, why not Taiwan? I don't give a shit.

(…)

…

Hu Che[15] Brainless 19.08.2002 19:09

(…) Once we laughed about Taiwan when there happened to be a big beating in their parliament. But was this not kind of a manifestation of democratic politics? Let's look at ourselves. In our People's Congress all the hands are always raised for approval. Is this any better, is this democracy? Why is Taiwan not willing to reunify [with us]? It's because currently politics in the mainland are less democratic than in Taiwan. In Taiwan you can publicly curse the president, you can have oppositional parties, and freedom of the press, you can demonstrate; can you do this in the mainland? In the whole country there are so many press products, but reading one you know them all; all of them speaking with one voice. You won't hear any deviant voice, won't hear any oppositional opinion; isn't this appalling? I don't like to see Taiwan separated from China and independent, but I'd like to change for a different way to solve [the problem of national reunification] and would like China to be really democratic and free after reunification.

Those who at the top of their voices call for an attack on Taiwan actually are brainless; it's only a manifestation of close-minded nationalism. Be a great thinker; use your brain before you talk!

…

I Am So Tender Long live peace! 21.08.2002 12:18

…

Lin Chufang Recapturing Taiwan through military force? Go to bloody hell! 21.08.2002 13:03

…

yyyxyz There shall be peace everywhere in the mainland and in Taiwan! 21.08.2002 13:42

Mainland and Taiwan people must not kill each other. Men's lives and the peaceful well-being of the people are much stronger driving forces than that apparently noble cause! Let those warmongers fight each other!

(BBS Youth Topics 2002o)

Hence, from the Party state's perspective, the Taiwan question probably will not have the potential for mobilizing people for any but symbolic actions. Both the more individualized and narcissistic youngest age groups and the financially more settled middle classes for different reasons are hardly willing to sacrifice their personal well-being for the nation, least in regard of reuniting Taiwan with the Chinese mainland through military force (also compare Johnston 2004: 617f., 623-626).

Generally speaking, there is a general consensus that every Chinese should be expected to be an upright patriot, ambitious to make China a super power. But although sharing strong patriotic feelings is almost generally considered to be the duty of every Chinese citizen as thread 18 suggests, this does not mean that there is any clear-cut concept of patriotism/nationalism, neither prescribed by the Party state nor constructed alternatively.

---

[15] This pseudonym probably means "Nonsense". I assume that the author used homonyms, because this pseudonym already was in use by another participant.

Thread 18

sihouyusheng111@CR Reflect on yourself! 16.09.2002 21:16

(…) We, the young people should not be satisfied just by leading a comfortable life. We also should not just fatalistically accept everything as fate like our preceding generation did. Our generation shall straighten the still weak Chinese back! The Chinese people is the most excellent nation in the world; we should reflect, should know what we have to do. We have the power to make China a global power!!

(BBS Exploring Culture 2002d)

Hence at present it might not be alternative models of national identification and competing agencies resulting thereof, but rather the ignorance and neglect large parts particularly of the younger urban population normally demonstrate in this respect, that may challenge the political leadership of the CCP. National Day for instance, normally central to the national imaginary, in virtual as in physical places of urban China is only celebrated as an additional public holiday providing an opportunity for meeting with friends and eating out (cf. threads 19, 23).

Thread 19

The Girl Is Young *1020* When I was living in Beijing I did not like Beijing! 10.01.2002 14:15

But now that I moved to Shanghai I still like Beijing more. Maybe it's because I have been used to culture and food of Beijing. Moreover, I personally think that Beijing is the better place to be particularly when a holiday draws near that involves very strong national sentiments such as National Day, because there you can feel the link with the motherland. In other places, however, it's purely another public holiday, rest for the people, but not at all linked to the birthday of the nation. This is not to say that other cities are bad, only that there I don't feel this kind of enthusiastic passion like in Beijing!

(BBS Fashion, Eating, Living, Motion 2002c)

National symbols or icons of the modern Chinese state as well as specialized patriotic TV shows once in high regard are only sought for by the country folk, whereas they are generally disliked and avoided by younger urbanites up to their 40s (Giese 2003b). While foreign businesses demonstrate their sympathy for the Chinese nation by large-sized congratulations to China and by displaying the Chinese flag and state symbols in quite a number of variations (Giese 2003b), the average urban Chinese seem to be preoccupied with shopping and dining, even rather playfully displaying the national flag of the USA as major competitor in world politics on their T-shirts, bags and toys (Giese 2003b) than honoring own national symbols. Hence, if nationalism or national identity were not regarded central issues any more by growing strata of young Chinese, the general self-perception and projected image of the communist party as spearhead of the national project may also lose much of its legitimizing power in the field of domestic politics.

6. Local Identities and Sub-local Affiliation – Field for Identification and Collective Agency

On the other end of the same scale of collective identities and community building there is – first of all – identification based on the place of birth or place of abode, whereas the latter gains importance since more and more Chinese and particularly the well educated strata of the Chinese population enjoy the freedom to choose their place of living and working. Probably due to the central role locality is playing in everyday life the sheer number of related postings gives strong empirical evidence within the surveyed bulletin boards that identification with the physical place of abode and the collective identity built upon shared imaginations of place and community in a given place are much stronger and salient than the somehow abstract and latent collective identity of being a Chinese citizen. Although virtually all members of the surveyed online and offline populations tend to identify themselves as members of the Chinese nation in one way or the other, it seems to be the identification with the place of living that is the much more constituting element of self-perception. For the inhabitants of metropolises like Beijing and Shanghai in particular it is central to be a Beijing citizen or a Shanghainese. Moreover, the discourse on local identities seems to be based on a complete and widely accepted hierarchy of Chinese places and ascribed identities. In this way the leading role of Beijing and Shanghai as cities appears undisputed, although these two are competing with each other for primacy. The following thread 20 illustrates the pride to be a citizen of either of these two metropolises and the competition between them.

Thread 20

Little Que_*mirage* A Beijing girl's impressions from Shanghai... 27.05.2002 16:06

> At Spring Festival this year I stayed in Shanghai for two days, had already heard that Beijingers and Shanghainese absolutely do not make a good match, and also knew about the many spleens of the Shanghai people. This time I experienced it personally; must say, they really live up to it!!
> (…)
> What's more, no matter if it's a small restaurant or a big one, people are particularly noisy when they are eating. If it were only chatting loudly, but they are eating very noisily, as well.
> Of course, I do not like the Shanghainese, however you have no other choice but to love the city itself. A modern metropolis has to be fully infused with the atmosphere of commercial culture. In cultural terms, however, Shanghai is by far less tolerant and open than Beijing, [and people] stick to their niminy-piminy petty bourgeoise mentality, which somehow makes them idealize their own weird manners even more.

(BBS Fashion, Eating, Living, Motion 2002d)

Positive identification with the own place of abode in this respect always also includes negative stereotypes ascribed to other places and the related collective identities of the people living there, as both the previous thread 20 and the following thread 21 illustrate.

