**Sept 2014 Gender & Communication conference Beijing 8000 character report for *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning***

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**Gender and Communication Conference Beijing**

**– a window to China for Nordic scholars**

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The conference ‘Gender and Communication - representation, voice and empowerment in and through media, film and information and communication technologies (ICTs)’ was held in Beijing 22-23 September 2014. The conference was hosted by Professor Bu Wei, the Institute of Journalism and Communication, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing and Professor Marina Svensson, the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University, Sweden. It was the fifth in a series of conferences that have brought together gender studies scholars from China and the Nordic countries since 2002. For participants from the Nordic countries the conference provided a unique opportunity to meet gender studies scholars from China. Similarly to previous conferences in the series, this conference offered what one participant from Denmark, who has embarked on research in China within recent years, called ‘a window to China’.

**Communication practice and theory**

Papers and discussions at the Gender and Communication conference covered a wide variety of topics and foci on gender and communication theory and practice. They ranged from the communication practices of women workers’ organizing described by project manager Ding Li of the Firefly NGO in Shenzhen, who worked in a factory from the age of fourteen, to the keynote speech ‘Gender, South to North - Thoughts on gender, communication and global power’ by Professor Raewyn Connell, University of Sydney on the dominance of knowledge production in the world by the global North. In her keynote speech Professor Sunera Thobani, Simon Fraser University, Canada, provided disturbing insights on the gender and race of the global war against terror. She argued that feminism has been hijacked by a colonialist, imperialist paradigm and described how dangerous it is to resist.

Similarly to previous conferences in the series, the conference was infused by a desire to bring together theory and practice. Thus, participants included not only scholars but also NGO activists. In the panel on ‘Gender Identity, Gender Education and Media Empowerment’ scholars from universities in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing as well as Wei Tingting, Program Manager at the NGO Beijing Gender Health Education Institute presented research on sexuality education and discussed the relevance of using the notion of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) as a framework for education practices as well as to theoretically conceptualize transformative practices. The equality between the four elements of LGBT was critiqued as an example of how predominant Northern theory creates an illusion that does not necessarily reflect actual practices.

**China and the Nordic**

Other conference papers were presented in panels on ‘Media Representation and Media Criticism’, ‘Gender and/in New Media Space’, and ‘Mediating Society: Women and Children’. While all papers presented by China-based scholars discussed issues relating to China, papers by Nordic based scholars included papers on China as well as on the Nordic countries. These included a thought-provoking analysis of changing stages of gender politics in the People’s Republic of China from the ‘collective male feminism’ during the first half of the twentieth century and up to the reform era to current understandings of gender in neoliberal, neo-Confucian and New Left politics, presented in the panel ‘Journalism, Gender Politics and Communication Theories’ by Associate Professor Qi Wang, the University of Southern Denmark, as well as a paper with the title ‘Duckface/Stoneface: The social semiotics and gendering of selfies among 10 to 13 year old pupils in four Swedish schools’ by Michael Forsman, Södertorn University, Sweden. Many of the papers on China, including papers presented in the concluding panel on ‘Gender Policies, Advocacy and Practice in China’, critically engaged with theoretical and practical communication issues relating to gender equality issues in China. A concluding keynote speech by Cai Yiping, Executive Committee Member of Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN) placed the challenges in China within an international development framework.

The conference was attended by about one hundred participants from China, four of the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), as well as from Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Indonesia and the USA. Selections of conference papers in Chinese will be published by Professor Bu Wei, while Professor Marina Svensson will be in charge of publication in English.

**Research collaboration beyond the conference**

Several participants expressed a wish for the establishment of research collaboration between scholars from China and the Nordic countries. This could be in the form of parallel and/or comparative studies in the two parts of the world. Potential research areas that were mentioned included journalism, inspired by University of Gothenburg Professor Monika Djerf-Pierre’s keynote speech on ‘Journalism, gender equality and the good journalism’, as well as education and hate speech in China and the Nordic countries. Several papers at the conference addressed the issue of extremely violent and gendered hate speech that is being communicated on the internet. This led Professor Monika Djerf-Pierre, the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden and Associate Professor Jack Qiu, the Chinese University of Hong Kong to the idea of publishing a book on Internet Backlash /Digital Backlash that would include papers by conference participants as well as other contributors.

**2017 conference – Oslo University**

The 6th Sino-Nordic Women & Gender Studies Conference on the theme of ‘Modernization, Gender and Generation’ will possibly be held at the University of Oslo under the leadership of Professor Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen. An organizing group will meet in Shanghai in May 2015 in connection with the convening of a PhD course at the Nordic Centre at Fudan University on ‘Modernization, Gender and Generation’. For further information on the PhD course contact Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen h.b.nielsen@stk.uio.no

**The Sino-Nordic Women & Gender Studies Conferences Series**

Why hold a series of conferences aimed at a specific group of scholars from China and the Nordic countries? Actually, there have been participants from other parts of the world at all the conferences. However, the main aim of bringing together gender studies scholars from China and the Nordic countries stems from the desire of Chinese gender studies scholars to gain knowledge about gender relations in the Nordic countries. To address this demand the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, the University of Copenhagen and the Nordic Centre at Fudan University in Shanghai have collaborated to convene the series of conferences since 2002. Subsequently, conferences have been held alternately in a Nordic country and China every three years.

The first conference was held in Shanghai 2002 on the theme of ‘Re-Negotiating the Politics of the Public and the Private - Gender and Politics in China and the Nordic Countries’. The second conference was held in Malmö, Sweden in 2005 on ‘Gender and Human Rights in China and the Nordic Countries’. The conference resulted in the publication of the book *Gender Equality, Citizenship and Human Rights: Controversies and Challenges in China and the Nordic Countries*, edited by Pauline Stoltz, Marina Svensson, Sun Zhongxin and Qi Wang. The third conference with the title ‘Gender at the Interface of the Global and the Local: perspectives from China and the Nordic Countries’ was held in Kunming, Yunnan in 2008. Following the conference a collection of papers entitled *Advances of Gender Equality under the Influences of Globalization and Localization* and edited by Zhao Jie and Wen Yichun with Cecilia Milwertz, Merete Lie and Birte Siim was published in Chinese. The fourth conference was held in 2011 at Aalborg University in Denmark on ‘Travelling Theories within the Context of Globalisation. Transnational Feminism and Knowledge Production’.