

Project Title: **Imagining China: The PRC in the Eyes of an Online Expatriate Community**

Project Summary:

The project began with the hypothesis that non-Chinese blogging and commenting online about China held an interesting position between Chinese and non-Chinese and might offer pointers towards a lessening of misunderstandings between the two groups.

The data gathered demonstrated, though, that such websites achieved almost the opposite. By offering spaces for discussion about cultural differences, these cultural differences became more clearly defined for the participants in the discussions. Instead of creating bridges of understanding, walls of difference were created and emphasised online.

The participants in the online discussions did not lessen misunderstandings, but confirmed their own negative experiences and stereotypes through an exchange with other, like-minded commentators on the site. The intention of the website to explain China to its mostly non-Chinese users through the translation of popular Chinese Internet content merely served to strengthen the prior convictions of visitors to the site that China and Chinese people were very different from non-Chinese people.

The results of this research project raise the general question for future research whether inter-cultural meeting spaces online are able to serve as such or not. Is it possible to create online inter-cultural spaces or are such spaces conceptually flawed?