Thread 21

jgj0510@CR Regarding people in Northeast China 01.07.2002 23:27
I always thought people in the Northeast were up-front and accostable.
What I experienced before '99 was just like that. But since I have started working I had to realize how absurd this notion had been. All the Northeasterners I have met after '99 have been knavish; there hasn't been any exception. I really cannot understand that there are still people getting off stating "Northeasterners are all living Lei Fengs", brazen-faced. One should downright say „all the Northeasterners are impudent", period.

zhihai969_NEW Prejudice 21.07.2002 02:24
No matter of South or North, people are so different from each other. 17 years ago I lived in the Northeast, had a whole bunch of friends; Northeasterners are very sound. Youngster, you're either ignorant or off your rocker!

Tourist *1203165680* You are a Sichuanese 02.07.2002 17:34
For sure, must be

(BBS Exploring Culture 2002e)

It was also this context of identity discourses closely related to locality that induced otherwise anonymous participants of bulletin boards to reveal most detailed and intimate information on their offline existence. The following thread 22 – although focusing on a different topic – is a good example of the amount of information Chinese BBS participants reveal about themselves and accumulate about each other's real life contexts respectively (see also thread 23).

Thread 22

Radish He Please kill the ID **Small Room Named Quiet Sky** – a complaint to mananger **Liu Xuehong**, moderators **Li Fang** and ***007*** 25.10.2002 23:06
I've been in China Youth [Online] for almost two years. This is my very first time to file an official complaint to the administration of China Youth [Online] in order to expel an Internet friend. Hopefully, my request will be treated seriously. In order to show my seriousness, I'm not using the emoticon "nonsense", I usually do.
Recently there has been an Internet friend from Da Xian, Sichuan with the ID **Small Room Named Quiet Sky,** who is continuously posting articles without any content, spamming, insulting and humiliating other Internet friends, leading to constant quarrel. Logging in to the BBS I cannot read postings as usual, hence wasting my time and energy and having my rights and interests damaged.
For these reasons I officially hand in this complaint to the administration of China Youth [Online]. I fear that at this moment neither the technical means nor the personal capacities of China Youth [Online] are sufficient for effectively limiting the behavior of this ID or ef-

fectively diminishing my sufferings caused by this ID. Meanwhile, the doings of this ID should be considered not qualifying for the protection of the freedom of speech. For the above mentioned reasons, I earnestly ask the administration of China Youth [Online] to kill the ID **Small Room Named Quiet Sky** in order to stop the disturbance this ID does everyday both to the [Bulletin] Board and to me.

Looking forward to your reply!

Radish He
25.10.2002

Cat in a Basket Not yet reached a stadium that calls for expulsion, right 25.10.2002 23:09
Crooked Mouth I agree with the point of view of Internet friend Radish He 25.10.2002 23:10
Expel a certain elementary school teacher **Small Room Named Quiet Sky** from Da Xian, Sichuan, who is shamelessly proud of using a faked diploma.
Small Room Named Quiet Sky Quite right! I was just waiting for you to show up! 25.10.2002 23:10
Those guys pretend to believe in justice unshakably after scolding me.
Tell you something, if my TD is blocked, you will have to face the same fate!
Who do you think you are to scold me? Oh! Are you expecting me to thank you after you've scolded me? Unless you are really such a person!
I did scold you, but it was you who had asked for it!
Small Room Named Quiet Sky **Crooked Mouth,** I'm waiting for you, the impudent party secretary of China Youth [Online], to argue with me, anytime! 25.10.2002 23:12
(…)
…

(BBS Youth Topics 2002p)

Those who positively identified with their place of abode were eager to reveal and also prove their identities as Shanghainese, citizens of Beijing, Shenzhen, Guangzhou or Chongqing. Some even referred to certain districts and distinct living quarters. Those, however, who lived in places generally viewed as less favorable, usually preferred to relate themselves to the next larger geographic entity – usually the closest big city or the province their living place was situated in.

The fact that discourses on local identities caused members of bulletin boards on the Chinese Internet to give up at least part of their sheltering pseudonymity for the purpose of distinct geographical positioning can be regarded as evidence for the strong binding force of place based collective identities constructed along geographical boundaries of small territorial units within China. Place or locality based constructs, it seems, are much more potent in providing the core functions of collective identity for the individual such as demarcation, emotional bonding and meaning (cf. Schöpflin 2001; Lear 1998; Bourdieu 1993) than more

abstract constructs of identity. Moreover, individuals joining together for social interaction because of shared geographical positioning or strong affinity towards a given locality and resulting exclusionary acts is one of the most prevalent phenomena within Chinese bulletin boards and can be observed much more frequently than any other comparable pattern of community building based on pre-existing collective identities. Shared collective identities grounded on place or locality, however, do not only provide the basis for building strong emotional bonds that are restricted to the virtual space of the Internet. On the contrary, wherever this shared collective identity is tied to a city or town, it provides the opportunity for social interaction to transcend the boundaries of the virtual space and to invade the physical reality of a given locality, as well.

A huge number of direct or indirect hints on this transcendental nature of social interaction among Internet users who share place identities shows that this is by far not only a theoretical option. Within the surveyed bulletin boards there were a large numbers of participants for instance from Shanghai and Beijing – migrants who strongly identified with their new place of abode included – who sporadically met offline. Some groups even met quite frequently over a long time while others even made these meetings regular events in fixed places (see thread 23). However, these offline meetings in no case had the result – as one might have expected – that virtual places were replaced by physical places as venues for social interaction within communities based on shared identities tied to locality. On the contrary, offline meetings obviously had the effect that online communication also intensified and social interaction developed in a complementary and integrated way in the virreal spatial continuum consisting of both virtual and physical places.

Thread 23

Once He Flies *FB*[16]-notification, addressing all peace loving people 17.09.2002 17:12

> You like to experience the elegant appearance of **Salt Meat**, the tremendous charms of **Seeds**, and the imaginative humour of **[Blue Sky, White Clouds and] Fish Head** personally? Register now for the Shanghai FB activity of [BBS] Fashion, Eating [Living, Motion]. Time: Thursday. Place: Not yet decided.
>
> ***larare*** Hey, **Once [He] Flies** 17.09.2002 21:38
>
> > Shouting so loudly to lure us to *FB*, I would offend you, if I were unable to come.
> > Thank goodness, I already have an air ticket, no problem. Will phone you on Thursday upon arrival. Notify me about time and place, okay.
> > Will **Seeds** come to Shanghai, too? What a lucky break. Last time she came to Beijing I did not meet her. Great that this time all will be able to meet in Shanghai.

[16] FB stands for "fubai" (literally: corruption) and is the term commonly used by Chinese netizens for offline meetings, because they usually involve excessive eating and drinking – habits that are regarded typical for corrupt civil-servants.

