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Title: **Re-thinking Diversity: Cultural Fuzziness between China, Germany and Design**

Abstract:

Over the course of China's development to one of the largest economic powers in the world, the country is transforming from the workbench of the industrialized nations to a business partner at eye level. Today, Germany as an exporting country does not only rely on the demand for German products on the huge Chinese market, but Chinese companies also gain ground in Germany. Consequently, Chinese and German managers and employees increasingly need to work together as equal business partners.

Based on interviews and ethnography in German companies in China as well as Chinese companies in Germany, the paper briefly examines how employees in leading positions make sense of and reflect on their arrangements of normality (meaning plausibility, an ability to act, orientation) including existing differences. The findings relate to a “fuzzy culture” approach (cf. Bolten 2011), which tries to undo the binary “either-or” structure of traditional models of culture and their consequences for interaction.

The idea of cultural “fuzziness” coincides with a rather unorthodox way to deal with human encounters: design. Therefore, the main part of the paper outlines common practice of design and how it can be applied to the enactment of reciprocal relationships illustrated by examples coming from the fieldwork in China and Germany. The goal is to (critically) discuss innovative ways to think about cultural processes and consequently about facets of diversity as a strategic instrument.

Keywords: Chinese-German business encounters, fuzzy culture, design, cultural enactment