

CEFC Taipei - Academia Sinica Lecture Series

法歐學者來台訪問暨學術演講系列

The **French Center for Research on Contemporary China, Taipei Office**,
the **Institute of Ethnology (IOE), Academia Sinica**,
and the **Institute of Sociology (IOS), Academia Sinica**,
have the pleasure to invite you to attend the following lectures:

By Prof. Ellen Hertz, UNINE (Switzerland)

Short Bio: Ellen Hertz is currently Professor of Anthropology, and Former Director, of the Institute of Ethnology at the University of Neuchâtel. Prof. Hertz studied Chinese, law and anthropology in the United States before coming to work in Switzerland, first as a lecturer at the University of Lausanne, and then as a professor at the Institute of Ethnology, University of Neuchâtel. Her research includes work on the creation of the Shanghai stock market, on indigenous people's rights in the U.N. system, on the UNESCO convention for the conservation of intangible cultural heritage and on the "decent work" agenda in the computer industry. She teaches in the areas of economic, legal and political anthropology, gender studies and China anthropology, as well as generalist courses such as the introduction to anthropology or social theory and the concept of culture in the social sciences.

I. "The Making of Ethical Computers and the "Decent Work Agenda" in East Asia. Preliminary Findings"

“合乎倫理的電腦製造與「尊嚴工作議程」在東亞：初步的研究結果” (in English)

Venue: **Conference Room 802, Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taipei**

Time: **Wednesday December 9, 2009, 12:30 PM**

Abstract: In this presentation, Ellen Hertz will map out some of the different normative orders that are currently converging around the question of working conditions in the computer manufacturing industry, notably in Southern China. Empirically, this paper is based on observation and interviews carried out by herself and her colleague, Marylène Lieber, respectively at an International Labour Organisation Meeting on the theme of working conditions in the IT industries (April 16-18, 2007, Geneva, Switzerland), and with one of the principal Swiss NGOs interested in this issue in Switzerland, *Pain pour le prochain*.

Ellen Hertz will concentrate here on the conceptual issues to be posed by future research. Using the tools of legal anthropology, she will set out to reflect on the competing and/or complementary normative registers in which this issue is being currently dealt with. These include:

- internationally negotiated standards for decent work within the ILO framework;
- reference to binding documents in international law such as the eight "fundamental"

ILO Conventions;

- corporate social responsibility agendas, including, notably, Hewlett-Packard's active attempt to train management at the sub-contractor level and to convince them of "the business argument" for their decent work agenda;
- use by NGOs and pressure groups of targeted "shaming" campaigns in the general and specialized media, directed against specific brand-name companies or industries;
- the strings attached by international organizations (World Bank, IMF) and development agencies aimed at enforcing respect for basic human rights ("project law");
- the new Chinese labor law, which provides far more comprehensive protection for workers than ever before;
- Chinese administrative procedures for the handling of worker dissatisfaction;
- activism by labor organizations within and outside China.

Making sense empirically of the ways in which these normative regimes interact will be the object of a longer study, involving significant amounts of fieldwork in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

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II. "Intangible Cultural Heritage: Transnational Politics and Local 'Culture Wars' "

“無形文化遺產：跨國政治與在地「文化戰爭」” (in English)

Venue: **Conference Room 2319, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei**

Time: **Monday December 14, 2009, 14:30 PM**

Abstract: In this presentation, Ellen Hertz outline the main tenants of the intangible cultural heritage paradigm ("ICH paradigm"), as set forth in the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The UNESCO Convention opens up a whole new transnational arena for negotiating recognition for local, national and international cultural actors and expressions. Launched to safeguard and honor cultural manifestations in the "South" (Africa, Asia, Latin America), often overlooked by previous heritage programs concentrating on built or monumental heritage, the 2003 Convention was immediately seized upon by certain states, who use it to attract attention, scholarly interest and tourism to particular regions or to the country as a whole. The People's Republic of China has thus far led the pack in obtaining recognition for particular items of "ICH", including, most recently, Chinese calligraphy and the *Mazu* festival.

In a new project that Ellen Hertz will undertake from 2009-2012, she will study how the ICH paradigm has been integrated into the Swiss cultural scene. As she will show, the UNESCO Convention has actually put the Swiss federal government in a very difficult position, as it must now decide which forms of "Swiss culture" it will recognize and through which processes. We intend to follow this political and administrative process in detail, as it tells us a great deal about how Switzerland imagines its "national traditions" in a contemporary, highly politicized setting. We will also engage in in-depth study a number of "limit cases", cases of cultural

heritage that do not fit within the traditional folklore paradigm such as: written stories told in dialect; migrant theater and youth hip-hop performances in Basel; “traditional” healing techniques such as magnetism, bone-setting and dowsing; and traditional watch-making know-how in the Jura region. In so doing, we intend to stretch the boundaries of the concept of ICH as far as it can go, in order to explore where and why it should be limited to certain cultural expressions rather than others. At the heart of the project is the question: *who is authorized to choose what cultural expressions represent the country, and who is excluded from this process?*

The questions raised here will no doubt find their equivalents in questions that Taiwanese anthropologists must have about the protection of cultural expression in Taiwan. As Taiwan is not recognized by the U.N. system, it cannot itself be a signatory state and must rely on the People’s Republic of China to undertake measures to preserve and safeguard its rich cultural traditions. However, important questions remained unsolved, notably, does “Taiwanese immaterial cultural heritage” include only indigenous people’s cultural expressions? Or indigenous peoples plus Fujian/*Minnan* cultural traditions? Or the numerous cultural expressions that arrived in Taiwan through Japanese colonization and/or the KMT’s retreat to the island in 1949? As even this superficial set of questions demonstrates, the apparently innocuous UNESCO Convention raises important political issues wherever it is applied, and may in fact be something of a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

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