Alltime Darling ***9992*** Sigh, if it only were National Day 17.09.2002 20:28
I am living in Nantong, I have admired *FB* for a long time, but the time is too inconvenient, will be difficult to come. I beg you, organize another one on National Day!
Blue Sky, White Clouds and Fish Head Me? 17.09.2002 20:13
Probably will be very late and I think I will not eat [with you]. But it's not sure, who knows? I will try to finish the meal with the others early to meet you as soon as possible. Take your time and don't leave early.
smilepinocchio Big event 17.09.2002 19:15
I will think about it
Wish the event to be a success, shall emphasize the central role of Shanghai!
No. 9 Ku[17] an[18] 17.09.2002 19:04
No. 9 Ku Why Thursday? 17.09.2002 19:04
I'm in Hangzhou, can't come!
Vegetable Farmer In The Sunshine I 17.09.2002 19:01
want to meet **Salt Meat** ------- elegant appearance is reason enough.
No doubt want to meet **Seeds** ----- coz havn't met [her] yet and even more coz of the tremendous charms
And **Fish Head**, yeah! Otherwise I had nobody to drink with --- tell me, where did you have dinner yesterday?
Water Says [I] register 17.09.2002 18:13
Finally, the longed for *FB* again.
Not Thinking of Tomorrow Ha, caught you flat-footed 17.09.2002 18:15
Did your homework too sloppy! Do it once more from the beginning! You only think of *FB*…..
Not Thinking of Tomorrow Ooh, I'm going to spit blood 17.09.2002 17:26
FB, here we go again!!
Uuuuuh uuuh uuuuuuh
pongkey I 17.09.2002 17:17
can't register, but I suggest to upload some photographs after *FB* …
…

(BBS Fashion, Eating, Living, Motion 2002e)

Local affiliation and the construction of place based identities transcending the virtual sphere of the Internet alone do not pose any challenge to the political balance of power. There is, however, a large number of issues that are widely discussed within virtually all Chinese bulletin boards and at the same time have the potential to induce place based collectivities to develop the sense of agency that is necessary for political action. Members of bul-

[17] This nickname consists of the first two characters of the Chinese translation for Kubera, the ninth of the sixteen Buddhist Arhats. In Chinese it is common to add the numbers to the names, hence "No. 9 Kubera". Kubera is worshipped as patron saint and god of wealth helping to increase the worshipper's financial resources, casting off poverty and all economic burdens.

[18] The author probably mistakenly pressed the "Enter" key one step too early before having converted the Hanyu Pinyin into Chinese characters, since he also starts his next posting, which follows within a minute, with the character "an" (Shandong dialect for: I).

letin boards voice a lot of discontent in regard of corruption, abuse of political and financial power, weak performance of public institutions, general social problems, labor relations, consumer issues and so on. The following quotations demonstrate two of the most common perspectives. Referring to a complicated case involving parents who obviously considerably contributed to the death of their child by waiting too long inactively but shifted the blame to the attending physician at the university hospital, the hapless doctor who then was beaten up by thugs hired by the parents, intimidated or indifferent colleagues and superiors, and a corrupt administration that refused to investigate into this case, the first author (thread 24) still expresses some hope for the better, if only higher authorities on the central level paid attention to local problems. The second writer (thread 25), however, drawing general conclusions from own experiences, demonstrates a high degree of disillusionment and deep-rooted distrust in the political and administrative institutions of the Chinese state in general.

Thread 24

Li San Is Coming Police and criminals under one roof! Government and underworld under one roof! General Secretary Jiang should hear this story! 14.05.2002 19:30

Ask *Speechless Wind* to write a letter to the National Party [Leadership] on behalf of the university.

If the provincial government saw to this case, it easily could be dealt with as simple „dispute about medical treatment". However, the main issue here is that police and criminals are collaborating, the big problem of government and underworld working hand in glove with each other. That's not a problem an ordinary department is able to solve.

(BBS Youth Topics 2002q)

Thread 25

Going Online Because Of Boredom Will the reactionary rule be restored in China? 19.06.2002 14:17

Today I went to the labor office to look for a part-time student job and they cheated me out of 10 Yuan. 10 Yuan are not a big deal, but – viewed from a different angle – there is cattiness everywhere in this society, nothing that you really can rely on. It's not the first time that I was cheated, but that doesn't mean that I have not enough experience in society. The first time I had been cheated out of 50. I thought, there still must be something reliable, but what is the result? Complete disillusionment. Once I got angry, I had to think about many social phenomena. Think about the social environment around us. Can one just say this is modern civilization??? Full of the stench of money but without any humanity, this state of society makes me doubt China's future. The future development will be spoiled by this scum. They even go so far to say universities were not important. Society is the best high school, [they say], and who needs to study at universities. How do they dare to publicly insult the students? As long as this kind of scum exists, all the talk about development is idle. No-one really cares for the needs of the ordinary people. Every department affirms to be devoted to administering and public welfare, but which

> of them is not only trying to reap profits. Is the market society really like this, a society in which money has the only say?! When I had been cheated that time, I was thinking about defeating them by law, but reality would have prevented my victory. Since this labor office could just act recklessly like this, they must have some strong backing, a powerful institution providing rear cover. There was no way for me to win over them. I have no idea what means I could adopt against these people. Perhaps a country that has opted for socialism with Chinese characteristics is just like this, all these things you can't bear or deal with rationally. How many decades do we still have to live in such a society? If we have to be so cautious everyday, are you still willing to trust? China has established every kind of bigger or smaller regulations, but what has really been brought under control? The ordinary people only feel more and more helpless. Our government is not the government of the people. The authorities that we potentiated ourselves cannot fulfill their duties for us. Such a motherland??!!!!! How can we wholeheartedly love her? How can we be fully confident in her??? There are so many things that frustrate [me]. I am convinced that everybody has also experienced, witnessed or heard about [such things]. May I ask if you can feel at ease? Is it possible that the reactionary rule is really about to be restored in China??????!!!!!
>
> (BBS Youth Topics 2002r)

On first sight these discourses seem to be either rather general and unqualified utterances of dissatisfaction with the individual situation and the development of the country in general or are only reflecting the media coverage mostly on prominent individual cases that are not too closely or directly related to the lives of those who pick up these topics within the bulletin boards: For example individual corrupt officials and politicians are widely blamed as soon as the official Chinese mass media report the cases; TV and newspapers are the most important sources of information and are regarded particularly reliable (cf. Guo 2005: 37, 47f., 66-72).

Closer investigation of such discussions, however, reveals that media coverage very often only triggers related discourses but is not the underlying cause. In the case of Beijing for instance the preparation for the Olympic Games 2008 are often targeted. On one hand Internet users see ample evidence for both squander mania and embezzlement of funds within the city's administration. On the other hand there is under-funding and negligence of schools and universities and incompetence among the responsible administrations. Since many of the participants of the surveyed bulletin boards obviously are students and young parents, these two issues were in most cases not discussed separately but viewed as two sides of one and the same medal (see thread 26).

Thread 26

liziwenriyi@CR I've got the same feeling, and this is maddening! 17.10.2002 20:00

I am not from the Northwest, but I was allocated a university place at a university in the Northwest. The Northwest accounts for almost one half of the Chinese territory, and the population also counts by many, many hundred millions. The geographical position [i.e. latitude and altitude] is not less favorable than that of Beijing; and the people are not more backward than those in Beijing, as well. It's just because this vast territory has been neglected all those many years of reform and opening up, that today education in the Northwest is lacking so much behind. Why does Beijing have the power to channel the taxpayers' money into its own development? Does Beijing also have the right to do so? Should there be special treatment for the capital? Spending so much money for construction, just for applying to host the Olympic Games. Has this money been Beijing's money? The education in the vast Northwest seems unimportant. If even in the Northwest education is completely neglected, what can you expect from [the campaign to] Opening up the West? Education is fundamental, and the West doesn't have her own talents. Should it be unavoidable to produce enormous inequalities during development? Will it help the people or harm them?

Don't say no more. That's China, exemplary. I'd like to cry out loud, but who'd listen?

(BBS Exploring Culture 2002f)

Moreover, these discussions were not theoretical in nature but rather reflected a developed sense of agency. Communication even sometimes ended up in the call for collective action of those affected by particular cases. This shows that there can develop a sense of agency on the common basis of shared place, as soon as individuals sharing this place identity face similar problems and are directly affected. Noise, air pollution and other environmental issues – and the related question of real estate market value – obviously provide strong enough stimuli necessary for developing this common sense of agency among otherwise differently positioned groups of individuals. Like in the following quotation (thread 27), circumstances or developments that are of common concern are openly criticized, but collective action is usually not directly called for due to the general political situation.

Thread 27

Having A Peek While Passing By Fashion, Eating, Living and Motion looks at Suzhou 31.08.2002 17:24

(…) The living quarters of Suzhou have been developed without any plan, chaotic; this means that for some inhabitants the living environment is rather bad. In the neighborhood of Suzhou's biggest chemical plant there are already living huge numbers of people. But for several reasons this factory cannot be moved away. Hence the masses of the neighborhood are forced to live with the daily stench. This is what I call "building a crematory in the midst of the city", but it doesn't mean that the crematory was built in the midst of the living quarters, rather the development of the city resulted in large living quarters completely encroaching upon the crematory. This has already been the situation

> for many years now. The [city] government of Suzhou has the duty to prevent the people from smelling the stench of "rotten eggs" and "cremated corpses".
> (…) Moreover, [the fact that] petrol-operated mopeds have been allowed at haphazard resulted in severe pollution problems for the old quarters of the city (you cannot imagine more than one hundred thousand mopeds running around the less than twenty square kilometres of the old city coughing out thick black fumes). In the meantime Suzhou has begun to issue licenses for private cars. I'm sure that this soon will prove to be just another big blunder.
> (…)
> What's the problem? Personally I'm convinced that our government is naïve to the core. This naivety of administration becomes evident from the following little story. At the moment the Suzhou government is introducing a project to have one water meter in every individual household. This means that funding will come from government, enterprises and citizens (approximately 40-50 millions), and every home will be provided with a water pipe connecting to a [new] water meter on the ground floor or outside of the building, which will replace the water meters that were placed inside the flats [till now]. It has been said that this shall facilitate the water supply company's work to read the individual meters of every apartment, save water, make things more comfortable for the citizens, reduce the disputes about the subdivision of fees between main and individual meters, and so on. And the reality? Actually, every understanding person will know that to solve the problems it only needs a couple of laid-off workers to be sent into every household to read the meters. But the local government intends to spend umpteen millions for a solution!
>
> (BBS Fashion, Eating, Living, Motion 2002f)

There are more examples for the development of agency related to both personal lives and political questions on the grass roots level. Such issues included the own professional future or the future of ones' children – as associated to formal institutional education. These were always viewed as directly related to inadequate political action, incompetence or corruption within the political administrations of a given place. These issues ranged from being directly affected by the emissions of a chemical plant in Suzhou quoted above to the more general and fundamental criticism of city planning in Beijing, which was regarded as focusing on motorized traffic and neglecting the legitimate rights of pedestrians and thus sacrificing the general quality of life within the city. Legitimate rights, legitimacy of administrative action and legal rights of individuals and collectivities similarly have moved center stage. Although there is a lot of criticism pointing at the deficiencies of the Chinese legal system, the notion of pursuing one's legitimate rights by legal means becomes more and more widespread.

It is particularly the new Chinese urban middle class striving for house ownership that forms a newly emerging rights-savvy populace. By now they call, for instance, for safeguarding their property rights as home owners, for better environmental standards around their compounds or better quality schooling for their children in their very places of abode

(Giese 2003b). But the socio-economic development of China also provided them with more space to exercise these rights. As discussions within Chinese bulletin boards already show today, groups sharing collective identities tied to virtual and physical place also begin to address politically more sensitive issues like freedom of information, the protection of personal privacy or political participation on the grass roots level. The following excerpts (see thread 28) from a fervid online discussion on the blocking of access to the search engine Google for Chinese Internet users, which coincided with the preparations for the 16th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in the 80th year after its founding, provide only one of many examples.

Thread 28

Flying Freely Propose that all big BBS of the Internet shall organize demonstrations to sharply protest against the blocking of *GOOGLE*. Please sign your names everybody for support! 02.09.2002 10:32

…

Flying Freely Even this little bit of convenience is unbearable for certain people; for a successful political ceremony of one party they 02.09.2002 10:44
pull out all the stops.

State Power Sign! 02.09.2002 10:57

…

Thin Bamboo I think certain people should be charged with breaching the constitution; those friends who knowledgeable in law, pen an indictment! 02.09.2002 11:09

…

Yan Nan Can consider to charge the telecommunications enterprises 02.09.2002 11:21

…

lilybright Agree; is there anything we could do? 02.09.2002 11:22

Flying Freely Everybody should see that this posting will fly around everywhere. Let the people know that there is this public opinion. You must sign in order to condemn 02.09.2002 11:25

…

Heavenly Steed Soaring Across the Skies*1030* Strange, what content might google have that the authorities cannot stand? 02.09.2002 11:58

Flying Freely Exactly 02.09.2002 12:13

Ridiculous Even google has been blocked too 02.09.2002 12:23

…

3721[19] The law is strong, but the out-laws are ten times stronger. 02.09.2002 12:23

…

cvc Means the netizens were raped!!!!!!!!!!!!! 02.09.2002 13:12

Flying Freely Protest, file a sharp protest, approach an international human rights organization, ask the what's its name without Borders for assistance 02.09.2002 13:21

[19] This nick name probably is an allusion to a colloquial figure of speech meaning "shouldn't mind someone that much".

…

Crusader Count me for one 02.09.2002 14:31

…

Ridiculous I want to buy a white *Tshirt* and write something in support of *google* on it 02.09.2002 16:43

I will begin mobilizing the masses, protecting the basic rights

…

newzz Strongly oppose the closing down of *GOOGLE* 02.09.2002 17:52

liuxianzhi Support by signing 02.09.2002 17:53

…

Scalpel The closing down of *GOOGLE* by the telecom represents a political act (forwarded [text]) 02.09.2002 18:28

Ridiculous If there is a political reason 02.09.2002 18:30

…

Chairman Mau[20] Strongest protest against the blocking of *GOOGLE* 02.09.2002 22:03

Sharpener I also sign 02.09.2002 22:06

Red Foliage on Fragrant Hill Just sign, if you want to. But don't exchange it for candies later on, well ~~~~~~~~~~ 02.09.2002 22:09

Mafia Supremo Go abroad, go abroad everybody! 02.09.2002 22:15

…

clmcyl I miss *google*, I hate …. 02.09.2002 23:21

Young Person Named Zhang Let the banner of freedom flaunt in the wind 02.09.2002 23:35

…

Roda JC If normal access to *google* will not be restored 03.09.2002 08:47

…

Roda JC There are already some hackers on the move now 03.09.2002 09.25

…

Ridiculous Look how public opinion gets raped 03.09.2002 10:08

Ice Storm Sharp protest! 03.09.2002 10:30

…

Crane on the Horizon Listening to the voice of the people is more important than protection against flooding. Old lesson!!!! 03.09.2002 10:35

Reflection of Clear Sunlight on Water That's the way freedom is lost!! 03.09.2002 11:11

…

Idolizing Numbers What will be the next? 03.09.2002 14:06

…

Ridiculous The closing of *google* revealed some really bad omens 03.09.2002 15:19

…

Chairman Mau The motives behind the blocking of *GOOGLE* are to provoke the masses of netizens, the motives are to disturb social stability, the motives are to make the Chinese civilization move backwards 03.09.2002 16:40

---

[20] In this nick name a homonym (meaning "cat") is used instead of the family name Mao of Mao Zedong, the Great Helmsman.

Chairman Mau The closing down of *GOOGLE* represents an open move against \ the**Three**Representations[21] 03.09.2002 16:52

…

One with a Bug If one is to sign, the real name should be signed 03.09.2002 19:41
Kitty Makes Meow Meow I do sign my real name 03.09.2002 19:47

…

Heavenly Steed Soaring Across the Skies*1030* That *google* had been blocked made me understand many things in China…… 02.09.2002 22:42
No. 4 Reached an even deeper understanding of what insolent means 02.09.2002 23:34

(BBS Youth Topics 2002s)

The Internet and its communication forums in particular may serve as a tool for channeling and organizing shared interests into social and political action. Reports on private home-owner groups creating their own communication forums on the Internet promoting the discussion and collective decision making show that community building, formation of collective identities and social interaction not only transcend the virtual and reach into the physical reality of given places but also vice versa (cf. ABC 2005).

7. Conclusion: Greatest Challenges from the Urban Grass Roots

In the preceding passages I have demonstrated that Internet and physical places in China today can be regarded as an interconnected and interdependent spatial continuum in which construction and renegotiation of collective identities and resulting social interaction develop in an integrated way. This process has been realized and used by Chinese authorities for the political management of anti-Japanese demonstrations in the first half of 2005 and will be further promoted by recent developments towards a greater convergence of offline and online media. Observations in August 2005 in Shanghai showed that more and more radio and TV stations as well as print media have created bulletin boards in order to attract and tie audiences to their more traditional services. No doubt, the integration of offline and online experiences and also of virtual and physical places will grow further. The political relevance of this process is obvious, as well. The outcome for the political system and the balance of power within China, however, is completely open.

A number of identity related processes initiated in virtual places possess the potential to challenge the dominance of the Chinese Communist Party. The models for unified collective identification propagated by the party are put into question already today. In the field of national identity, however, this process is largely unconscious, characterized rather by igno-

[21] The Three Representations are Jiang Zemin's invention and contribution to Chinese socialist theory.

rance and lack of interest among growing numbers particularly of young Chinese than by actively challenging the hegemonic model through constructing alternative national models of identity. The absence of discourses related to national identity within BBS Online Romance, the bulletin board that is frequented by the youngest group of Internet users under observation, gives clear evidence of this tendency. Although no distinct alternative to party orthodoxy seems to exist by now and competing models of Chineseness existing elsewhere – as Hong Kong and Taiwan identities or even as transnational Chineseness – do not appear attractive enough for young Chinese urban middle classes, the party might face the necessity of continuous efforts to provide a shared sense of agency related to its model of national identity. Otherwise negligence and the clear tendency to dissociate national identity from the ruling party and the government may result in decreasing political legitimacy of one-party rule. This will be like playing with fire, as widespread and very outspoken criticism of the Chinese government over leniency towards perceived enemies clearly demonstrates.

On the local level, however, there seem to develop collectivities that are tied to distinct physical or virtual places and can be characterized by their shared collective identities and a growing sense of agency. If the related phenomena discussed above will at least result in localized political action or even in the construction of collective identities based on mutual interests that transcend local boundaries (cf. Guo 2005: 88-91, 98-100) and form the sense of agency on a larger basis and higher level bearing the potential to challenge party hegemony and political power balance not only on the level of neighborhoods and city districts, remains an open question. Although the analysis of relevant discourses within Chinese bulletin boards shows a clear tendency to act for one's legitimate interests and legal rights. There is, however, not much evidence yet for this feeling of agency having been translated into collective action.

At this stage of development limited collective interests related to property rights and home ownership seem to bear the greatest potential to result in collective action, as for instance petitions by residents of private housing compounds against local industrial pollutors already give evidence of (cf. ABC 2005). Although beyond the scope of this article and without any evidence within the research project it is based on, scholars who are interested in the civil society function of temples and Christian churches in particular arrive at similar conclusions. Voluntary associations, they argue, form the beginnings of a civil society. Due to their fragmentation and localized nature, however,

> "civil society initiatives tend to be confined to particular localities and bound to their places rather than transcending them. Hence, social behavior and/or political action potentially challenging Party hegemony is also a local phenomenon defined by particular places, their structures and actors." (Madsen 2004).

These examples and the well known and more or less successful efforts of the CCP to censor and manipulate discourses on particular politically sensitive issues of nationwide relevance show that potential challenges will rather develop both from the local level and from the more general insidious changes in orientations and lifestyles triggered not least from discourses within the virreal spatial continuum than from direct confrontation on present political issues of greater reach. Moreover, it has become very obvious that not the pressing social problems of those marginalized within the reform process possess the potential for collective identification and agency, because the most affected groups – though a strong sense of agency can be assumed – lack the communicative channels for the construction of collectivities based on their mutual interests. The virreal spatial continuum is inhabited by the more privileged strata of the Chinese urban society (cf. Guo 2005: 15ff.); and since their members still are preoccupied with pursuing their own collective and individual interests rather than aiming at social justice for all, challenges for one-party rule are rather negligible at least at the time being.

Both the Hong Kong experience and recent developments within the Chinese mainland itself have demonstrated the capacity of the CCP to integrate the relevant social groups and their interests into the current system thus providing advantages for both sides. The admission of entrepreneurs and capitalists to the Communist Party is only one outstanding example of successfully perpetuating and legitimizing the current one-party rule through *appeasement*. However, whether this will be a successful option in dealing with countless localized collectivities and their similarly localized interests or growing numbers of educated urban youths eventually facing difficulties on the labor market and thus developing marginalized collective identities and corresponding agency, remains to be seen. Online communication forums like the studied bulletin boards, however, might provide a venue for developing both shared collective identities and a sense of agency that transcend the narrow confines of any given physical locality.

Bibliography

ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) (2005): Urbanisation in China: The New Revolution, in: ABC Radio National – Background Briefing: 21 March 2004, in: www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/bbing/stories/s1072803.htm (August 8, 2005).

Baker, Paul (2001): Moral Panic and Alternative Identity Construction in Usenet, in: Journal of Computer Mediated Communication, Vol. 7, No. 1, in: www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol7/issue1/baker.html (December 1, 2004).

BBS Exploring Culture (short for: sohu.com BBS Social Aspects, Exploring Culture) (2002a): Online Archive, in: www.duei.de/ifa/projekte/chinabbs/bbs/bbs1/bbs1index05.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002b): Arrogantly Looking Down Upon A Number Of Heroes: Why don't we get enraged? Posting, September 10, 2002, 23:36. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs1/6126798.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002c): Small Lascivious Immortal: A Problem that is not easy to ignore. Posting, September 20, 2002, 10:41. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs1/6196523.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002d): sihouyusheng111@CR: Reflect on yourself! Posting, September 16, 2002, 21:16. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs1/6172147.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002e): jgj0510@CR: Regarding people in North-East China. Thread, July 1, 2002, 23:27 - July 2, 2002, 13:27. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs1/bbs1index07.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002f): liziwenriyi@CR: I've got the same feeling, and this is maddening! Posting, October 17, 2002, 20:00. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs1/bbs1index10.html (December 1, 2005).

BBS Fashion (short for: sina.com BBS Fashion, Eating, Living, Motion) (2002a): Online Archive, in: www.duei.de/ifa/projekte/chinabbs/bbs/bbs2/bbs2index05.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002b): pongkey : Today the Chinese national soccer team lost a match but did not loose face. Thread, June 08, 2002, 21:16-21:55. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs2/bbs2index06.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002c): The Girl Is Young 1020 When I was living in Beijing I did not like Beijing! Posting, October 1, 2002, 14:15. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs2/373670.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002d): Little Que_mirage: A Beijing girl's impressions from Shanghai.... Posting, May 27, 2002, 16:06. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs2/317770.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002e): Once He Flies: FB notification, adressing all peace loving people. Thread, September 17, 2002, 17:12-21:38. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs2/bbs2index09.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002f): Having A Peek While Passing By: Fashion, Eating, Living and Motion looks at Suzhou. Posting, August 31, 2002, 17:24. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs2/360872.html (December 1, 2005).

BBS Online Romance (short for: sohu.com BBS Camp Emotion, Online Romance) (2002): Online Archive, in: www.duei.de/ifa/projekte/chinabbs/bbs/bbs4/bbs4index05.html (December 1, 2005).

BBS Youth Topics (short for: cyol.com China Youth Online BBS Youth Topics) (2002a): Online Archive, in: www.duei.de/ifa/projekte/chinabbs/bbs/bbs3/bbs3index05.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002b): Eastern Wood: Frantic, perfidious, shameless, and egoistic Japanese. Posting, October 26, 2002, 12:21. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/110718.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002c): wangluotuzi: There are a lot of problems but there is also a bright future. Posting, June 28, 2002, 11:02. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/70270.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002d): Though Getting Wet By The Rain …: Fucking Japanese ————. Posting, October 25 2002, 10:22. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/111192.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002e): Year Of the Horse: [I] know that China is not yet rich and powerful, that's. Posting, October 9, 2002, 07:51. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/133783.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002f): Bagong Mountain Man The real dangers that we face. Thread, July 20, 2002, 12:37 - October 22, 2002, 19:39. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/bbs3index07.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002g): Ever Persistent Dugu How much suffering has the severe and lingering disease corruption brought about China? How could this last for thousands of years until today and does not turn for the better? Should the historical inertia really be that strong??. Posting, June 28, 2002, 11:46. Online Archive, in:

www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/68674.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002h): I'm Old Yang: Well then, Youngor, since you cannot come to an end with your affirmative mentioning of it, I will repost this posting that a senior fellow apprentice sent to my mailbox. Those of our compatriots who are living in Japan, you can discuss your impressions of Japan yourselves. Posting, November 27, 2002, 21:26. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/229079.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002i): Communist Party Member: Patriotism does not need any precondition!. Thread, May 25, 2002, 17:45 - June 20, 2002, 22:45. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/bbs3index05.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002j): Vertical: No single interest of the state can be superior to freedom and dignity of the people. Posting, August 24, 2002, 22:49. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/85579.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002k): Blue Cat: Those people who are dying to propagate democracy. Posting, June 19, 2002, 18:43. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/43162.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002l): Blue Cat: You, Ordinary Joe 2002, are really substandard. Posting, June 19, 2002, 18:33. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/43161.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002m): Vertical: I would have liked having been borne in Northwestern Europe. It's a pity id didn't work out like this, have to make the best of being a Chinese. Posting, June 17, 2002, 12:03. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/38742.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002n): Flame: Who says nobody is watching. Posting, September 06, 2002, 22:13. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/100341.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002o): Hell's Angel: Recapturing Taiwan by the use of military force is inevitable. Thread, August 17, 2002, 22:00 - September 24, 2002, 12:55. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/bbs3index08.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002p): Radish He: Please kill the ID Small Room Named Quiet Sky – a complaint to the mananger Liu Xuehong, moderators Li Fang and 007. Thread, October 25, 2002 23:06 - October 26, 2002, 14:57. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/bbs3index10.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002q), Speechless Wind: Nanhua University tragedy. Thread, May May 14, 2002, 12:13 - June 11, 2002, 21:23. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/bbs3index05.html (December 1, 2005).

--- (2002r): Going Online Because Of Boredom: Will the reactionary rule be restored in China? Posting, June 19, 2002, 14:17. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/bbs3index06.html (December 1, 2004).

--- (2002s): Flying Freely: Propose that all big BBS of the Internet shall organize demonstrations to sharply protest against the blocking of GOOGLE. Please sign your names everybody for support! Thread, September 2, 2002, 10:32 - September 3, 2002, 23:34. Online Archive, in: www.chinabbsresearch.de/bbs/bbs3/bbs3index09.html (December 1, 2005).

Bourdieu, Pierre (1993): The Field of Cultural Production. Cambridge: Polity

Boyd, Danah (2002), FACETED ID/ENTITY: Managing representation in a digital world. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Breeze, Mary-Anne (1997): QUAKE-ING IN MY BOOTS: <EXAMINING> >CLAN: COMMUNITY< CONSTRUCTION IN AN ONLINE GAMER POPULATION, in: cybersociology, No. 2, in: http://members.aol.com/Cybersoc/is2breeze.html (January 10, 2000).

Bruckman, Amy (1992): Identity Workshop: Emergent Social and Psychological Phenomena in Text-Based Virtual Reality, in: ftp://ftp.cc.gatech.edu/pub/people/asb/papers/identity-workshop.rtf (December 15, 1999).

Burkholder, Richard (2005): Internet Use: Behind 'The Great Firewall of China', in: Gallup Poll News Service, February 1, 2005, in: www.gallup.com/poll/content/print.aspx?ci=14776 (February 17, 2005).

Butler, Judith (1990): Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity. New York: Routledge.

Castells, Manuel (1997): The Power of Identity. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) (2004): 13th Statistical Survey on the Internet Development in China (January 2004), in: www.cnnic.net.cn/download/manual/en-reports/13.pdf (April 16, 2004)

--- (2005): Zhongguo hulian wangluo fazhan zhuangkuang tongji baogao (2005/1) (China Internet Development Statistics Report (2005/1), in: www.cnnic.net.cn/download/2005/2005011801.pdf (January 24, 2005)

Cogdill, Sharon (1996): many speaking to many … at the tuesday cafe, in: http://condor.stcloudstate.edu/~scogdill/netoric/many.html (April 19, 2004)

Cui Wenhua (ed.) (1988): Heshang lun (River elegy). Beijing: Wenhua Yishu Chubanshe (Culture and Art Publishing).

cyol (2002): Zhongqing zaixian luntan: Qingnian huati (China Youth Online BBS: Youth Topics), in:

http://bbs.cyol.com/index2.php?job=topic&forumid=47&forumname=%C7%E0%C4%EA%BB%B0%CC%E2 (October 20, 2004).

Denzin, Norman K. (1989): The Research Act. A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods. 3rd ed., Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Donath, Judith S. (1999): Identity and deception in the virtual community, in: Smith, Marc A.; Kollock, Peter (eds.), Communities in cyberspace, London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 29-59.

Fletcher, Gordon (1998): …All that is Virtual Bleeds into Reality, in: www.spaceless.com/papers/1.htm (April 20, 2004).

Früh, Werner (2001): Kategorienexploration bei der Inhaltsanalyse. Basiswissengeleitete offene Kategorienfindung (BoK), in: Wirth, Werner; Lauf, Edmund (eds.), Inhaltsanalyse: Perspektiven, Probleme, Potentiale, Köln: Halem Verlag, pp. 117-139.

Geist, Beate (1996): Die Modernisierung der chinesischen Kultur. Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde.

Giese, Karsten (2003a): Construction and performance of virtual identity in the Chinese Internet, in: Ho, K. C.; Kluver, Randolph; Yang, Kenneth C. C. (eds.), Asia.com. Asia encounters the Internet. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 193-210.

--- (2003b): Field Notes, Interview Transcriptions, Observation Protocols, and Foto Survey, Shanghai/Chengdu, September-November 2003 (unpublished).

--- (2005a): Antijapanischer Nationalismus – bedingter Re.ex und gefährliches Kalkül, in: CHINA aktuell, 3/2005, pp. 3-10.

--- (2005b): Freier Diskurs oder perfekter Überwachungsstaat? Identity Work im chinesischen Internet, in: CHINA aktuell, 1/2005, pp. 35-51.

--- (2005c): Surfing the Virtual Minefield. The Chinese Internet as Field for Research, in: Berliner China-Hefte, Vol. 28, pp. 20-43.

--- (2005d): Chinese Identities in the Internet Age, in: www.chinaBBSresearch.de (October 30, 2005).

--- (2005e): Field Notes and Interview Protocols Shanghai, September 25-30, 2005 (unpublished).

Glaser, Barney G. (1978): Theoretical Sensitivity. Mill Valley: Sociology Press.

--- (1992): Emergence vs. Forcing. Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory. Mill Valley: Sociology Press.

Guo Liang (2003): The CASS Internet Report 2003: Surveying Internet Usage and Impact in Twelve Chinese Cities. Beijing: Research Center for Social Development, Chinese Academy for Social Sciences.

--- (2005): Surveying Internet Usage and Impact in Five Chinese Cities. Beijing: Research Center for Social Development, Chinese Academy for Social Sciences, in: www.wipchina.org/?p1=download&p2=27 (November 22, 2005).

Guo, Yingjie (2004): Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The Search for National Identity under Reform. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

Hachigan, Nina (2001): China´s cyber-strategy, in: Foreign Affairs, Vol. 80, No. 2, in: www.rand.org/nsrd/capp/cyberstrategy.html (May 17, 2004).

Hardey, M. (2002): Life beyond the screen: embodiment and identity through the internet, in: The Sociological Review, Vol. 50, No. 4, pp. 570-585.

Heberer, Thomas (1997): Nicht Demokratisierung, sondern Pluralisierung. Zum politischen Entwicklungsprozeß in China, in: E+Z Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit, No. 12, December, 1997, pp. 323-325, in: www.dse.de/zeitschr/ez/1297-4.htm (January 8, 2000).

Horrigan, John B. (2001): Online Communities: Networks that nurture long-distance relationships and local ties, in: www.pewinternet.org/reports/pdfs/PIP_Communities_Report.pdf (May 12, 2004).

Ito, Mizuko (1999): Network Localities: Identity, Place, and Digital Media, Paper Presented at the 1999 Meetings of the Society for the Social Studies of Science, San Diego, in: www.itofisher.com/PEOPLE/mito/locality.pdf (May 10, 2004).

Jasper, James M.; Polletta, Francesca (2001): Collective Identity and Social Movements, in: Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 27, pp. 283-305.

Jiang Wei (2004): User Behaviour and the Impact of the Internet: A Study on Chinese Net Users in Beijing and Shanghai. Singapore: Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series, No. 24.

Johnston, Alastair Iain (2004): Chinese Middle Class Attitudes Towards International Affairs: Nascent Liberalization?, in: The China Quarterly, Vol. 179, pp. 603-628.

Kalathil, Shanti; Boas, Taylor C. (2003): Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule. Chapter 2 — Wired for Modernization in China, in: First Monday, Vol. 8, No. 1, in: http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue8_1/kalathil_chapter2.html (May 22, 2004).

Lackner, Michael (1998): Konfuzianismus von oben? Tradition als Legitimation politischer Herrschaft in der VR China, in: Herrmann-Pillath, Carsten; Lackner, Michael (eds.), Länderbericht China. Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im chinesischen Kulturraum. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, pp. 425-448.

Lear, Jonathan (1998): Open Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Li Xiguang; Xuan Qin; Kluver, Randolph (2003): Who is setting the Chinese agenda? The impact of online chatrooms on party press in China, in: Ho, K. C.; Kluver, Randolph; Yang, Kenneth C. C. (eds.), Asia.com. Asia encounters the Internet. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 143-158.

Madsen, Richard (2004): Catholics and Civil Society in China, in: www.cecc.gov/pages/roundtables/091704/madsen.php (July 28, 2005).

Mayring, Philipp (2000): Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken. 7th ed., Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag.

Melucci, Alberto; Keane, John; Mear, Paul (1989): Nomads of the Present: Social Movement and Identity Needs in Contemporary Society. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Mooney, Paul (2004): China's 'Big Mamas' in a Quandary, in: YaleGlobal Online, in: http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/article.print?id=3676 (May 18, 2004).

O'Brien, Jodi (1999): Writing in the body: gender (re)production in online interaction, in: Smith, Marc A.; Kollock, Peter (eds.), Communities in cyberspace. London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 76-104.

Oevermann, Ulrich; Allert, Tilman; Konau, Elisabeth; Krambeck, Jürgen (1979): Die Methodologie einer 'objektiven Hermeneutik' und ihre allgemeine forschungslogische Bedeutung in den Sozialwissenschaften, in: Soeffner, Hans-Georg (ed.), Interpretative Verfahren in den Sozial- und Textwissenschaften, Stuttgart: Metzler, pp. 352-434.

--- (1987): Structures of meaning and objective Hermeneutics, in: Meja, Volker; Misgeld, Dieter; Stehr, Nico (eds.), Modern German sociology. European perspectives. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 436-447.

Oldenburg, Ray (1999): The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community. New York: Marlowe & Co., first published 1989, New York: Paragon House.

Orthmann, Claudia (2004): Strukturen der Chat-Kommunikation: Konversationsanalytische Untersuchung eines Kinder- und Jugendchats, Doctoral Dissertation, in: www.diss.fu-berlin.de/2004/78/ (February 22, 2005).

Peschel, Sabine (ed.) (1991): Die Gelbe Kultur. Der Film Heshang: Traditionskritik in China. Bad Honnef: Horlemann.

Popper, Karl R. (1974): Objektive Erkenntnis. Ein evolutionärer Entwurf. 2nd ed., Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe.

Reid, Elizabeth (1994): Cultural Formations in Text-Based Virtual Realities, in: http://crosswinds.net/~aluluei/cult-form.htm (December 12, 1999).

--- (1995): Virtual Worlds: Culture and Imagination, in: Jones, S. G. (ed.), CyberSociety: Computer-Mediated Communication and Community, Thousand Oaks and London: Sage, pp. 164-184.

Reporters without Borders (2003): ´Living dangerously on the Net`. Censorship and surveillance of Internet forums, in: Reporters Without Borders Reports, in: www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=6793 (May 7, 2004).

--- (2004): Censorship stepped up to target blogging, in: Asia press releases, in: www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=9545 (May 7, 2004).

Rheingold, Howard (1994): Virtuelle Gemeinschaft. Soziale Beziehungen im Zeitalter des Computers. Bonn, Paris, Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley.

Sant, Tony (2001): Liminality and Altered States of Mind in Cyberspace, in: Limen, No. 1, 2001, in: http://limen.mi2.hr/limen1-2001/toni_sant.html (May 17,2004).

Schöpflin, George (2001): The Construction of National Identities. Paper presented at the Österreichischer Wissenschaftstag, Vienna, October 25-27, 2001, in: www.nt.tuwien.ac.at/nthft/temp/oefg/text/wiss_tag/Beitrag_Schopflin.pdf (October 10, 2004).

Seckington, Ian (2005): Nationalism, Ideology and China's 'Fourth Generation' Leadership, in: Journal of Contemporary China, Vol. 14, No. 42, pp. 23-33.

sina (2002): Yi Shi Zhu Xing shenghuo luntan (BBS Fashion, Eating, Living, Motion), in: http://forum.life.sina.com.cn/?38:1075 (May 20, 2005).

sohu (2002a): Qinggan zhenying wangshang qingyuan (BBS Camp Emotion, Online Romance), in: http://club.women.sohu.com/womenmain.php?b=netlove&c=12 (October 20, 2005).

--- (2002b): Shehui guangjiao wenhua tansuo (BBS Facets of Spciety, Exploring Culture), in: http://bbs.sohu.com/frame_bbs.php3?bbd_id=924 (October 30, 2002).

Snow, David (2001): Collective Identity and Expressive Forms, in: http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=csd (November 30, 2004).

Strauss, Anselm (1987) [German 1994]: Qualitative Analysis For Social Scientists. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung. München: UTB].

Strauss, Anselm; Corbin, Juliet (1990) [German 1996]: Basics of Qualitative Research. Newbury Park: Sage [Grundlagen qualitativer Sozialforschung. Weinheim: Beltz PVU].

Tsui, Lokman (2001): Internet in China: Big Mama Is Watching You, Master's thesis, University of Leiden, in: www.lokman.nu/thesis/010717-thesis.pdf (May 22, 2004).

Turkle, Sherry (1995): Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Wacker, Gudrun (2003): The Internet and censorship in China, in: Hughes, Christopher R.; Wacker, Gudrun (eds.), China and the Internet. Politics of the digital leap forward. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, pp. 58-82.

Wellman, Barry; Gulia, Milena (1999): Virtual communities as communities, in: Smith, Marc A.; Kollock, Peter (eds.), Communities in Cyberspace. New York: RoutledgeCurzon.

Wong, Bobson (2003): A Matter of Trust: The Internet and Social Change in China, in: China Rights Forum, No. 3, 2003, pp. 41-43, in: http://bobson.wong.home.mindspring.com/research/china/matteroftrust.pdf (May 18, 2004).

Yang, Guobin (2003): The Co-evolution of the Internet and Civil Society in China, in: Asian Survey, Vol. XLIII, No. 3, pp. 405-422.

WORKING PAPERS
Global and Area Studies

Edited by the German Overseas Institute (DÜI) in Hamburg.

Recent issues:

No 13 Daniel Flemes: Creating a Regional Security Community in Southern Latin America: The Institutionalisation of the Regional Defence and Security Policies; December 2005

No 12 Patrick Köllner and Matthias Basedau: Factionalism in Political Parties: An Analytical Framework for Comparative Studies; December 2005

No 11 Detlef Nolte and Francisco Sánchez: Representing Different Constituencies: Electoral Rules in Bicameral Systems in Latin America and Their Impact on Political Representation; November 2005

No 10 Joachim Betz: Die Institutionalisierung von Parteien und die Konsolidierung des Parteiensystems in Indien. Kriterien, Befund und Ursachen dauerhafter Defizite [*The Institutionalisation of Parties and the Consolidation of the Party System in India. Criteria, State and Causes of Persistent Defects*]; October 2005

No 9 Dirk Nabers: Culture and Collective Action – Japan, Germany and the United States after September 11, 2001; September 2005

No 8 Patrick Köllner: The LDP at 50: The Rise, Power Resources, and Perspectives of Japan's Dominant Party; September 2005

No 7 Wolfgang Hein and Lars Kohlmorgen: Global Health Governance: Conflicts on Global Social Rights; August 2005

No 6 Patrick Köllner: Formale und informelle Politik aus institutioneller Perspektive: Ein Analyseansatz für die vergleichenden Area Studies [*Formal and Informal Politics from an Institutional Perspective: An Analytical Approach for Comparative Area Studies*]; August 2005

No 5 Ruth Fuchs: ¿Hacia una comunidad regional de seguridad? Las Fuerzas Armadas en la percepción de las elites parlamentarias en Argentina, Chile, Brasil, Uruguay y Paraguay [*Moving towards a Regional Security Community? The Armed Forces in the Perception of Parliamentary Elites in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay y Paraguay*]; July 2005

No 4 Andreas Mehler: Major Flaws in Conflict Prevention Policies towards Africa. The Conceptual Deficits of International Actors' Approaches and How to Overcome Them; June 2005

No 3 Susan Steiner: Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction: A Conceptual Framework for the Economic Impact; June 2005

All Working Papers are available as pdf files free of charge at www.duei.de/workingpapers.
For any requests please contact: workingpapers@duei.de.
Editor of the Working Paper Series: Bert Hoffmann.

Deutsches Übersee-Institut/German Overseas Institute
Neuer Jungfernstieg 21 • D-20354 Hamburg • Germany
e-mail: duei@duei.de • website: http://www.duei.de

DÜI